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THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE STRUGGLING: BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENT PREPAREDNESS AMONG TEACHERS IN AN ADULT LEARNER COLLEGE

By

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ABSTRACT

THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE STRUGGLING: BELIEFS ABOUT STUDENT PREPAREDNESS AMONG TEACHERS IN AN ADULT LEARNER COLLEGE

By

Janet Ellen Gray

Increasing reliance on open-enrollment policies by postsecondary educational institutions has further diversified the level of preparedness among incoming college students. Colleges and universities nationwide are admitting students whose academic preparation is perceived to be less than adequate for college-level work. Estimates suggest that more that one-third to one-half of all newly entering college and university enrollees are not sufficiently prepared to succeed in the college context, rendering them at-risk for educational failure. Scholars have used various labels to characterize this group of adult learners, including underprepared, low-functioning, marginal, disadvantaged, learning disabled, at-risk, low-achieving, and unmotivated. These labels reflect the status of students' prior educational experiences, innate abilities, and attitudes toward college (Grubb, 1996; Dunn, 1995; Astin, 1993; Mealey, 1990).

Relatively little is know, however, about how teachers in these institutions make sense of these widely varying levels of diversity in their classrooms, or how they accommodate these differences within their teaching practices. Despite curricular innovations and college policies intended to improve student achievement and the overall quality of education, it is the classroom teacher who is ultimately responsible for directly addressing the needs of these students. Research studies suggest that teachers hold distinct sets of beliefs regarding student potential, subject matter, teaching strategies, and subsequent learning outcomes that are reciprocated in an on going reformulation of

beliefs and practices (Dirkx, Amey, & Haston, 1999; Pitts, White, & Harrison, 1999; Fang, 1996; Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992; Pratt, 1992; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Shulman, 1986a).

Given these assumptions, a qualitative case study of five teachers in an adult learning college was undertaken to explore how they think about and respond to the diversity of preparedness among their adult learners. In depth interview were conducted with each teacher; transcripts were subjected to phenomenological analysis Moustakas, 1994).

The teachers described a wide range of abilities among their students, indicating a clear sense among these teachers of the "kinds" of students that they work with—the "good" student, the "struggling" student, and the "failing" student. Preparedness was defined largely in attitudinal and motivational, rather than academic terms.

While the teachers' ideals for teaching—the transmission of knowledge and content mastery—are supported by the objectives of the Institution, they are widely challenged by the abilities of the student body (Pitts, et al., 1999). In an effort to cope with the tension generated by the academic and psychosocial diversity in the classroom, they ultimately defined they work in terms of subject matter expertise and institutional mandates regarding academic achievement. Descriptions of classroom practices emphasized the importance of content mastery and motivational strategies to help maintain these standards. The resulting theory-in-use reflects a strategy of mediation among the teachers' ideals for teaching, the objectives of the institution, and the norms of social accountability. Implications for the relationship between beliefs about student preparedness and the future of classroom practice and enrollment policies are discussed.

This dissertation is dedicated to my Mother:

Lorna Olga Gray

In Loving Memory of

Anna Wach Sobol

Rollin R. Gray

Edmund L. Gray

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Over the past several decades, changes in our nation's social institutions have played a significant role in the growth of open-door enrollment policies in postsecondary education (Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Stage & Williams, 1993; Kanoy, Wester, & Latta, 1990). Public and non-profit colleges across the United States have steadily joined the ranks of their proprietary counterparts with perennial open-door policies already in place (Hittman, 1995; Honick, 1995). Collectively, these institutions have made it possible for students of all social and educational backgrounds to participate in postsecondary education.

Changes in the profile of adults who pursue a college degree are reflected in the social and economic responsiveness of institutions of higher education. Today's market is also shaped by consumer demand for an education that is markedly different in content and purpose than in years past (Zeiss, 1998). In spite of the anticipated effects, however, the education industry had not counted on the influx of students who possess weak educational backgrounds (Morris, 1993; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Monahan, Peterson, & Ellsworth, 1989; Browne, 1986; Olagunja & Jordan, 1982), unrealistic educational goals (Pace, 1990), and a number of psychosocial deficits (Garcia, 1995; Thombs, 1995; Shaughnessy, Sanfilipo, & Manz, 1990; Shaughnessy, 1989)—rendering them at risk for educational failure.

The trend suggests that an increasing number of students are being admitted who are not academically prepared to succeed in the college context (Grubb, 1996; Ryland, Riordan, & Brack, 1994; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Tinto, 1993; Shaughnessy, 1989; Judd, et al., 1985). Questions are being raised about the sustainability of student achievement and have prompted many postsecondary institutions to become increasingly focused on the preparedness of students who are matriculated. In addition to these developments, research suggests that factors of concern that are broader than academic ability also influence perceptions of preparedness (Pitts, White, & Harrison, 1999; Garcia, 1995; Mealey, 1995; Thombs, 1995; Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994).

Research statistics reveal that more than one-third to more than one-half of all newly entering college and university enrollees fit the profile of the underprepared student (Grubb, 1996; Astin, 1993; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Brier, 1979). Abraham (1992) cited a similar finding of more than 30% of his research population in a study of scholastic ability. Relative to the statistics on underpreparedness, 8.8% of Henderson's (1992) sample freshmen students were reported to have a formal learning disability. Furthermore, the enrollment of students with formal learning disabilities had increased from 15% in 1985 to 25% in 1991, representing the fastest growing category of those within the disability student population (Henderson, 1992).

Researchers in the field of education are documenting an increasing diversity of learning characteristics manifested in the college classroom, such as learning, behavioral, and motivational disparities (Dunn, 1995; Garcia, 1995; Thombs, 1995; Kanoy, et al., 1990; Mealey, 1990; Shaughnessy, et al., 1990; Stage & Williams, 1990; Shaughnessy,

1989); and discrepancies in educational outcomes that are reflected in test scores, grade point averages (GPAs), and high rates of attrition (Tinto, 1993; Stage & Williams, 1990; Olagunja & Jordan, 1982). By all accounts, student performance is a function of preparedness at the postsecondary level.

Research has identified several psychosocial and behavioral problems respective to their impairments to the learning process. The effects are independent yet not exclusive of the class of formal learning disabilities (Henderson, 1992) and are attributable to unfavorable attitudes toward education and learning (Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993; Judd, et al., 1985; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981); difficulty with time management and study habits (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Pace, 1990; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981); low self-esteem and self-defeating behaviors (Thombs, 1995; Shaughnessy, 1989); and a weak locus of control (Garcia, 1995; Shaughnessy, et al., 1990; Shaughnessy, 1989). Most notable are the key research findings that consistently underscore low levels of motivation among students as a predisposition to underpreparedness as well as a contributing factor toward poor academic performance (Dunn, 1995; Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Mealey, 1990).

Given the data that support the growing trend of underprepared and at-risk learners, college faculty and administration face a diverse array of educational challenges at the postsecondary level. However, as professionals in the field seek to address these complex issues, ultimately it is the college teacher who mediates among the students' needs and the institutions' response; therefore, an understanding of how these dynamics stand in relationship to one another becomes critical.

This researcher's experience as a teacher at a two-year public college and a four-year private college suggests that many teachers are aware of the dimensions of student underpreparedness. However, their means of responding to these dynamics may vary. Some teachers may be motivated to seek alternative strategies in which to engage the at-risk learners in their classrooms; others may refer students to the tutorial process. For those teachers who believe that the onus of learning lies with the student, their efforts to cope with the problem of underpreparedness lie within the margins of their professional responsibilities. To a large extent their responses indicate that they tend to view such impairments as sources of contention, frustration, and dissatisfaction (Pitts, et al., 1999).

What is suggested is that teachers' perceptions of student preparedness are filtered through their own beliefs regarding student ability and the potential for academic achievement. Therefore, exploring teachers' beliefs and their prospective influences on classroom practices may provide insight into their potential to shape educational outcomes.

Background to the Problem

Teachers at the two- and four-year college level represent the many facets of the postsecondary education system. While working within the context of their respective institutions, i.e., open-door enrollment, they are experiencing a disproportionate number of underprepared students in the classroom. For example, estimates of the proportion of underprepared students vary from 25% to 50%, to as high as 78% in some educational systems (Lazarick, 1997; Grubb, 1996). These estimates call for teachers and administrators to increase their understanding of the educational needs of this growing

portion of the college student body (Kanoy, et al., 1990; Stage & Williams, 1990; Thombs, 1990; Astin, 1985; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981).

College systems nationwide began instituting open-enrollment policies nearly three decades ago (Kanoy, et al., 1990; Shaughnessy, 1989; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981), especially within non-profit and public-sector education. Proprietary (for-profit) institutions have traditionally employed open-enrollment policies as a means of maintaining financial viability.

Challenges to the establishment were initiated by the push for more accessible (Roueche & Roueche, 1993) and more well-funded (Honick, 1995) education in the 1960's, coupled with the identification of a national public education system in crisis (O'Banion, 1997; Davis & Botkin, 1994; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1993; Roueche & Roueche, 1993). As colleges and universities began embracing these causes by opening their enrollment to virtually all who applied, students with a wider variety of academic and social backgrounds were encouraged to take advantage of a "second chance" at a college education (Letteri, 1980). Consequently, these policy changes resulted in the matriculation of students who otherwise may not have considered postsecondary education at all.

As the trend continues, these institutions are continually faced with new educational challenges that are as diverse as their constituency—developing relevant curriculum to meet the expanding academic, social, and economic needs of today's students (Zeiss, 1998; Hyslop & Parsons, 1995; Roueche & Roueche, 1993). In the classroom, however, these ideals come into conflict when students' educational aspirations (Astin, 1988) are not met with the ability or the motivation to succeed in the

college context (McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981). Without exception, such discrepancies have become apparent within the entire framework of postsecondary education (Hyslop & Parsons, 1995; Moore, 1995).

Studies in higher education have isolated the problems characterizing a significant portion of the college student body. The research has been traditionally grounded in a chronology of academic and psychosocial constructs—aptitude, cognitive ability, motivation, personality, and family background. The findings reveal a number of attributions that are indicative of students' functional status—underprepared, underachieving, unmotivated, marginal, disengaged, disadvantaged, low-functioning, learning disabled, at-risk, high-risk, and even immature (Dunn, 1995; Morris, 1995; Thombs, 1995; Tinto, 1993; Henderson, 1992; Mealey, 1990; Miller, et al., 1990; Pace, 1990; Shaughnessy, et al., 1990; Stage & Williams, 1990; Kentucky Education Association & The Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1989; Shaughnessy, 1989; Bray, 1987; Olagunja & Jordan, 1982; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981; Brier, 1979).

Underprepared students are typically lacking in one or more of the skill sets necessary to function at the college level: 1) basic academic skills—deficits in reading and math (Dunn, 1995; Mealey, 1990; 2) cognitive skills—learning disabilities, low intelligence, deficits in critical thinking and reasoning (Dunn, 1995; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Mealey, 1990; Pace, 1990; Wade & Reynolds, 1989; Judd, et al., 1985); 3) coping skills—lack of initiative, emotional instability (Morris, 1995; Serna & Lau-Smith; 1995; Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Downs, 1992; Kanoy, et al., 1990; Shaughnessy, et al., 1990; Shaughnessy, 1989; Astin, 1985; Sprinthall & Collins, 1984; Blum & Spangehl, 1982); and 4) intrapersonal skills—attention deficits, negative

attitudes, disruptive behavior, truancy, substance use/abuse, campus and community violations (Garcia, 1995; Thombs, 1995; Jessor, Donovan, & Costa, 1991; Monahan, et al., 1989; Olagunja & Jordan, 1982).

The research suggests that the notion of student preparedness reflects far more than academic ability or levels of academic achievement. Other risk factors have dissociated students from the college context—low educational aspirations and a lack of persistence in a college major are relative to their underestimation of the realities of college life (Dunn, 1995; Keeley, Shemberg, Cowell, & Zinnbaur, 1995; Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Ryland, et al., 1994; Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993; Stage & Williams, 1990; Judd, et al., 1985; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981).

Studies examining the relationship between the dynamics of underpreparedness and measures of performance have revealed lower test scores and grade-point-averages (GPAs), and higher rates of attrition among at-risk students compared to their traditional (academically able) college cohorts (Cheng & Levin, 1995; Dunn, 1995; Ryland, et al., 1994; Tinto, 1993; Judd, et al., 1985). Yet, potentially more alarming are the subset of studies that have found such disparities to be greater among proprietary college students than their community, not-for-profit, and four-year college counterparts (Cheng & Levin, 1995; Apling, 1993).

The results of these inquiries have lead to the development of more progressive approaches to the problems associated with underpreparedness (Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Miller, et al., 1990; Monahan, et al., 1989). Conventional treatments consist of academic and behavioral modalities designed to reinforce the motivation to learn (Lowman, 1994; Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Judd, et al., 1985; Blum

& Spangehl, 1982). The more recent applications access the cognitive dimensions of learning (Garcia, 1995; Keeley, et al., 1995; Serna & Lau-Smith, 1995; Mealey, 1990; Wade & Reynolds, 1989) and reinforce the role of student agency in the learning process (Jackson, 2003). The motivational stimulus is consonant to the intrinsic value of education. "Learning-how-to-learn" strategies have also been reemphasized, given the growing volume of information and technology being disseminated at an overwhelming pace today (Roueche & Roueche, 1993).

Mentoring programs and the focus on teacher-mentor relationships have received more attention in recent years (Mezirow, 1994; Daloz, 1987), signifying some of the initial efforts to focus on the role of the teacher in the educational process. Agency administration have also responded by fortifying these interventions with revised policy applications (Kasworm, Polson, & Fishback, 2002; Browne, 1986) and college accreditation requirements (Prager, 1995).

The basic assumption is that these program paradigms are partial to the needs of underprepared students (Keeley, et al., 1995; Lowman, 1994; Mealey, 1990; Wade & Reynolds, 1990; Judd, et al., 1985), the colleges that serve these students (subsequent to financial and federal mandates), and the industries that hire those who graduate (Prager, 1995). Yet, college-level teachers are only marginally involved in the research process and program development for underprepared students. They are expected to assume these interventions after they have been established in the field.

A summary of the current research-to-practice outcomes reveals several discrepancies in the postsecondary educational process: 1) many of the research strategies designed to help underprepared students have been developed with a minimal

amount of input from practitioners; 2) remedial programs have been too narrowly focused on basic academics only (Roueche & Roueche, 1993); 3) the available treatment paradigms may not be compatible with teachers' educational ideals or instructional methods; 4) teachers may choose to alter or adapt some of the available treatment paradigms in an effort to meet the perceived needs of their students; and 5) the effectiveness of the treatments developed for underprepared students has only been loosely documented in post-practice assessments.

Among the more recent research in postsecondary education, only a modest amount of data has been substantiated from teachers' perspectives of the underprepared students in their classrooms (Pitts, et al., 1999; Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992). For example, Dirkx & Spurgin recorded the beliefs that adult basic education (ABE) teachers' held about their students. Their study provided a sense of how teachers think about their adult learners and how their beliefs potentially influence their teaching practices (Pitts, et al., 1999).

Research has supported the assumption that the thoughts and beliefs held by teachers do have a significant impact on their teaching behavior (Fang, 1996; Beattie, 1995; Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Shulman, 1986b). Within the context of teacher education, teacher beliefs are defined as a rich store of general knowledge that represents teachers' reality. As a cognitive process, teacher beliefs serve as constructs in which to guide teachers' personal thoughts and classroom activities (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992; Harvey, 1986).

The identification of underprepared college students and what teachers believe about these students are critical constructs that are in need of a great deal more inquiry

(Grubb, 1996; Beattie, 1995; Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992). Developing a more effective institutional response to academic underpreparedness should involve a better understanding of the beliefs that teachers hold about their students and the implicit "systems" or "theories" that are used to relate these beliefs to specific classroom practices (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992, p. 20). What can we learn from the professionals who deal with these students on the front lines of education?

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore what teachers in an open-door college believe about the preparedness and the abilities of their students, and how they profess to address their needs in the classroom. Specifically, the study is guided by the following research inquiry:

1) What do teachers who teach in a private, for-profit college believe about the preparedness of students who are enrolled in their classes?

2) How are teachers' beliefs about student preparedness reflected in how they think about their classroom practices?

3) What acknowledgements or accommodations do teachers profess to make in the classroom in regard to the students they perceive to be underprepared?

Given the emphasis on the qualitative aspects of the teachers' experiences, the research inquiry is informed by the principles of phenomenology.

The research was conducted on one mid-Michigan campus of a private, for-profit, postsecondary college that currently maintains an open-door enrollment policy. The institution offers a wide variety of vocational and technical training programs (certificates and licensures), and associates and bachelor degrees (diplomas) in the business, technical, and allied health fields, and industrial and human services. These programs are designed

to prepare students for entry-level positions in these fields. The College also offers several variations of an Executive Masters of Business Administration (MBA) degree. All degreed programs include a basic core curriculum in English, math, and social science.

Delimitations

The scope of this study is limited to one campus of a private, for-profit, postsecondary educational institution. The primary focus is on teachers' beliefs about the preparedness of students in their classrooms. Central to the study's inquiry is the concentration on what the teachers reveal about underprepared students in particular, and what they believe to be an effective means of educating these students.

Limitations

The specific qualities of the institution that this study is calling into question—a private, for-profit college with an open enrollment policy—may limit the ability to apply the research findings to other postsecondary education systems. Given the qualitative nature of the research design, which was limited to the interviewing of only a small number of teachers at the College, the findings will yield a restricted quantity of descriptive data. These restrictions are also held to data collection procedures that were limited to the interview process only. The teachers' actual classroom practices were not observed in this study. Finally, the subjective nature of these data may preclude them from being generalizable to other populations.

Significance of the Study

The present study may provide educators insight into the role of teacher beliefs about underprepared students in the college classroom. These findings hold the potential

for understanding how teacher beliefs are influential of and consonant to teachers' professed practices. In a broader context, we may increase our understanding of the role of teachers as the critical link between postsecondary institutions and the students that they serve.

Pending the outcome of this study, the findings may also hold the potential to shape future practices in higher education by providing the necessary implications for continuing teacher training and policy development. Ultimately, the results of this study may suggest that these initiatives can be sustained through the development of more collaborative efforts between researchers and practitioners in the field of education.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In response to the needs of teachers and learners, researchers in the field of education have increasingly turned their attention toward the cognitive aspects of teacher education (Fang, 1996). It is a widely held assumption that teacher beliefs influence classroom instruction and affect student performance outcomes within the educational context (Fang, 1996; Clark & Peterson, 1986). Applying the construct of teacher beliefs to the study of underprepared students may lead to new research trials in treating learning deficits at the college level.

However, it is important to understand the nature and the needs of underprepared college students in particular, and why their numbers have been steadily increasing in college enrollments nationwide. At the same time, the identification of these dynamics will reinforce our understanding of the educational challenges that teachers are facing in the college classroom. A review of the research literature regarding scholastic underpreparedness is presented in the first section of chapter two.

Consonant to the topic of student preparedness is the exploration of teacher beliefs about teaching, learning, and the students that they educate. These constructs are central to the inquiry in the current research and are detailed in a review of the literature regarding teacher beliefs in the body of this chapter of the research.

It is conceivable that the beliefs of the teachers in this study are influenced by the teachers' professional environment. Therefore, a review of the nature and mission of proprietary sector education, and their contributions to higher education, may provide

insight into the complex relationship between the teachers' beliefs and the context in which they exist. Key information regarding the foundation and function of the proprietary school system is presented in the latter part of chapter two.

The Growth of Open-Door Enrollment

Nearly three decades ago, many community and public colleges across the United States began adopting open-enrollment policies as a part of their mission for continuing education. Proprietary and not-for-profit institutions, driven primarily by free-market enterprise and a lack of public funding, have always assumed this status (Honick, 1995).

As an academic and administrative policy, open enrollment is the matriculation of college applicants with little or no minimum or mandatory performance standards. Typically, this includes the dissolution of the traditional GPA "cut-off" point —1.78 or better—required for admission. This standard may also have been determined by a "C-" grade in the past (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994). However, an increasing number of students entering college in this context are functioning at or below these marginal levels. Performance indicators suggest that these students are academically at-risk, learning disabled, or underprepared (Dunn, 1995; Davis & Botkin, 1994; Ryland, et al., 1994; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992; Henderson, 1992; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1989; Astin, 1988; Brier, 1979).

The impetus for such sweeping policy changes originated from a momentum of social, educational, economic upheaval that sparked the nation during the 1960s. Social and political unrest on college campuses nationwide was eventually met with the return of military war veterans seeking a new start via re-admittance to these colleges (Browne, 1986). At the same time, adult learners were calling for a more "relevant" education as

well as for a "second chance" to learn, despite any past educational failures (Sprinthall & Collins, 1984). The expanding social, educational, and occupational needs of the adult population at large eventually prompted colleges to adopt more lenient admissions policies, i.e., open-door enrollment.

Within approximately the same time frame, the nation also became increasingly aware of the on going difficulties plaguing public-sector (K-12) education; i.e., low test scores and persistent rates of attrition. Academic and curricular reforms were needed at this level of education as much as at the postsecondary level (O'Banion, 1997; Davis & Botkin, 1994; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983).

Within the public sector, many high school students who were learning disabled benefited from the remedial and special education programs that were implemented in response to a number of perceived scholastic difficulties. These and other reforms at the K-12 level increased the likelihood that these students would graduate from high school and continue at the postsecondary level (Dunn, 1995). However, despite lowered proficiency standards and higher student test scores and GPAs, the skill and competency levels of these students remained alarmingly low (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Kentucky Education Association & The Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1989). Thus, the shift from high school to college reflected similar struggles within the student body.

The Emergence Of Academically Underprepared Students

Studies measuring student status reveal that a percentage of students continuing their education at the college level are academically underprepared to succeed in the

college context. Collectively, these data show that underprepared and marginally literate incoming freshmen are a growing part of the open-door enrollment phenomenon (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Henderson, 1992). Academically, underprepared college students are lacking in several basic skills (i.e., reading and math) and share a variety of learning deficits (Dunn, 1995; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Henderson, 1992; Olagunja & Jordan, 1982; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981; Brier, 1979). These deficits are consistent with students' inability to meet or maintain academic standards at the college level.

As the trend continues, enrollment profiles have expanded due to individual circumstances requiring work-related training or retraining, and enlists those in need of integrating a foreign-born background or accommodating intrapersonal limitations. (Grubb, 1996; Garcia, 1995; Thombs, 1995; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Kanoy, et al., 1990; Mealey, 1990; Shaughnessy, et al., 1990; Shaughnessy, 1989). As a result, the at-risk agenda applies to students with economic, social, and personal deficits that also impact academic performance. Teachers and administrators now share the dual responsibility of reducing the barriers to learning while maintaining the academic standards of higher education.

Research Investigations and Background Characteristics

Despite efforts to keep up with the disadvantages that come with diversity, questions regarding the dynamics of student preparedness still persist: How do the characteristics of low-functioning students differ qualitatively from "traditional" college students (Stage & Williams, 1990)? How do the main effects of the variables of scholastic underpreparedness interact with one another and manifest themselves in

student performance (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Ryland, et al., 1994; Astin, 1993; Tinto, 1993, 1975; Kanoy, et al., 1990)?

Some of the earliest data regarding college-level students (primarily from public postsecondary institutions) often came in the form of classifications or typologies of student characteristics. Many of the original typologies were based on students' personality, interests, and values (Holland, 1966; Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Clark & Trow, 1966). Other classifications were developmental or "hierarchical" in nature (Perry, 1970), implying that students would progress to higher stages of thinking and reasoning as they functioned in a college environment (Astin, 1993). Student profiles became increasingly more dynamic as researchers captured significant interaction effects among variables such as educational background, attitude, orientation to college, personality, satisfaction, and institutional environment (Astin, 1993; Morstain & Kraft, 1977; Nafziger, Holland, & Gottredson, 1975; Morstain, 1975, 1973).

Paralleling these data are social studies that point to backgrounds filled with physical adversities—poverty, poor school districts, violent homes and neighborhoods—as contributing factors toward student underpreparedness (Kerka, 2002; Monahan, et al. 1989; Brier, 1979). Brier (1979) pioneered the inquiry into these demographics and was first to establish the term "underprepared" in the field of education. Other studies linked underpreparedness to more specific academic, cognitive, and behavioral risk factors, such as poor study habits, low intellectual functioning, or psychological disturbances (Thombs, 1995; Shaughnessy, et al., 1990; Stage & Williams, 1990; Kentucky Education Association & The Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1989; Shaughnessy, 1989; Judd, et al., 1985).

However, the former research inquiries revealed that not all underprepared students necessarily come from rough, impoverished environments (Brier, 1979), while subsequent inquiries revealed that poor performance outcomes are attributable to cognitive and behavioral dysfunction despite high intellectual assessments (Dunn, 1995; Shaughnessy, et al., 1990; Shaughnessy, 1989; Olagunja & Jordan, 1982). As Shaughnessy (1989) concluded, "it is not intelligence alone that guarantees our success, it is what we do with it that counts" (p. 2).

Cognitive Variables

Defining the deficits in human cognition is critical to the understanding of academic underpreparedness. The significance of these findings lies in the degree to which their effects are manifested independently of aptitude and intellect. Descriptions of these variables are listed in Table 2.1 below:

Table 2.1 Cognitive Characteristics of Underprepared Students

COGNITIVE CHARACTERISTICS	RESEARCH DATA BASE
1) Negative attitudes and a weak orientation to education	Sample, 2002; Garcia, 1995; Honnick, 1995; Morris, 1993; Downs, 1992; Judd, et al., 1985; McDonald & Cotroneo; 1981; Morstain & Kraft, 1977
2) Unrealistic expectations for academic success	Jackson, 2003; Garcia, 1995; Apling, 1993; Tinto, 1993; 1988; Judd, et al., 1985
3) A weak or external locus of control	Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Kanoy, et al., 1990; Mealey, 1990; Deci & Ryan, 1987; Blum & Spangehl, 1982
4) Lack of persistence in educational goals and lack of commitment to the educational context	Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Ryland, et al., 1994; Tinto, 1993; Stage & Williams, 1990
5) Lack of attentiveness in class	Olagunja & Jordan, 1982
6) Difficulty with taking lecture notes	Pace, 1990
7) Difficulty with organizing time and study habits	Thombs, 1995; Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Pace, 1990; Judd, et al., 1985; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981
8) Difficulty with problem-solving and adapting to alternative approaches to learning	Serna & Lau-Smith, 1995; Lowman, 1994; Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Miller, et al., 1990; Shaughnessy, 1989; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981
8) Difficulty with or resistance to critical thinking	Keeley, et. al., 1995; Mealey, 1990; Wade & Reynolds, 1989; Miller et al., 1987
10) Difficulty with classroom dynamics and classroom authority	Garcia, 1995; Thombs, 1995; Downs, 1992; Kentucky Education Association & The Appalachia Educational Laboratory, 1989; Monahan, et al, 1989
11) Irrational beliefs and self-defeating behaviors—learned helplessness, avoidance of problems, defensive-ness, blame proneness, and hostility	Kerka, 2002; Garcia, 1995; Thombs, 1995; Downs, 1992; Jessor, et al., 1991; Shaugnessy, et al., 1990; Shaughnessy, 1989
12) Problems with various aspects of motivation	Dunn, 1995; Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Kanoy, et al., 1990; Mealey, 1990; Stage & Williams, 1990; Judd, et al., 1985; Blum & Spangehl, 1982

While the list of variables in Table 2.1 is not an exhaustive one, it illustrates the complex dynamics that characterize underprepared learners. Given their complexity, their effects become difficult to measure because attempts to combine any two or more variables for purposes of research often yield limited and isolated data. Likewise, Astin (1993) identified a related research dilemma with competing outcomes:

> For one thing, the concept of an interaction effect is fairly abstract and difficult to comprehend....Since any student characteristic can, in theory, interact with experiences, the number of possible interaction effects that could be explored in any given empirical study is enormous.... (p. 37)

These findings are especially true of the dynamic of motivation, which has been the center of increased attention across several disciplines over recent years. For this reason, it warrants more discussion at this time.

Student Motivation: Internal and External. The concept of motivation can be framed as a cognitive variable. Internal (intrapsychic) motivation is defined as the drive or desire to obtain a goal for its intrinsic value; external motivation is defined in terms of students' sense of personal satisfaction received from the attainment of extrinsic rewards, i.e., positive test scores or academic recognition (Sample, 2002; Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Mealey, 1990; Blum & Spangehl, 1982; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981).

Efforts to treat underprepared students are traditionally informed by the principles of extrinsic motivation. Curricular interventions are manipulated through schedules of reinforcement in an attempt to increase student motivation and subsequent academic performance (Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Kanoy, et al., 1990;

Mealey, 1990; Kentucky Education Association & The Appalachian Educational Laboratory, 1989; Judd, et al., 1985; Blum & Spangehl, 1982).

Though these designs are largely theoretical in nature, it is the teacher who applies these principles in the classroom. Ironically, little is known about what teachers think and believe about the effectiveness of these designs, especially in relationship to their beliefs about their students; nor do we know much about how teachers' beliefs may influence their decision to impart these strategies in the classroom.

While underprepared students are often found to have a diminished drive in either dimension of motivation—internal or external—three important points stand out: 1) not all underprepared students are lacking in motivation; 2) not all students possessing solid academic ability are motivated to excel scholastically, and 3) research outcomes reveal that the dynamics of motivation are often impacted by multiple agenda that compromise scholastic performance (Jackson, 2003; Sample, 2002; Dunn, 1995; Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Mealey, 1990; Miller, et al., 1990; Pace, 1990; Shaughnessy, et al.,1990; Shaughnessy, 1989; Sprinthall & Collins, 1984).

Psychosocial and Behavioral Variables

These observations hold the potential for understanding why poor academic performance still persists and have prompted researchers to further isolate the subset of psychosocial variables that attend an at-risk academic status. Research has concentrated on the relationship between key characteristics and academic outcomes.

Consider the following qualification. Student GPA has traditionally been isolated as a performance criterion in studies on student achievement. For example, high school grade point average (HSGPA) is one of the strongest predictors of college freshman GPA

(FGPA) nationally, accounting for 50% of the FGPA variance (Burns, 1985). Despite the role of GPA as a major independent variable, however, a growing body of evidence suggests that several other cognitive and non-cognitive components account for as much or more of the variance between students who are in academic jeopardy and those who are not (Dunn, 1995). Negative attitudes, low self-esteem, and poor study habits have been significantly linked to diminished performance outcomes (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Tinto, 1993; Pace, 1990). Conversely, Tinto's (1993, 1975) research revealed that involvement in campus activities and attitudes toward one's chosen college institution were instrumental in scholastic motivation and indicative of persistence in (completion of) college.

Shaughnessy (1989) cited Sternberg's (1986) discussion of behavioral tendencies associated with poor academic performance, most notably among students with a high intellectual capacity. Among these problems are a lack of impulse control, lack of perseverance, applying the wrong abilities, failure to initiate, spreading oneself too thin, excessive dependency, excessive self-pity, and wallowing in personal difficulties, to name but a few. Shaughnessy also concluded that students can be underachieving and at risk when engaging in excessive escapism (i.e., watching television), self-defeating behaviors, alcohol abuse, and when experiencing emotional disturbances.

It is not surprising to find that mounting personal or family problems left unresolved may carry over into the classroom and impact college life (Garcia, 1995; Thombs, 1995). Students troubled by these issues may engage in "acting out" in the classroom—resisting authority and disrupting the learning process (Downs, 1992; Jessor,

Donovan, & Costa, 1991). The tension is often exacerbated by academic expectations that overwhelm the underprepared student (Jackson, 2003).

Thombs (1995) attributed these behaviors to a lack of self-regulatory skills needed for campus life. "In many cases, adjustment difficulties are demonstrated by failing or withdrawing from courses, alcohol abuse, violations of campus policies or local community laws, depression, loneliness, and dropping out or transferring to another institution" (Thombs, 1995, p. 20). It was revealed that 28.5% of Thomb's freshmen sample reported having three or more problem behaviors. The findings in his investigation are supported by the "Problem Behavior Theory" originally formulated by Jessor & Jessor (1977) and reexamined by Jessor, et al. (1991).

Conclusions Regarding Academically Underprepared Students

A review of the literature reveals that scholastic ability and social circumstances can contribute to academic success or failure. Inside the institution, the incorporation of open-door enrollment policies has also played a major role in shaping the dynamics of student performance and student life. With particular emphasis on underprepared and marginally motivated students, programmed interventions have been initiated with the intention of delivering key support services to those in greatest need.

Despite the efforts in research and reform, not only are the dynamics of underpreparedness not fully understood, they are rather elusive in nature. Just when we believe that we have narrowed down some pertinent information regarding the college student body, the dynamics have changed (Zeiss, 1998), especially in the areas of student attitude and motivation. For example, Sprinthall and Collins (1984) remarked that in the 1980's, college students appeared to be more apathetic and complacent than before.

They are also perceived to take their coursework and college life less seriously than students in previous years had, despite the past calls for change.

Even some of the identifiable problem behaviors present on college campuses and in college classrooms have changed. While they have been linked to profound disruptions in academic performance (Thombs, 1995; Jessor, et al., 1991), the behaviors have becomes more intense and the infractions more serious (Monahan, et al., 1989). These dynamics will continue to unfold as the pool of underprepared students continues to increase and change (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Roueche & Roueche, 1993). In light of these observations, McDonald & Cotroneo (1981) have concluded that, "...many of us can no longer assume that our students even want to be in college" (p. 1).

Researchers also conclude that we can no longer overlook the impact that the dynamics of underpreparedness have on college-level teachers, and vice versa. Increases in student diversity continue to overwhelm teachers with the rapid pace in which these developments effect the learning process (Pitts, et al., 1999). In spite of the anticipated effects, only a modest amount of information is known about what teachers believe about underprepared students in particular and how these beliefs affect their classroom practices.

Institutional Responses To Academically Underprepared Students

Student underpreparedness is a system-wide problem requiring a proactive response at the administrative level. Formulating admissions policies and procedures is the first step in setting standards that regulate the expectations of college administration, teachers, and students alike (Browne, 1986; Judd, et al., 1985; Brier, 1979). The objective is one of balance and fairness in that marginal students are allowed a "second

chance" (Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Sprinthall & Collins, 1984) to continue their education, and that colleges do not become "dumping grounds" by taking in students not accepted by other institutions (Browne, 1986, p. 95).

The recommended criteria for setting academic and administrative policies regarding at-risk students often stand in relationship to the mission of the institution. The following are examples of some of the stipulations and standards at the college level: 1) setting policy for academic "warning" or probation—stipulating the less than minimum performance standards that warrant such action, and the time frame for provisional status (Browne, 1986; Judd, et al., 1985); 2) instituting developmental (remedial) courses (Lazarick, 1997; Hittman, 1995; Prager, 1995; Brier, 1979); 3) establishing tutoring services and peer-related interventions (Brier, 1979); 4) providing counseling services; 5) conducting faculty in-services regarding remedial education (Bray, 1987); and 6) setting policy for reinstatement to or final dismissal from college (Browne, 1986).

With administrative policies in place, college admissions procedures are an intermediary process between policy and practice. Placement tests are administered to incoming freshmen to assess academic ability; at-risk students are placed into basic programs (i.e., remedial math and English), as indicated. The success of these interventions is predicated on educational parity for students and a solid reputation for the institution.

Academic efforts to ameliorate scholastic underpreparedness also play an instrumental role in student performance. Research suggests that there is a positive correlation between student achievement and the availability of institutional support

services on campus (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994). Postsecondary institutions have traditionally responded to academic underpreparedness by offering tutorial programs in designated "learning centers" on campus (Richard & Sullivan, 1994; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Abraham, 1992). For career or proprietary systems, these measures are instituted in accordance to the "ability to benefit" clause (Section IV.C.2.a, p. 14) which speaks directly to the social responsibilities of these institutions. These guidelines are established by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT) (Prager, 1995, p. 67). The success of these programs is measured in terms of higher retention rates, which is typically equated with financial viability within the postsecondary system (Hittman, 1995; Ryland, et al., 1994).

Unfortunately, many of the initial academic interventions were strictly academic in design, focusing too narrowly on basic skills, i.e., English and math, while neglecting other crucial dimensions of learning, i.e., critical thinking skills. "They were too mechanical, or removed from the reality of the situation" (Roueche & Roueche, 1993, p. 20). In addition, Bray (1987) pointed out that, "In the past, students were tested and sent to existing courses. Little emphasis was placed on designing courses that would meet the needs that students demonstrated on the tests" (p. 36).

A second criticism was that many remedial programs actually decelerated learning by slowing down the pace and "watering down" the curriculum in attempts to bring the underprepared learner "up to speed" (Monahan, et al., 1989). The issue stirred further debate over whether these programs would succeed in "coddling" students or "shielding them from failure" (McDonald & Cotroneo, 1982) that they would likely experience in the real world.

Colleges and universities have responded by expanding their student services and addressing other factors pertaining to student achievement. They have incorporated their services into more comprehensive learning, counseling, and advisory programs—study skills development (Pace, 1990), time and stress management, behavior modification, mandatory course placement (Bray, 1987), and placement into degreed programs suitable to student ability (Prager, 1995; Mealey, 1990; Miller, et al., 1990; Judd, et al., 1985).

Other external support services have been implemented to improve the quality of college life for all students. For example, while career development and placement services have long since been the hallmark of proprietary and career schools (Hittman, 1995), they are now institutional standards within the entire postsecondary system. Among the more notable enterprises is the establishment of on-site child-care at an increasing number of proprietary institutions in particular (Prager, 1995). These services are sustained by multiple agenda that also benefit the institution—attracting, supporting, and retaining students.

Research and Practical Responses to Academically Underprepared Students

Researchers in the field of education have also responded to the issue of student diversity at the postsecondary level. They have supported the system by developing a variety of instructional strategies designed to treat academic underpreparedness. Current perspectives advocate student agency and the role of self-responsibility in the educational process (Jackson, 2003; Kanoy, et al., 1990). The following constructs represent an overview of the key concepts applied to the research over the past two decades.

Instructional Concepts and Designs

In the standard instructional or tutorial domain, traditional learning strategies are predicated on improving basic literacy skills (Bray, 1987). Suggested methods of instruction are designed to augment these skills and enhance academic performance.

In the classroom, studies show that a majority of students give high ratings to instruction that is clear and interesting (Lowman, 1994). However, the effects of these dynamics may be tempered by the format in which they are delivered. Given the finding that the traditional lecture-discussion format is considered to be "burdensome" by underprepared students (Blum & Spangehl, 1982), the stimulus-response value of academic material that is otherwise interesting may be compromised under these conditions. Furthermore, the standard lecture format is decidedly less effective with underprepared students than even programmed instruction. Although repetitive in nature, the latter is positively indicated for its treatment effects—the reinforcement of learning through rote rehearsal.

In a critical review by Roueche & Roueche (1993), the authors suggest returning to the so-called modern learning strategies originally proven effective in previous eras of education. Though these strategies had fallen into disuse, Roueche & Roueche (1993) state that they have been rediscovered and "reworked to fit the rising population of at-risk students" (p. 20):

> We have relearned, for example, that ample practice increases the likelihood that performance will improve, that the more old information one has on which to base new information or learning, the more likely new information will be assimilated; that learning new information or skills is best conducted in context,

and that early and frequent practical application and 'whole-to-part' organization of learning units are more meaningful to the learner. Furthermore, we have discovered that in a world where information accumulates and becomes obsolete at a rapid pace, learning-how-to-learn strategies hold out perhaps the best promise for processing information at acceptable level and speeds. Moreover, cooperative learning through socially organized and task-oriented activities appears to increase significantly the development of academic and social skills. (p. 20)

O'Banion's (1997) assessment of the current status of education reflects the latter assumptions. He cautions that regardless of the strategic efforts to improve learning and retention, they are to no avail unless we teach students *how* to learn. His assertion is that the value of education must be placed on the needs of the learner in order to see any real progress into the twenty-first century.

Cognitive and Motivational Concepts and Designs

In response to these concerns, progressive research measures have lead to advances in the cognitive domain of learning. Stimulus motivation and critical thinking skills are intrinsic to the instructional process (Dunn, 1995; Keeley, et al., 1995; Serna & Lau-Smith, 1995; Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Kanoy, et al., 1990; Mealey, 1990; Wade & Reynolds, 1989; Blum & Spangehl, 1982; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981).

McDonald and Cotroneo (1981) were among the first researchers in the field of education to operationalize the cognitive aspects of motivation. As an applied paradigm, "purpose motivation" (McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981, p. 8) reinforces the intrinsic value

of classroom instruction through self-directed learning. Blum & Spangehl's (1982) "task motivation" (p. 21) is a similar form of planned instruction—goal-directed learning sequences are designed to increase the motivation to learn. Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes (1994) recommend a strategy that also rewards students by virtue of their participation in the learning process. They suggest allowing students to make their own selections from a list of assignments varying in the degree of difficulty as a means of increasing the motivation to learn in a manner similar to task motivation (Blum & Spangehl, 1982).

The research by Miller, et al. (1990) measured several cognitive dimensions of learning in relationship to motivation and achievement. They found that the college-level female subjects (Ss) in their study scored higher than their male counterparts on scales measuring the ability to relate ideas. Female Ss were also more likely to adopt a deep processing approach to learning and show more interest in their courses. These data indicated a greater degree of intrinsic motivation among the female Ss in comparison to the male Ss. However, female Ss also scored higher on a subscale measuring "fear of failure," which suggested that women students might not fully apply themselves to their studies if they are lacking confidence in their ability to succeed.

Miller, et al. (1990) found that the male Ss in their study engaged in a surface approach to learning and scored higher on a measure of pragmatic reasoning regarding their education and their coursework. The male Ss' scores were also indicative of more negative attitudes toward schoolwork than those of the female Ss. Further analysis suggested that these data were not consistent with an intrinsic orientation toward learning. Miller, et al. related their findings to how they may make a significant

contribution to the understanding of students' academic potential, and to the subsequent development of more well-informed academic assistance programs.

Researchers have conceptualized critical thinking as an operative of cognitive awareness, or metacognition (Mealey, 1990; Wade & Reynolds, 1989). Critical thinking skills are instrumental to students' ability to analyze academic material and develop an intrinsic understanding of the concepts. Metacognitive learning is relative to students' ability to integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge, and to apply such constructs to future contexts.

Wade & Reynolds (1989) defined the thought processes involved in metacognition: 1) task awareness—prioritizing the importance of the material; 2) strategy awareness—selecting the appropriate learning techniques; and 3) performance awareness—applying the acquired skills to new concepts. Learning outcomes are reinforced by the acquisition of several skills—observation, analysis, and the ability to internalize the learning experience. Mealey (1990) discussed the attainment of these skills in terms of their intrinsic value—control over the learning process.

In this context, critical thinking is recognized for its dynamic ability to motivate students to learn. Critical thinking skills are typically structured in practical applications that systematically reward students by virtue of their participation in the learning process. The research-to-practice implications are consistent with the research on student preparedness—increasing motivation is an essential activity in the treatment of students who are otherwise lacking in this area of performance (Dunn, 1995; Mushinski-Fulk and Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Kanoy, et al., 1990; Stage & Williams, 1990; Wade & Reynolds, 1989; Blum & Spangehl, 1982).

Despite the advances in adult learning theories, Keeley, et al. (1995) contend that their viability in the classroom requires specific attention to the antecedents to learning: "...we believe that we cannot develop high levels of critical thinking in our students until we learn to recognize and overcome students' natural resistance to learning to think critically, a process that requires considerable behavior change" (p. 140). They stress that the resistance to learning needs to be addressed in ways that necessarily decrease fear and motivate change before learning applications can be rendered effective (Garcia, 1995; Keeley, et al., 1995; Downs, 1992; Shaughnessy, et al., 1990; Shaughnessy, 1989).

In the practical domain, it is the college teacher who addresses these problems and facilitates the strategies designed to enhance academic performance. However, what teachers believe about these strategies and how their beliefs influence their decisions to utilize them in the classroom is as complex as the diversity of students that they serve (Fang, 1996; Beattie, 1995; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Shulman, 1986a; Elbaz, 1983).

Theoretical and Practical Concepts and Designs

The more recent constructs developed within the framework of adult learning theory emphasize the psychosocial aspects of cognition and learning. For example, Mezirow (1994) theorized that adult learning experiences are grounded in cognitive processes conceptualized as transformational learning. Active reflection on the dialogue between teachers and learners encourages students to integrate new knowledge through the reinterpretation of past experiences. Life perspectives are eventually transformed with the development of new meaning schemes.

Daloz (1986) also views adult learning as a life "transformation." He acknowledges the teacher's role in the learning process and advocates a mentoring

relationship between the teacher and the learner. The transference of learning is facilitated in a wide range of experiences in assimilating and accommodating information, mediating conflict, and sharing knowledge. By expanding students' knowledge in relationship to broader contexts of life, learning will eventually change the learner. The theories by both Daloz (1986) and Mezirow (1994) are significant because of their initial focus on the role of the teacher in the educational process.

Conclusion To Responses Regarding Academically Underprepared Students

Effectively serving the underprepared student population requires a more integrated response from research, administration, and practice in the field of education. Opportunities exist through methods of inquiry into how teachers of postsecondary institutions perceive the diverse and particularly low-functioning students that they encounter in the classroom. Understanding the potential effects that their beliefs have on the performance of these students may provide key insights into their success or failure.

Research on Teaching

In the field of teacher education, the process of teaching consists of two major domains: 1) teachers' thought processes, i.e., teacher cognition; and 2) teachers' actions and their observable effects (Clark & Peterson, 1986). Early research in the field was concentrated in the latter domain; outcomes of teaching were analyzed for their effects in the research on teaching and learning. For example, process-product research examined the relationship between teachers' and students' classroom behaviors and student achievement; and studies on teacher effectiveness measured the impact of teacher performance on student outcomes as the criterion for excellence in teaching (Beattie, 1995).

However, much of the research was criticized for having some of the same shortcomings as the research on underprepared students had. The problem laid in the assumption that the relationship between teachers' actions and their observable effects was linear—that the effect of teachers' behaviors on students was causal and unidirectional (Fang, 1996). Similar limitations were replicated in the preliminary research designs in teacher education: "It was often conducted under laboratory or contrived conditions and data were collected using categorical observation scales" (Beattie, 1995, p. 55). Thus, the scope of the results was significantly restricted.

Teacher Beliefs

In recent years, research into the psychological aspects of adult learning has focused on the dynamics of teacher education. Paradigms have shifted from the learners' perspective to the teachers' perspective, and to what teachers think as opposed to how they behave. Fang (1996) explained the current trends in higher education:

> ...(with) the advances in cognitive psychology, the popularity of ethnographic qualitative methodology, and the conception of teaching as a thoughtful profession, teacher education researchers have, in the past decade or so, demonstrated an unprecedented interest in and enthusiasm about certain aspects of teacher cognition and their relationship to pedagogical practices in the classroom. (p. 47)

Based on these assumptions, inquiry into the psychological aspects of teachers thought processes required more poignant research questions, such as, "Where do teacher explanations come from? How do teachers decide what to teach, how to represent it, and how to deal with problems of misunderstanding?" (Shulman, 1986b, p. 8).

Clark & Peterson (1986) categorized the research on teachers' thought processes into three fundamental types: (1) teacher planning; (2) teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions; and (3) teachers' theories and beliefs (Fang, 1996; Beattie, 1995). Clark & Peterson's model representation of teachers' thought processes and teachers' actions and their observable effects suggests a reciprocal relationship between these two domains of teaching in an analysis of teachers' thought processes—also referred to as teacher thinking (Fang, 1996; Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992; Shulman, 1986b).

Initial inquiry into this domain of education was relegated to the discipline of reading and literacy (Fang, 1996); questions regarding teachers' thinking on the various approaches to reading instruction dominated the research. The focus on teacher cognition has provided insight into what dynamically occurs in the learning environment and has lead to a steady expansion of investigations into other areas of teachers' thought processes, i.e., the beliefs teachers hold about their students and their subsequent classroom practices (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992). In the research context, "Teachers' theories and beliefs represent the rich store of general knowledge of objects, people, events, and their characteristic relationship that teachers have that affects their planning and their interactive thoughts and decisions, as well as their classroom behaviors" (Nisbett & Ross, 1980, p. 82).

Shulman's (1986b) perspective on teacher thinking distinguished several dimensions of teacher knowledge: 1) subject-matter content knowledge (substance and syntax), 2) pedagogical knowledge (how to represent information), and 3) curricular knowledge (topical, subtopical, related, and alternate knowledge). The research suggests that teacher knowledge is a theoretical constant in mediating cognition and behavior

(Fang, 1996; Beattie, 1995; Shulman, 1986a; Elbaz, 1983; Nisbett & Ross, 1980), and that reflection on the knowledge applied in the classroom has the potential to direct teachers' thinking and planning for future classroom interactions (Fang, 1996; Clark & Peterson, 1986).

Fang (1996) defined practical knowledge as a fourth dimension of teacher knowledge, and emphasized the role of teachers' knowledge as a critical construct within the definition of teacher beliefs: "Theories and beliefs make up an important part of teachers' general knowledge through which teachers perceive, process, and act upon information in the classroom" (p. 49). According to Beattie (1995), practical knowledge is formed by the constructs of image, practical principle, and rule, "...and is held in an active relationship to practice and used to give shape to practice" (p. 57).

In 1983, Elbaz isolated the concept of personal practice knowledge in the research on teacher thinking. In her review of the literature on teacher education, Beattie (1995) defined Elbaz's concept of practical knowledge as "...a description of the content, orientation and structure of a teacher's practical knowledge defined in its own terms rather than in terms derived from theory" (Beattie, 1995, p. 56). The assumption is that this relationship is dynamic and is reflected in five orientations to practical knowledge—situational, theoretical, personal, social, and experimental (Elbaz, 1983). Beattie concluded that Elbaz's work marked the turning point in this area of the research.

In the same year, Clandinin (1983) developed a sharper focus on Elbaz's (1983) concept of image. Clandinin proposed that the concept needed to reflect the personal and private experiences invested in teachers' images. Beattie's (1995) review of the literature referred to Clandinin's conceptualization of teacher image as the dynamic link between

past experiences and on-going practical expressions. Beattie's (1995) interpretation of the research suggested that teacher image transcends the subjective and objective perspectives of teacher knowledge; that it is far more progressive and is distinctly that of the teacher's.

Studies on teacher thinking continued to expand the parameters of research in teacher education and provided new insights into the specific theories and beliefs held by teachers. The majority of these constructs have been classified under the rubric of teachers' implicit theories (Fang, 1996; Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992; Munby, 1982). These theories are assumed to represent a valid and trustworthy reality in which to guide personal thought and classroom activity (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992; Harvey, 1986). Shavelson (1983) theorized that teacher belief systems act as filters in which a host of instructional judgments and decisions are made. For example, teachers subscribing to the "bright-person" concept typically deliver instruction with the assumption that the student is responsible for decoding the content (Fang, 1996). On the other hand, teachers may be influenced by a "deficit perspective" (Fingeret, 1984)—that the culture of the middle-class is accepted as the norm, and individuals from other cultures are judged against this norm (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992). Accordingly, this perspective is relative to teachers' orientations to the perceived needs of their students: "Need attributions either explicitly indicate or implicitly infer that students are lacking in or are in need of something, such as physical or mental health, additional knowledge, skills, appropriate attitudes, or financial and social support (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992, p. 28). Likewise, the "within-child" deficit model ascribes educational failure to the intellectual or psychological deficits the learner brings to the educational setting (Trueba, Spindler, & Spindler, 1989). Teachers

whose orientations are consistent with either of the deficit perspectives are influenced by ensuing impressions of underpreparedness in the classroom and may defer to a more fundamental pedagogy.

Research in education has also defined the situations and parameters in which teachers' theories and beliefs have unfolded. Practical measures have been taken from three standard phases of the teaching process: 1) prior to the actual teaching process (pre-service), 2) the beginning of the teaching process (in-service or experienced), and 3) the advanced phases of the teaching process (the "experienced teacher") (Fang, 1996; O'Connell Rust, 1994; Tillema, 1994). Findings cited from each point of reference support the conclusion that teacher beliefs play a significant role in shaping the perceptions and practices of teaching. Long-term teaching experiences are particularly instrumental in effecting these dynamics—active reflection on these experiences are held in reciprocal relationship to new and existing beliefs (Brousseau, Book, & Byers, 1988).

Much of the research has relied on qualitative methods to capture the subjective nature of teacher beliefs (Beattie, 1995; Shulman, 1986b). The methodology of choice has typically been the case study method. However, though the data gathered is said to come "straight from the field" of participants, Shulman (1986b, p. 8) cautioned that these cases are then grounded in some sort of research theory. The problem lies in the fact that they are necessarily "reconstructed" as opposed to being used to build a new frame of reference (Shulman, 1986b).

Refinements in the research process have lead to a paradigm shift in the research on teacher thinking:

> ...classroom research methods have changed considerably and there has been a movement away from the empirical/analytical models of research, which adopts a theoretical researcher's perspective, and has an emphasis on the researcher's purposes, toward that of the teacher practitioner's perspective, where purposes are collaboratively identified by the researcher and the teacher...(Beattie, 1995, p. 55).

Advances in ethnographic methods have lead to research on teacher beliefs in terms of practice, rather than through the analysis of practice in terms of theory (Beattie, 1995). These methods have their origins in the reflection-in-action studies (Schon, 1983) of the past, where the researcher observes professionals as they pose and solve problems in problematic situations (Beattie, 1995). In this context, the learning environment is regarded as an integral part of the process. First, research suggests that the practice of teaching is reflective of a teaching culture (Brousseau, et al., 1988)—a rich interaction between teacher's beliefs regarding their work and their students. Second, the interaction effects are manifested in the classroom—a social setting (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992) of complex social and cultural interrelationships which also affect the thought and decision-making process of teachers (Beattie, 1995; Shulman, 1986b). Duffy & Anderson (1984) captured the significance of the classroom environment in their study on teacher beliefs. They found that even though teachers were able to articulate their beliefs, their actual practices were governed by the nature of instruction and classroom life, or realities (Fang, 1996).

The narrative perspectives has become the methodology of choice (Beattie, 1995) in the qualitative research on teacher thinking (Beattie, 1995). While the focus is still on

the development of theory in terms of practice, the studies differ in terms of the situations chosen for each study, and in terms of the knowledge created by each independent inquiry. Beattie (1995) explained that,

> ...narrative studies are collaborative inquiries by researchers and practitioners into everyday experiences and practices of educational professionals, the ensuing accounts of which are mutually constructed narratives of experiences which are embedded in the narrative unities and the life histories of the person involved. (p. 63).

Given the complex and subjective nature of the qualitative approach to research, Fang (1996) cautions that the thesis on consistency between beliefs and practices has not always been supported by the research findings on this topic. Researchers have taken additional measures to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data gathered by grounding these studies in their own reality. Recommendations call for the data to be "triangulated" with observations of events as they naturally occur in the classroom (Fang, 1996; Nunn, 1996). The process also provides researchers the opportunity to observe whether or not teachers' espoused beliefs are reflected over time in certain behavioral modalities, i.e., classroom instruction and teacher-student interaction (Fang, 1996). However, this practice is not typical of a phenomenological research design and was not employed in the present study.

Since the present study was conducted in a private, for-profit postsecondary institution, it is important to provide an understanding of the context in which the teachers' (participants') beliefs have unfolded. Chapter two concludes with a discussion

of the proprietary postsecondary education system, and an assessment of its effectiveness in today's competitive educational market.

Proprietary Postsecondary Institutions

Proprietary institutions have their own qualities and characteristics that differentiate them from other institutions in the postsecondary education system. Though they share characteristics that are common to both traditional community colleges and non-profit establishments, their historical development sets them apart in the context of adult education.

Private, for-profit schools can be understood in terms of their classification and status within the scheme of the postsecondary education system. Parnell and Peltason's (1984) Guide to Community, Technical, and Junior Colleges provides a broad distinction between community (public) institutions and technical (proprietary or non-profit) institutions. Technical postsecondary institutions are further divided into four distinct statuses: 1) technical campuses of multi-campus college systems (sometimes branches of four-year colleges); 2) state-administered two-year college systems; 3) two-year proprietary institutions; and 4) non-publicly funded non-profit technical colleges (Wilkerson, 1992; Parnell & Peltason, 1984). By definition, the College selected for the site of the current research likely resembles the third subdivision.

This classification is not an exact science, however, as many researchers recognize the convergence of curriculum between community college and technical (proprietary) college education (Clowes, 1995; Hittman, 1995; Hyslop & Parsons, 1995). Community colleges, traditionally defined by their broad general education standards, have yielded to consumer demand for technical and career-ready programs. Furthermore,

"(Researchers)...document a culture within community colleges oppositional to the academic culture associated with higher education" (Clowes, 1995, p. 10). Conversely, technical or "career" colleges, usually proprietary in nature (Clowes, 1995), "...are increasingly forced by accreditation standards to offer degree programs with general education requirements comparable to those of the community college" (Clowes, 1995, p. 10). Speculation on the latter suggests that institutional compliance is also initiated by the incentive to gain status and remain competitive in the educational market of the last few decades (Honick, 1995).

Wilkerson (1992) states that the difficulty in distinguishing the differences among today's postsecondary institutions persists because "public vs. private status is certainly not a definitive criteria by itself" (p. 2). Neither is the for-profit versus non-profit criteria, for that matter. Similar to the parallels that exist between community college colleges and private institutions, there is a great deal of overlap in mission *and* in funding. For example, non-profit schools receive public monies through federally funded student aid (Clowes, 1995), while community colleges have increasingly sought out corporate funding. The issue of financial solvency is essential for all colleges competing in the education industry.

The apparent difference between public and private institutions is the nature of their governance. Private operations are generally not as complex as public (community college) administration. They typically have an administrative board with the usual policy-making responsibilities associated with a board of directors (Wilkinson, 1992). Executive officers are appointed as heads of these colleges; presidents are assigned to the

regional campuses or branches. Campus deans are hired to fill academic and administrative posts within the hierarchy and report to the college president.

Many colleges classified under the technical division of the postsecondary system are recognized for their mission as "business" or "career" colleges. Therefore, the following information highlights the growth and development of these establishments, which are traditionally if not exclusively discussed within the context of proprietary education. For purposes of this review, the term "proprietary," in deference to its for-profit status, will be used to represent the business and technical ventures within the field of education.

Proprietary schools today—referred to as "private career schools" (Apling, 1993) or "technical colleges" (Parnell & Peltason, 1984)—are traditionally for-profit institutions that offer occupational training for adult students (Apling, 1993). These institutions typically offer certificates, licensures, and degreed programs in a wide variety of occupational and technical fields. Job-readiness and job placement paradigms are prominent features in their mission to educate.

The beginnings of the proprietary school movement can be traced as far back as the founding of the United States. Its growth and development is synonymous with the colonization of America. During this period of U.S. history, the specific skills and trades that were in demand were taught as private ventures that far outnumbered the publicly supported schools already in existence. By the 1820s and 1830s, formal private business schools were established, including the first "corporate" or "chain" schools—the Bryant and Stratton Colleges (Honick, 1995).

Following the Civil War, industrial expansion fueled even more proprietary growth. Technology and methodology flourished at this time with the invention of the calculator, the stenograph machine, the Remington Model 1 typewriter, and the Gregg shorthand method, respectively. At the same time, the growing dissention over policies and practices paralleled the rapid expansion. Business owners eventually resolved their differences by mutually agreeing to self-regulation. Under the guidance of the Bryant and Stratton establishment, their affiliation with the International Association of Business Colleges ameliorated the status of proprietary institutions.

By the 1890s, the career school industry continued to forge ahead, despite the competition from public school programs. However, they operated under the increasingly intense scrutiny of the public reformers of the day (Honick, 1995). Public perception of the proprietary school had shifted in a negative direction by the time the United States entered the Progressive Era (1900s-1920s). The once largely unregulated schools, repudiated for their aggressive solicitation of students, misleading advertising, and inadequate curricula, were literally swept up in a flood of reform legislation passed to clean up government, industry, and education (Honick, 1995).

With such a battered and tarnished reputation, even the more reputable proprietary institutions suffered. As they were permanently "pitted" against the national public education system, they were compelled to fight for respectability and acceptance. Their efforts finally solidified with the creation of the National Association of Accredited Commercial Schools (NAACS).

With the consolidated power of the NAACS, along with the passage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, proprietary schools gained a renewed foothold

in the education industry. The first-time-ever federal subsidy (the G.I. Bill) from the U.S. government was a boon for private, for-profit schools. It helped create a new era for these schools, though one that forced them to be purely market-driven.

Under the circumstances, however, some of the past accusations leveled at proprietary colleges began to resurface in similar and yet different ways. Honick (1995) explained that,

> Here, we see the beginnings of behavior that would repeat itself after 1972 when some proprietary schools were to be included in federal grant and federally guaranteed student loan programs: schools eligible for G.I. Bill students set their rates to the maximum amount the government would pay—more often than not, rates that were unrelated to actual costs. They also had incentives from the government to recruit students regardless of their ability to benefit from the school's instruction. (p. 36)

The renewed federal aid controversy continued to influence proprietary practices and the students who participated in financial aid programs. Recent statistics reveal that 79% of proprietary students receive some federal aid, compared to 29% of all other college students (Moore, 1995). Given the widespread availability of government aid and the increasingly market-driven formulas of proprietary schools, students have been easily recruited with the lure of "easy money," only to be caught up in the trend of extremely high default rates upon graduation.

This phenomenon also plagued much of the non-profit education sector for the same two reasons: 1) non-profit schools operating independently of public funding had to become more market driven in order to remain competitive; and 2) students funding

their private education relied heavily on loan and grant money, only to become a part of the default statistics. As the problem became excessive if not abusive on the part of these institutions as well as their students, many schools were in jeopardy of losing their federal aid eligibility altogether.

Though the financial losses motivated schools to engage in some self-corrective measures, amendments to the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1992 also called upon proprietary institutions to formally "tow the line" and clean up the financial aid abuses. Prager (1995) explained that, "...the legislation also actually encourages institutions and their external evaluators to move beyond default and assess quality by including outcome measures such as program completion rates, student attainment of occupational competency, and labor market performance" (p. 62).

Compliance with the HEA amendments of 1992 rendered proprietary programs similar to traditional community college programs in nature and length of curricula and semesters. It also discouraged "proprietaries" from targeting low-income students exclusively, thus achieving a greater diversity of students as found among a community college population (Moore, 1995, p. 73).

Institutional responses to regional and national accreditation standards have also helped to bring proprietary schools and their programs closer to par with non-profit and traditional community college standards. Compliance at the regional level is monitored by agencies such as the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association, while compliance at the national level is monitored by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges of Technology (ACCSCT). The ACCSCT also designates the degree-granting status of proprietary institutions.

By complying with numerous accreditation standards, proprietary schools have slowly regained acceptance from their postsecondary peers and have become more attractive to the students they seek to recruit. Coincidentally, their compliance with the standards set forth in the "ability-to-benefit" clause from the ACCSCT (Section IV.C.2.b, P.14) summarily satisfies the requirements legislated in the amendments to the HEA of 1992. The ability-to-benefit clause addresses the social and ethical responsibilities of proprietary schools to ensure that their students succeed in the college context. As a system-wide practice, similar standards are imposed on other college sectors in higher education (Moore, 1995).

Given the various agency interventions, there now appears to be a convergence between technical (proprietary) schools and their community college counterparts (Hyslop & Parsons, 1995), at least as far as curriculum and accreditation standards are concerned. Although, researchers such as Moore (1995) have argued that this is a "forced convergence" (p. 72) due to federal student aid policy aimed at reducing loan default and limiting student fraud.

Who are the technical schools at the end of the twentieth century? How many do they number, and what do they offer? Apling (1993) disclosed that, "In school year 1988-89, there were an estimated sixty-two hundred proprietary schools, representing more than one-half of the nearly twelve thousand postsecondary institutions nationwide" (p. 381). Some of these schools are single entities, some have branch campuses, and some are a part of a proprietary chain. Most of these schools and their branches are small in size—enrollments are typically under one hundred students per school or campus.

Apling (1993) documented the educational and occupational programs typically available at the majority of proprietary institutions. He cited the 1988-1989 Institutional Characteristics Survey (ICS) of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS88)—sponsored by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) of the U.S. Department of Education (ED)—as the source of the following data:

> Nearly all (91 percent) of proprietary schools responding to the IPED88 indicated that they offer occupational programs. In addition, fifty-seven percent said they offered academic programs. Forty percent provide continuing occupational training; 20 percent offer avocational courses; 16 percent provide adult education and high school equivalency programs; and 13 percent offer high-school courses. Most schools (90 percent) grant certificates to successful completers. Only 6 percent grant associate degrees. (p. 385)

Recent trends indicate an increase in the number and type of associate degrees offered, along with the introduction of bachelor and master's degree programs system wide.

As for the specific programs offered in the proprietary sector of education, Apling (1993) also cited the IPED88:

> Nearly two-thirds of responding proprietary schools offer training in business, marketing, or cosmetology. The remaining one-third provide programs in health, technology, trade and industry, transportation, and other occupations, which include, for example, security services, culinary arts, casino dealing, and pet grooming. (p. 386)

The programs or curricula that are offered are driven by the cost of delivering these and other support services (i.e., counseling and career placement) at a profitable

margin. The cost to attend proprietary institutions is typically more expensive than most all of the other postsecondary counterparts (i.e., thousands of dollars more per term), especially in comparison to the community college system (Apling, 1993).

Yet, proprietary economies are not entirely independent of government regulations, labor market demand for skilled graduates in high profile fields, or the demands of the consumer, either. In today's market, the supply of proprietary programs is largely determined by the demands of labor and industry. Student sovereignty also plays a key role in workforce education in particular (Zeiss, 1998). Hyslop and Parsons (1995) cited Johnstone's (1993) perspective on the current trend:

> ...Americans preparing for the twenty-first century are less concerned with traditional degrees and are more focused on achieving specific competencies and having them validated. Furthermore, he (Johnstone, 1993) perceives technology as a continuous force for decentralizing and individualizing learning. Clearly, it is the technical schools, both for-profit and non-profit, that have attempted to answer students' cries for a relevant education and fill a much-needed niche in postsecondary education—vocational competency and job training. (p. 47)

Who are the students that enroll in technical schools across the United States? The following body of information highlights the characteristics that are typical and not so typical of the proprietary or career college student.

"Researchers tend to agree that most proprietary students are from less-educated families, at least less educated than those attending community colleges and four-year institutions...and, that the parental background of proprietary students is predominantly uneducated" (Cheng & Levin, 1995, p. 52). This may be related to another common

assumption that proprietary students' academic backgrounds are weaker than those attending community colleges and four-year institutions. However, "...Levin and Clowes (1987) found composite aptitude scores to be unrelated to the selection of a proprietary or not-for profit institution as opposed to a two-year institution" (Cheng & Levin, 1995, p. 52). Unfortunately, little has been done to measure levels of educational attainment among proprietary school students; i.e., graduation versus rates of attrition (Cheng & Levin, 1995).

Other basic demographic measurements have yielded mixed results in the research literature. The research by Cheng and Levin (1995) addressed the discrepancies found in enrollment profiles:

> Researchers remain divided regarding the basic demographic characteristics—gender, race, and socioeconomic status (SES)—of the proprietary school student....In some literature, proprietary students are reported as disproportionally female. Other literature shows them to be male. In general, those researchers who agglomerate institution types or who focus on programs such as hair styling, health professions, data processing, and business report a predominantly female student population. (p. 51)

Though a number of researchers have found their sample of proprietary school students to be slightly to predominantly more female (Washington State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board, 1997; Levin & Clowes, 1987), Apling's (1993) data are supported by Cheng and Levin (1995)—the interaction between gender and the curriculum offered accounts for the proportion of male and female students in these institutions.

Regarding the racial composition of proprietary students, Apling's (1993) sample of the population revealed a predominantly minority student body (Cheng and Levin 1995), while Levin and Clowes (1987) found their sample to be predominantly white. However, Cheng and Levin (1995) cautioned that the latter is among a handful of research anomalies resulting in student samples that are disproportionately white. In a broader context, Cheng and Levin's (1995) comparison of several key pieces of research regarding proprietary, community college, and technical college students did not yield any differences in racial composition among these postsecondary populations.

According to Cheng and Levin (1995), "The literature on the SES (socio-economic status) of proprietary students is also contradictory" (p. 52). The typical proprietary college student reportedly comes from a "blue-collar" family or a family with below-average income (United States General Accounting Office, 1997; Apling, 1993), or from a middle-income family (Levin and Clowes, 1987).

Cheng and Levin's (1995) study also revealed that proprietary and especially not-for-profit (NFP) students may not be so desperate for "quick and specialized training" in order to gain immediate employment (p. 57). Though researchers generally agree that proprietary school students are less academically prepared than their postsecondary school counterparts, their completion rate is rather similar: "...over one-half of PROP (proprietary) students received a license, certificate, or associate degree in a six-year period, as compared to fewer than one-third of 2YR (two-year) students" (Cheng & Levin, 1995, p. 58). Cheng and Levin (1995) concluded that proprietary (technical) schools have done well in meeting the needs of their students: "Proprietary schools have

helped raise the educational levels of a great number of young adults to a considerable height, given the relatively low aptitude and low SES of their students" (p. 58).

Comparative outcomes regarding the effectiveness of technical schools versus community colleges may, in fact, depend on the mission of the respective institutions. "The common wisdom is that proprietaries were always leaning toward utilitarian purposes, while community colleges were more for general education" (Cheng & Levin, 1995, p. 57). Yet, it is the proprietary mission that seems to be beating the competition in postsecondary education. Why? "Because the free enterprise system, thankfully, is alive and well. Proprietary colleges and universities have been quick to respond to new market needs and are rapidly emerging as viable options for more students than ever before" (Zeiss, 1998, p. 12). Their formula for success has come at a critical time, given that "Current social realities demand that ...colleges operate more flexibly and take expanded roles in workforce development, community development, and transfer education" (Zeiss, 1998, p. 12).

Now that federal monies (student aid) and investor dollars are pouring in, along with eager adult students, proprietary schools are doing quite well. Zeiss (1998) points to the large scale Indiana Business College, with 10 campuses statewide, and the Disney Institute (Walt Disney Incorporated), as shining examples of high-quality, high-profile, high-profit education. Meanwhile, public and non-profit schools are bound by tradition and are less likely to be linked to corporate partnerships or financial investments.

Adult learners are also benefiting from the new wave of educational enterprise. The vast majority of proprietary school students are apparently completing their programs with high satisfaction (Washington State Training and Education Coordinating

Board, 1997), and they are receiving good job preparation in a "convenient" manner (Zeiss, 1998). College recruiters have also delivered on their promise—the College in the present study boasts a 98% graduate (job) placement rate to date. The endorsement by employers further guarantees students' place in the job market, and in society. According to the Washington State Training and Education Coordinating Board, 80% of the completers of degree-granting technical schools were employed within nine months after completion.

The current state of proprietary education has enabled students to receive a solid education and secure their place in the workforce. Meanwhile, the proprietary institution has secured a place among its postsecondary peers while setting an example for the future of education.

The current study is a qualitative inquiry into the dynamics of teacher beliefs regarding the academic preparedness of students in a proprietary institution with open-enrollment policies in place. Chapter three examines the epistemological perspectives of the study and discusses the methodological principles of the research design.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore what teachers in an open-enrollment college believe about the preparedness of their students, and how they perceive the abilities of their learners in the classroom. The study is guided by the following research inquiry:

1) What do teachers who teach in a private, for-profit college believe about the preparedness of students who are enrolled in their classes?
2) How are teachers' beliefs about student preparedness reflected in how they think about their classroom practices?
3) What acknowledgements or accommodations do teachers profess to make in the classroom in regard to the students they perceive to be underprepared?

Basic Assumptions of a Phenomenological Perspective

Given the emphasis on the subjective experience of the teachers, the current case study is informed by the principles of phenomenology. The case study method is used to gather and study any desired phenomenon in a systematic manner. Research designs that are qualitative in nature forego hypothesis testing and allow for the interpretation of and insight into the data gathered. Data derived from a phenomenological perspective are necessarily rich and descriptive in nature, and reveal significant and inseparable variables that are subject to holistic interpretations (Merriam, 1998).

Phenomenology is an approach that focuses on human consciousness; it seeks to locate the subjective interpretation of experiences and understand how individuals attach

meaning to those experiences under the conditions in which they unfold. Davis (1995) explained that:

> Phenomenology is the attempt to understand and describe phenomena exactly as they appear in an individual's consciousness, to get at the interrelationship between life and the world...and to understand how phenomena interact with the way humans actually live in the world....Since meaning is always in the subject, not the object, objective understanding is impossible...we can never know what phenomena truly mean, only how someone interprets those phenomena. (Davis, 1995, p. 120)

The quest for understanding the essence of lived experiences (Barritt, Bleeker, Beekman, & Mulderij, 1985) originated from philosophical traditions in western culture. The call for insight into the human condition was held in stark contrast to the paradox of positivistic research methods: "Consequently, scientific data, without systematic science of consciousness, lacks every possibility of being understood more deeply or utilized in an ultimately valid manner" (Davis, 1995, p. 122).

As the movement spread worldwide, scientists objecting to rationalistic (Guba & Lincoln, 1982), intellectual, and positivistic research methods (McPhail, 1995) recognized phenomenology for its potential as a research tool in the social sciences (McPhail, 1995; Jacob, 1988; Barritt, et al., 1985). Qualitative analysis as such was regarded as a scientific revolution, giving rise to several methods of inquiry that are now considered to be standards in the field—ethnography, naturalistic inquiry, generic pragmatic (sociological) qualitative inquiry, and connoisseurship/criticism.

Phenomenology represents a novel approach among these designs, with its roots in the classics (Fetterman, 1988).

Social scientists stress that, "Differences in (research) methods are not simply due to choices in methods, they relate to epistemological differences. The outcomes of research depend on the researcher, the methods, the topic, and the subjects interviewed" (Scott, 1985, p. 71). Phenomenological inquiry is particularly biased and value-laden (Short, 1993); and spontaneous and shared experiences exist in mutual or "transsituational" interactions (Barritt, et al., 1985, p. 26), not in isolation (Davis, 1995; McPhail, 1995; Short, 1993; Barritt, et al., 1985). It is for these reasons that this perspective plays an integral part in exploring and understanding teacher beliefs regarding underprepared students. Because phenomenological inquiry looks for subjectivity and interrelationships within thoughts and experiences, the experiences shared by each teacher in this study exist within the research context, as well.

Given these assumptions, the methodological framework must necessarily acknowledge the role and the rationale of the researcher in this study. If phenomenology is to emphasize the study of the "wholeness" (Moustakas, 1994) of teachers' experiences, then certainly the role of the researcher plays a part in their phenomenological world. Because these concerns also address issues of validity, Davis (1995) suggested that "Researchers need to realize their own subjectivity during project design, and they need to admit to it during presentation of results" (p. 128).

This researcher controlled for the internal validity of this study by engaging in peer debriefing and member checks. Peer debriefing involves testing preliminary insights against those of uninvolved peers, and to receive methodological advice from other

professionals in the field (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Member checks entail a process "...whereby data and interpretations are continually checked with members of various groups from which data are solicited; to be done on a continuous basis throughout the study..." (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, pp. 247-248). While the findings from this research are not generalizable to larger populations, reliable reporting, and thick, detailed descriptions of the data will lend itself to external validity (Barritt, et al., 1985).

Conclusion to the Phenomenological Research Process

While the phenomenological perspective (Barritt, et al., 1985) is not necessarily considered to be an exact science, it is neither a singular or haphazard approach (Davis, 1995; Fetterman, 1988; Jacob, 1988). With a strong set of epistemological assumptions and methodological guidelines (Davis, 1995; McPhail, 1995; Fetterman, 1988; Barritt, et al., 1985; Guba & Lincoln, 1982), the phenomenological approach enables researchers to explore a greater diversity of outcomes of human behavior. By attempting to transcend the constraints of positivism, we are able to expose and analyze multiple possibilities and realities; we can accept the world as it is, "...while creating methods that yield solutions to...problems (Barritt, et al., 1985, p. 8)."

Research Design

The current case study methodology (Merriam, 1998) is informed by the principles of phenomenology (Davis, 1995; McPhail, 1995; Jacob, 1988). The study was designed to investigate the beliefs that the teachers in this study hold about their students, and how these beliefs potentially shape their classroom practices. Based on these assumptions, an interview protocol was developed to elicit the teachers' perspective on their work, and to capture the essence of the teachers' shared beliefs about the

preparedness of their students. While the teachers were not asked to restrict their reflections to particular groups of students, this researcher was particularly interested in the ways in which they perceived and made sense of the underprepared learners within the context of their practice. To add to the authenticity of this study, data collection procedures (the personal interview) were conducted in their natural environment—the campus of the institution that each participant has been a part of for over a dozen years. The remainder of chapter three highlights the research context, population, and data-gathering methods selected for the study, and defines the data analysis procedures involved in the research process.

Context and Setting

The site selected for this research is a campus of a proprietary, postsecondary college system located in the mid-Michigan area. For the sake of confidentiality, a pseudonym is used in place of the College's real name. The College is referred to as "Pine Lake College" in the research context. It's roots date back to 1888, and was formerly know as a business college with the same namesakes. The College (system) holds a traditional position within the field of postsecondary education, given its for-profit or proprietary status.

Pine Lake College has a total of 10 campuses and several off-site locations in a statewide system only. The system is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (Chicago, Illinois). Its individual programs are accredited by a number of field-specific commissions and associations representing the respective areas of study.

The College calendar is structured around three ten-week terms during the fall-spring academic year, and one eight-week summer term. This is to facilitate easy access to and easy entrance into the College's programs. A majority of classes at the College are four credit hours each. Classes are offered weekday mornings, afternoons and evenings; the accelerated courses are scheduled in half-term intervals or on weekends.

The College offers certificates and degreed programs that are technical in content. The major curricula are concentrated primarily in the areas of science, technology, and business, i.e., child development, allied health, radiology technology, environmental science, computer science, electronics, office administration, accounting, and management. The College formally awards Associates and Bachelor degrees, and Master's degrees in Business Administration (MBA). A core of general education credits in English, math, writing, and human relations are assigned to all degreed programs.

The MBA program is subdivided into traditional and alternative courses of study. The alternative track offer several field-specific degrees in business and industry—Computer Information Systems, Health Care Management, Marketing, International Business, and Leadership Studies. They are designated as cognates of the Pine Lake International model and the Concentration and Corporate model.

The following description of the campus and its surroundings will provide a portrait of the environment that the faculty practices in. The campus is quite old and is well established in the community. It was originally occupied by a private educational institution for several decades before Pine Lake College began its operations in 1984.

The rolling landscape and the old buildings are features that make the small campus very unique and inviting. The grounds are attractive and well groomed with a

variety of trees and flowerbeds. The original campus buildings appear to be an architectural synthesis of the English Tudor and the Swiss "chalet" styles, giving the campus an Old World appeal. The campus houses classrooms, residence halls, a bookstore, a student life center, a cafeteria, a gymnasium, a learning support center, faculty offices, and admissions and career placement offices. Adjacent to the original structures is three shining new buildings—a third dormitory, a second classroom building, and the library. They are the pride of the campus.

The original classroom building is well over fifty years old. The interior is rather modest in appearance, but the classrooms provide a clean and functional environment. New carpeting and chairs have since been installed, giving the classrooms an added appeal. The classrooms in the new building are contemporary and all color-coordinated, and faculty, staff, and students seem to prefer the new classroom building to the old one.

The faculty offices are limited in size and function, but the faculty and staff cope with the conditions. As a part of the on going campus renovations, these offices have also been remodeled and updated in a contemporary decor.

Human Profile

The Fall term 2005 enrollment for the mid-Michigan campus numbers 2,125 students. The student body is approximately 65% female, and over 98% Caucasian. The day classes are typically filled with traditional (18-year-old) college-aged students, while the evening enrollment tends to hold students who are older on average than the traditional college age. A majority of these students come from families whose parents do not have a college education.

Estimates based on academic records suggest that up to 65% of the student population is academically underprepared. Pine Lake College identifies underprepared learners as those with grade point averages below 2.0, or entrance and subject-proficiency exam scores below the designated cut-off levels determined by the College. Given this percentage, any particular teacher could expect between 40-65% of the students in their courses to be underprepared. These estimates are likely to be relatively higher in the basic (remedial) courses (i.e., Basic Math, English review, and the Study Skills course) and lower in the upper-level courses.

The campus has one president, and several deans, assistant deans, and program directors operating beneath the president. There are slightly over one hundred teachers employed on the mid-Michigan campus, but only 6 of them are full time employees. The faculty is more than 98% Caucasian, and a majority of the teachers are female. There is a wide variety in their ages—approximately twenty-seven to sixty plus years of age. The majority of the mid-Michigan campus teachers hold Master's degrees in a wide range of disciplines (including the sciences, the social sciences, and the technical fields). Approximately ten percent of the teachers hold bachelor's degrees; approximately three percent hold doctoral degrees.

This researcher began teaching at Pine Lake College Fall term, 1987, and taught several social science and humanities courses under the department of General Education for a several years. Given the employment opportunity, the campus was an accessible site for the current research.

Sample Population

The five faculty members chosen for this study—three men and two women—have been teaching at Pine Lake College for over 12 years. All of the teachers hold master's degrees, though not all of their degrees are directly related to their respective areas of instruction. Much of the subject knowledge they do hold also comes from work-related experiences in their respective fields, or from their past and present teaching experience. They were assured of strict confidentiality regarding their participation in the study, and in regard to the disclosure of the research results. Additional measures were taken to safeguard the anonymity of the teachers in the research context. The necessary precautions are discussed in full in a subsequent section of this chapter. All five participants have signed the research consent form for the current study (see Consent Form—Appendix A).

The teachers chosen for this study were sampled from a variety of different disciplines and departments within the College in order to obtain a cross-section of academic backgrounds. The five teachers represent the Math, English, Accounting, and Computer Systems curricula at the College. The teachers in this study were also selected for their role in teaching a percentage of the courses that are either mandatory for all students or are at least at the undergraduate level at the College. Key research inquiries regarding academic underpreparedness were maintained by ensuring that the teachers had exposure to the characteristically skewed distribution of underprepared students functioning at this level of learning. The teachers' references to the students in their upper level courses further enabled them to compare academic ability from a campus-wide perspective.

Data Collection Procedures

One-on-one interviews were conducted in a private setting on the Pine Lake College campus. Before the beginning of each interview, the teachers were given only basic information regarding the nature of the study and the interview process. The goal of each interview was to engage the teachers in an authentic conversation about their teaching experiences, and to reconstruct these experiences from their perspective as much as possible. The interview protocol was designed to be non-leading and generally related to the teachers' experiences as a means of limiting the influence of the researcher's agenda in their responses.

The interviews were structured around five basic questions regarding the teachers' lives as teachers, with related inquiries attached to four out of five of these questions. The questions were predicated on variables relating to the teachers' perceptions of student preparedness, their methods of instruction, the challenges of teaching, and their thoughts regarding their effectiveness as teachers. On occasion, additional improvisatorial questions were asked during the interviews in order to expand upon the content that was disclosed, and to enhance the natural flow of conversation. What information the teachers chose to disclose or omit could potentially reveal their professional priorities in relationship to their beliefs about student preparedness. Each interview was audio-taped and lasted approximately one and one-half hours each. See Appendix B for a copy of the interview format.

At the conclusion of each interview, the teachers were thanked for their participation in the research project. They were also encouraged by the researcher to approach her at any time during the course of this study to inquire about the nature and

the progress of the research, and to express any other interests or concerns that they may have had. The teachers were also informed that they would be apprised of the final research findings at the conclusion of this study.

After transcribing these interview data verbatim, necessary steps were taken to contain the data generated from a qualitative research design. Phenomenological methods were applied to structure the research findings—the individual textural descriptions and the composite textural description.

Treatment of the Interview Data

The qualitative approach to research in the social sciences necessarily yields large amount of subjective data. Therefore, the phenomenological approach to data reduction and analysis (Moustakas, 1994) was applied to the findings of this research study. Each interview transcript was taken through the process of horizonaling, clustering of meaning units, and the identification of common themes in the development of the individual textural descriptions and the final composite product.

Horizonaling

Horizonalization involved the removal of all incomplete and repetitive statements from the text of each interview. During this process, all comments were carefully evaluated so they would not be dismissed as errant or irrelevant. Caution was taken to not remove any critical thoughts or significant statements from the data. Capturing the meaning of teachers' perspectives was an essential part of the process. Examples of some of the horizons emerging from the teachers' statements are as follows: "I like to see the students do well," "I like to explain the material, then let them practice it," and, "A good

students is one who is motivated to do the work." All three statements were discriminate enough in content to warrant a separate distinction from one another.

Clustering of Horizons and Meaning Units

The horizons identified in each interview were coded and clustered into individual meaning units. All like statements or meanings were grouped together by shared characteristics or related meanings. For example, statements such as, "Some students have a lot of personal problems," were originally coded as "Descriptions of Students." Statements such as, "Some students seem highly motivated to do the work," and "Some students are going to school just to get a job," were coded and clustered as representations of "Student Motivation." Examples of other similar meaning categories that emerged across most if not all of the data sets included "Student Ability," "Instructional Methods," "Classroom Dynamics," and "Beliefs About Teaching and Learning." These clusters of data represented the significant, relevant, and invariant meanings manifested in the teachers' responses.

Individual Textural Descriptions

The data were treated accordingly and used to prioritize the construction of the individual textural descriptions. The five textural descriptions were organized in a relatively consistent format that captures the situations, conditions, and relationships that the teachers have experienced inside the classroom. These descriptions represent "what is" within the teachers' teaching experience and academic life. They also provided the basis for the composite textural description presented in chapter four of this study.

Given the very personal nature of a qualitative research design, a certain amount of discretion is necessary. Research ethics dictate that the anonymity and the privacy of

those who willingly disclose professional and personal aspects of their lives be protected when and where indicated. These imperatives were observed in the current study and were stipulated to each of the study's participants prior to the commencement of the research process.

The same safeguards applied to the name of the research site were extended to the teachers in this study. To preface the individual textural descriptions, fictitious names were assigned to the teachers in order to conceal their identities. Also, where particular issues, subject matter, or courses were named and discussed, the words "subject," "major," or "professional" were bracketed and inserted in place of their proper nouns. These conditions were imposed to prevent any direct references that could potentially reveal the identity of the teachers. See Appendix C for the complete individual textural descriptions.

Identification of Themes. An analysis of the individual textural descriptions revealed that individual thoughts expressed were actually representations of broader and perhaps more significant meaning categories. Subsequent to this analysis, the meaning units were compared individually and collectively across all five data sets, then collapsed into thematic categories that were most consistently represented among all five interviews. For example, meaning units once coded as "Student Background" and "Student Ability" were grouped together under the theme "Beliefs About Students." Three central themes representing universal descriptions and meanings emerged as the foundation for the composite textural description—"An Overall Sense of Teaching at the College," "Beliefs About Students," and "Approaches to Instruction." The process also predisposed the data to a more uniform comparison across the five data sets.

Composite Textural Description

The thematic applications were instrumental in organizing the collective flow of content and shaping the composite textural description. The composite textural description provides an understanding of how the five teachers experience their roles as teachers and reveals the beliefs that serve to structure their understanding of those experiences. The qualitative properties effectively capture the overall meaning of the teachers' experience at the College.

The same safeguards used to protect the anonymity of the teachers in the individual textural descriptions were incorporated into the development of the composite textural description. The composite data is presented in chapter four of the research.

In the final analysis, this data served as the foundation in which to create the composite structural description—a holistic interpretation of how the teachers make sense of their students and their work in the ways that they do. The composite structural description is presented in chapter five of this study, followed by an application of the related research in higher education.

Administrative Approval of the Research Study

Final approval of this research has been formally granted by this researcher's doctoral committee, chaired by Dr. John M. Dirkx—Higher, Adult, and Lifelong Education, Michigan State University, and by the Human Subjects Research Committee at Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan. Approval for this study has also been granted by the administration of Pine Lake College (the Mid-Michigan campus)—the campus President, the Assistant Dean of Academics, the Dean of the Department of General Education, and the College's Executive Committee. The outcome of this study

will be revealed both verbally and in written form to the teachers who participated in this study, as well as to other faculty, staff, and administration at Pine Lake College interested in the findings of this research.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

The reported research findings are based on the application and analysis of the principles of phenomenology. The composite textural description represents the collective flow of the teachers' beliefs and experiences at Pine Lake College. The steps taken to arrive at the composite data were illustrated in chapter three of the current study. These data were subsequently extended to the final analysis of the research—the composite structural description. The composite structural description and its interpretive perspectives are presented in Chapter Five of this study.

An analysis of the individual textural descriptions suggests that the teachers' beliefs about their work and roles within the institution are organized around two central constructs—transmission of the subject matter, and the essentials of content mastery. These two ideals are woven within the teachers' perceptions of their students' abilities, and their sense of teaching as a professional activity. The remainder of this chapter captures these perspectives in the presentation of the composite textural description.

Overall Sense of Teaching

In the following section, a discussion of the teachers' experiences provides a sense of what it is like to teach at Pine Lake College. Their reflections develop into a dialogue about the nature of their work and their students, and how effective they believe that they are in achieving their goals for teaching. The teachers' thoughts eventually reveal how they have mediated their beliefs about their students' abilities and their methods of teaching while working within the context of the College.

All of the teachers in this study are very passionate about their profession, yet it is interesting to note that a majority of the teachers had not originally aspired to teaching in a formal capacity. They all hold Master's degrees in a number of different fields and have experienced a variety of different careers prior to teaching at Pine Lake College and other postsecondary institutions. Collectively, the educational and work experience that they bring to the College crosses several academic disciplines—math, English, accounting, and computer technology.

Since Pine Lake is a career-oriented College, the Institution's expectations for teaching are partial to the interjection of field-specific knowledge and hands-on expertise. The teachers' role in imparting their professional experience is compatible with the College's mission to teach, train, and prepare students for entry-level careers. The teachers' diverse backgrounds are primarily what qualify them for the wide variety of teaching assignments that they currently hold.

All of the teachers told of virtually being hired "on the spot," leaving them little time to become oriented to the College or prepare for the term. "We find out it's common now. I was hired Thursday and started teaching three classes Monday morning." Their introduction to the classroom was also met with the academic expectations of the College. Comments such as, "The curriculum is so laid out, I have to get through the [course] book and the curriculum; I don't have much time to fit anything else in," are indicative of the challenges that come with the job. Gary continued to explain that, "[I'm] trying to balance personal time versus professional time. [I'm] trying to balance the amount of material versus the depth of understanding desired versus the amount of classroom time available." However, practice has lead to proficiency as the teachers have

learned to satisfy their own academic agendas. Gary admitted that, "I've learned to slip things in here and there."

The teachers' best efforts are matched by their passion for teaching: "I think teaching is wonderful, exhilarating." As Natalie explained,

> I like most everything about teaching. I like explaining; I enjoy answering questions. I like to have the students be able to understand something they didn't understand before when they leave my class. I like the individual one-on-one teaching, too.

Learning and comprehension are by far the most exciting aspects of the teaching experience for the teachers. They describe the phenomenon as an illumination of the learning process: "You see the lights go on sometimes." According to Natalie, "When the lights go on, you know they're getting it." In the day-to-day life of teaching, the students' success in the classroom becomes the teachers' satisfaction in teaching: "It's rewarding to see students, when all of the sudden they're sitting in the back of the room and you can just see them saying, 'I get it! I finally get it!'"

The data also suggest how the teachers came to understand their roles as teachers in the ways that they do. Some of the teachers apparently fall back on past learning paradigms when building their professional character. Bill stated that,

> I was never trained to be a teacher. Never took a methods class, ever. I tell everyone that ever taught, if they ask me about mentoring; I say take all the good things you can remember about the good teachers and throw away all the stuff that you have on the bad teachers, and then develop your own style. Don't be me, because you can't be.

What specific methods or techniques Bill would retain in an effort to shape his practices were not entirely clear. He basically internalized his past educational experiences and reconstructed them to complement his own style of teaching in the classroom.

What Bill did seem to describe is a professional transformation that takes place with the acquisition and assimilation of collective classroom experience:

> Whatever works I try to incorporate it into other classes later on. The question is, 'How do I change through time?' If I find something that works once, I'll incorporate it into others, and it becomes a part of the way I am.

Eric drew upon a freshman speech class he had taken during his undergraduate program that was extremely helpful to him personally and professionally. His speeches were tape-recorded so he and his classmates could hear the "gradual improvements" made: "Then we listened to it [the tape-recording]. We were all amazed at the improvements we had made. That gave us all confidence. I felt good, because public speaking is something very important, and I was never good at it." He felt so strongly about the outcome that he now believes that all students should be exposed to speaking in public as an essential part of their professional development.

The Aims of the Teachers' Teaching

The data in this study reveal that the teachers hold particular beliefs about teaching and learning. Explicit in their aims for teaching is the emphasis they place on the *transmission of the course content* to the extent that classroom instruction is thorough and comprehensive. *Content mastery* is an implicitly held objective that is reinforced with the teachers' curricular knowledge. The faculty's commitment to these concepts is strong, and their adherence to these principles is a reflection of their overall sense of what

it means to effectively educate their students. Bill explained that, "I'm much more for understanding than I am for regurgitation." Gary also emphasized the importance of this concept:

> I remind myself mentally as I start the class—getting the job done is not the most important thing, or showing them how to do it, it's helping them understand it—trying to take the subject matter and figure out how to teach it. That's what goes quite often into my preparation.

Imparting a critical understanding of the course content appears to be manifested in the teachers' instructional styles. Natalie stated that she would usually "...ask them to explain to me what it was that we were talking about, or do a similar problem and see that they do have the comprehension." She also explained that, "If I find that whatever it is that I'm explaining is not going over well, then I'll stop and go back and start over again and see if I can find out where it was that I lost them."

Helping Students to Learn and Succeed

In a broader context, the teachers believe that the qualitative aspects of teaching and learning are instrumental to educational attainment and future success. These goals are reflected in their wishes regarding what they hope to achieve in the classroom. Natalie articulated the following priorities:

> Building interest in [subject], that's the number one challenge. If I can get them interested in doing the [subject], the rest of the class runs very nicely. If they aren't interested, they aren't going to work on problems, and they aren't going to produce. Showing that it's useful somewhere, that it's applicable to what they're going to be doing, is absolutely the very first thing that I have to do. I do it by

showing my enthusiasm, and then by demonstrating that there are some things that you can do with the [subject] that applies to all kinds of different fields.

Like Natalie, Gary believes that demonstrating a passion for the process is an effective means of stimulating his students:

> Helping students includes having a positive attitude on my part. Making it clear that the implied assumption is that they can learn this and I'll help them. They can trust me and I'll get them through this.... I'll say, 'You guys have had me before in classes. You know I'll get you through this.'

Kathleen's position is also characterized by a sense of encouragement:

> I personally have always felt that part of the class, not only was the [subject], but helping them [students] see that they can succeed. Part of what you're doing not only is teaching, but you're helping build self-esteem, and I guess I like all that.

Eric's aims for teaching are similar to Gary's and Kathleen's, though he expressed his ideals in terms of strategy:

> [Instilling confidence is important] because they're going out to be [profession], and they have to be confrontational many times. It's very hard to be confrontational unless you're very secure in yourself and in your position that you're taking. What I'm doing is kind of work in terms of papers. That helps. I try to get students to work problems all the way through. I think trying to encourage them to do the work on their own helps give them confidence.

It is Bill's wish to see his students maximize their abilities and secure their future:

> [What I hope to achieve through teaching] is to see people reach their potential. Their potential could be a [professional]. That's fine. Their potential could be the

president of General Motors. That's fine. I'm just as proud of each one of them. They're there to reach their potential. I say, 'You are here to develop your human capital, your mind, because that's the only thing that you have to offer your employer.... [If] you're happy doing that and you're doing the best [professional] job you can do, you've fulfilled your potential.'

For the teachers, success in the classroom is gauged by the degree of comprehension of the subject matter. Their goal is to reinforce content mastery, with the assumption that acquiring academic knowledge is more than a function of rote rehearsal. Their aims for teaching complement a lifelong view of education. However, the teachers' espoused belief-to-practice philosophies come under closer scrutiny as these dynamics are further mediated by their beliefs about the nature of effective versus ineffective teaching. The following section addresses the teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of their teaching strategies, and how their beliefs play a role in shaping their practices.

What it Means to be Effective

Deciding what constitutes effective teaching is apparently based on a recollection of classroom experiences, especially those perceived to be positive in nature. During the interviews, the teachers seemed to be less able to identify what particular strategies they believed made them effective; instead, they recounted the good feelings that they experienced during previous classroom encounters as examples of effectiveness. Their descriptions suggest that, for them, effectiveness is a consistent yet elusive characteristic. The qualities are apparently more enduring than situational in nature. For example, Kathleen suggested that,

> I guess I like to think I'm always effective; I can't name any one particular time. Most of the classes I have taught enough that I've kind of perfected what I do. I don't think there's any one time, or it only happens once in a while. I think I'm pretty effective all the time. I guess if I thought I was ineffective very much, I wouldn't be here.

Bill stated that, "I think that I was very good before, and I'm still good. I don't know, I probably have changed through time. It may be subtle changes I've done, but the basic tenets of the way I teach are constant."

The sense of being effective as a constant characteristic is partially shaped by internal feedback. Eric decided that,

> I'm always effective in my teaching. I personally don't think so, but students have repeatedly told me this year after year. Supervisors have told me that year after year I do such a wonderful job.... I think I do a good job. I think I cover the material, but I get rave reviews all the time. I can't evaluate myself. I just do the best that I can. I don't really care whether the students like me or not. I never have. It's just that I'm going to do what I think is best, and that's the way it is.

While the faculty generally view themselves as effective teachers, they did not specify any particular teaching techniques that may have been more effective than others. Even when they speculated on a number of possible strategies, their thoughts were shrouded in uncertainty. For example, after Kathleen suggested that she felt particularly good about making her students feel at ease in class, she backed away from her statement and made the following remark: "I don't know, you should probably be asking the students, not me."

Natalie also found her response to this topic rather difficult to qualify: "I've never seen myself on videotape. All I have is my perception of how I come through, so I don't know how I appear." She went on to suggest that perhaps it was her preparation that led her to believe that she was effective, yet she quickly amended her position:

> I don't think so anymore. I can be as prepared one day as I am the next, and one day it's clear, and the next day it's not. I used to think perhaps it was the students, and I don't think that's true. I don't know what causes that change. Whether it's the enthusiasm I have for the topic we're discussing, that could be it. If it's something I really enjoy, I'm sure that comes through.

Natalie was, however, able to capture the feelings associated with the classroom encounters she perceived herself to be effective in:

> It's exhilarating. I don't even remember when they were, but I can sure tell you what the feeling was. It was a super high. You just felt like you were on top of the world and everything that came out of your mouth was correct and clear and to the point. They all understood, and it was wonderful. It doesn't happen every day, but I'm not perfect. If knew [what made the teaching so effective], I would repeat it every opportunity I get.

The teachers also conveyed a sense of effectiveness by describing classes that just seemed to "click." "The class just seems to click when the students seem interested in the class and everyone is learning." More often than not, it was an overall good feeling that the teachers felt at the end of a class period.

Though the teachers seemed to be able to determine when a class went well, their vagueness over identifying the dynamics that deliberately effect the learning process persisted. For example, Bill recalled the following class experience quite readily:

> ...in one of the [subject] classes I've had. I can't remember the exact year of the class, but we had a good class. I got everybody to understand, got it across, which was phenomenal. Usually [subject] is a difficult teach at best, and the one class I was very happy with. Whatever I seemed to try worked. It was one of those kinds of deals where you could do the same thing in the next class and it blows up on you. This time it all sort of clicked, and that doesn't happen very often.

Like Natalie, Bill relived the qualities of the learning experiences he believed to be effective in. By the same token, he was not exactly sure why such outcomes could not always be replicated from class to class. For the teachers, it seems to be a matter of personal observation over scientific proof that determines what strategies work best in the classroom.

Eric approached the subject by recounting a teaching experience that he thought would have turned out to have unfavorable consequences. Though the class was deemed a success, he was not really sure why:

> The only problem I had was once. One course that I taught was [subject], which was an area I never taught in. I went into it thinking I'm going to make a mess of this. I felt it was a unique situation for me, because I make no claims that I can teach this class. I'd go do the homework myself the night before, go over it in class. I got one of the highest ratings I ever got in that class from the students.

What particular dynamics made this class an effective teaching encounter was not explicitly revealed; and though Eric seemed pleased with the outcome, the only formal evaluation of the class came from the students.

The teachers eventually named a few particular learning strategies that they believe to be effective, though they seem to have originated as much or more from their pre-teaching conceptions of standard educational practices than from their post-teaching evaluations of these strategies. What they did share was their preference for strategies that catalyze student comprehension. For example, group work is considered to be a valuable reinforcement to the learning process. Gary stated that, "I do like that small classroom or group interaction. I think that's effective." Natalie explained that, "I think that lecture with no opportunity for questions and no opportunity for the students to practice what you're telling them is not effective. That's what I try when I'm introducing material to do."

The teachers also shared the value of talking with their students, telling them stories and giving them examples that support the course concepts. Kathleen stated that, "I think that over the years I have learned stories to tell to point out examples. I think students and everybody learns much better if you tell them a story." Eric also explained that, "I try to factor in real life experiences into the class, which works out okay, sometimes. When I introduce 'war stories,' I do it on a very limited basis." Yet, for the profoundly underprepared students, there is a strong consensus among the teachers that the only effective means of educating these students is through individual tutoring.

The teachers' discussion of their teaching practices reluctantly shifted to those awkward moments in the classroom. As the descriptions of classroom experiences

played out, the teachers' sense of what constitutes ineffective teaching remained largely undefined. Kathleen compared two sections of the same course she had had for two consecutive terms, suggesting that being effective had little to do with what transpired in each class:

> It was a small class [this term], and they just never seemed to click with each other. They weren't disruptive, but it was difficult to get them involved in any kind of conversation. I would have thought it was me, except that the class just before that wasn't like that.

In retrospect, Kathleen drew a conclusion about her students that was the near opposite of Natalie's: "I think except for the few problem students you have, that it just doesn't matter what you do. It's not you, it's them."

Like Eric, Kathleen did not seem to perceive herself to be an ineffective teacher overall, yet she maintained her uncertainty over what would mean to be ineffective in the classroom:

> One class that I teach, I've taught 3 or 4 times, I don't ever quite feel like I click. The other classes, you sort of know when things are going right and you've got a routine. But I've got one class that I can't ever seem to find, 'This is the way to teach this class.' I don't know if I'm ineffective, but I can't ever think of any other word beside 'click.' Every once in a while you have a day that didn't go right, but this one class, I'm not sure I'm effective.

It was Kathleen's perception of the class *not* "clicking" that seemed to serve as a potential determinant of ineffectiveness.

Natalie's perspective also reflected the uncertainty:

I've had a lot of days when I knew when I got started, that whatever I said, everything that came out of my mouth was mush. I fumbled through this, I fumbled through that. Sometimes it doesn't last a whole class period. Sometimes it's the first five minutes, and then I get on a roll. It doesn't seem to be that I'm tired because sometimes that's when I do best. I don't know whether it's the attitude of the class. Sometimes you feel [that], 'Well, if they don't care, why should you.'

The Constraints of Teaching within the Context of the Institution

As the teachers strive to be effective in their teaching, they have come to realize that their efforts exist within the context of the College. Experience has taught them the inevitability of mediating the needs of their students along with the curricular goals of the College. However, attempting to meet these various demands sometimes results in feelings of frustration under difficult conditions. This often occurs when the teachers necessarily cope with some of the policies and practices of the College, especially those that seem to perpetuate the problem of underpreparedness.

For example, curricular and administrative decisions originating from the College administration invariably have an impact on the teachers "from the top down." The decisions that are implemented in the classroom can create challenges that the faculty finds difficult to negotiate. Kathleen recounted her struggle to maintain the course requirements of a class she was assigned to teach:

It's a very difficult class. The POs [performance objectives] require a lot of work, and it's an entirely different concept for them. The text is really hard. I don't know if they read it because it's so hard, so it's difficult for me. I can't say, 'Never

mind, don't read it.' I feel like I have to do a lot of stuff to get them to read it, because they need to read the text in order to know how to do the final product.

Natalie's frustrations were brought on by dealing with students that she believed to be unable to do college-level work, yet were admitted by the College and enrolled in her classes:

> We had a couple through this last year and the year before come through the [subject] program who could not [do the work]. That's *extremely* frustrating. They just did not have the capacity. It was especially frustrating since one of the girl's parents were convinced that she could make it if just had enough time, and they were telling her that. She couldn't, so that's frustrating.

Gary discussed the difficulties he has in accommodating the needs of his students while dealing with the constraints of his professional duties:

> [I'm] trying to balance the students' personal needs versus academic needs. If the students are worried, anxious, or upset about something, they're not going to learn very well. To a certain extent, you have to deal with these things. They often result in important 'life lessons,' but that's usually not covered in the course curriculum and it 'eats up' any limited classroom time.

Gary also addressed other role conflicts stemming from some of the basic conditions of his employment:

> Trying to balance my role as teacher [dispenser of information, facilitator of learning] with my role as judge, grader, certifier, etc. I've long been amazed at the conflicting tasks society has given me. I'm supposed to help my students learn, yet it is also my job to tell the world when they haven't. I'm supposed to

encourage them and support them, but I also have to tell them when they've failed.

The professional conflicts Gary faces seem to reflect a moral dilemma. While considering the needs of his students, his concerns extend beyond the boundaries of the Campus when trying to reconcile his responsibilities both in and outside of the classroom:

> [I'm] trying to balance personal time versus professional time. Outside of the classroom, any additional time I spend on classroom-related tasks is coming from my personal time. Every instructor I know who is any good at all spends more time on classroom-related tasks than he or she is contractually obligated to do. To me, this is a sign of a professional.

The element of time seems to blur the lines of distinction between Gary's personal and professional ideals.

Eric voiced the strongest reaction to the policies imposed by the administration of the College:

> Overcoming administrative interference. We have representatives from all the different campuses who meet together—the [major] professors. We meet together and come up with policy regarding curriculum and programs in the [major] area. The administration wants certain things, like the standardized [major] exam, and they will have people who come from these nonunion campuses ordered how to vote. Usually the nonunion people outnumber the union employees, so we wind up having all kinds of problems.

Eric also cited other administrative actions that have impacted him both in and outside of the classroom. The course curriculum and program policies in [subject] continue to be at the forefront of his many concerns:

> Our program is geared to the [major] exam. They're changing the format of that, so we all have to change our programs to meet whatever the new challenge is. We have to change our curriculum, change our textbooks, change the subject from maybe two quarters to three quarters...but that's usually done on a system level, and those decisions are made before we even meet. Some of them are the right decisions, some of them are not.

Eric's other concerns entailed employment-related issues that continue to have a direct effect on him as much or more than on his students:

> Continued employment. We have a problem here. One of our people has been told that [Teacher] is going to be laid off. Who's going to be next? So that's a concern. I may not even be here next quarter. That's a deterrent to my ability to teach.

Eric's lack of control over the curriculum and his status at the College was a visible source of conflict for him during his interview. The circumstances exacting such a response from Eric could potentially affect his attitude toward teaching, and his performance in the classroom.

The following sections highlight what the teachers at Pine Lake College hold as essential to the process of teaching and learning, and the challenges they face at the college level.

Approaches To Instruction

In this section of the research findings, descriptions of the teachers' instructional strategies and the practices they adhere to are presented in greater detail. The effort to project their self-image onto the classroom is discussed in terms of increasing the likelihood of learning. The culmination of these dynamics is manifested in the teachers' transmission of the subject matter, with an emphasis on motivating students to learn. Mastery and retention of the material is the desired outcome.

Planning

The teachers described what seems to be a great deal of preparation before, during, and after their classes, and in between terms. Variations in the amount of time and effort the teachers put into planning their lessons are a reflection of the different disciplines and time frames that they operate in. "What goes on in the class itself sometimes...varies so much, depending on what the class is."

For these and other reasons, the element of time is a critical construct for the teachers both on and off of the job. As Eric explained: "Too many classes to teach. It doesn't give you any time to do anything other than just teach the class. [The problem is] preparation and you're not at your best." Kathleen stated that, "I'm not good on last minute stuff. Because I have another job, I try to schedule my classes fairly tightly." The issue of employment outside of the College is not an uncommon one, as the vast majority of the over one hundred Pine Lake College teachers are hired as part-time employees.

Theoretically, lesson plans are designed to negotiate the various levels of student preparedness and the motivation to learn. The desired level of moderation is achieved when the curriculum is balanced in an equation of ability versus time allotted to cover the

course content. Little is offered in the way of specific strategies used to help students who are struggling inside the classroom, other than a periodic reapplication or review of the course material. Deviations from the teachers' basic formula are usually relegated to a tutorial process since precious classroom time cannot be compromised for the sake of a few students who are unable to keep up with the class.

Structure of the Lesson

The teachers uniformly structure their lesson plans with a presentation of the course concepts followed by a period of practical application. Thoroughness seems to be a key objective for the teachers. Gary explained that,

> ...My natural tendency is to try to lay it all out and be extremely specific and tell them exactly what you want to do—the course objectives. [It's the] behavioral science kind of teaching school. You show them and you walk them through the process. You demonstrate it and have them practice it.

Kathleen revealed that, "I may teach a little technique and then I put them in groups and then let them practice whatever this technique or this process is." Bill also shared his approach to a learning sequence:

> I'm of the persuasion, good or bad, that if you can't explain it, you don't understand it. Some people are visual learners and some are not. That's why I do the lecture first, and then I do the stuff afterward. I'm of the opinion, talk about it first, then do some examples, or whatever. That's a point I think is relevant.

These subsequent group and practice strategies are believed to be as critical as the initial foundations laid down in lecture. Natalie seemed to express the benefits of this sequencing most succinctly: "I think straight lecture with no opportunity for questions

and no opportunity for the students to practice what you're tell them is not effective. That's really the only way to get [subject] cemented in their minds." These strategies are also regarded for providing an opportunity for students to interact in a less formal environment. While the teachers assume that the students are more receptive to these practices, they also assume that these dynamics increase the motivation to learn.

Accommodating Differences among Learners

During the interviews, the teachers revealed their awareness of the academic diversity students bring to the classroom. The vast difference among their learners compels them to accommodate characteristics such as student ability and student status, i.e., freshmen versus upper classmen. Their practices are mediated by changing the scope of their instruction, depending upon the types of courses they are teaching and the types of students enrolled in them.

Kathleen imparts an inductive order to her classroom instruction in an effort to accommodate and motivate her learners:

> They're pretty scared to begin with that they're [not] going to succeed—that's pretty obvious from the very beginning. What you try to do is give them things immediately that they'll succeed in—an easy quiz, or group quizzes, or something that they can succeed in. You've got to try to get that out of them. You take small steps, and you see that they succeed in every small step that they get. If they can succeed then usually they'll keep on trying. That's human nature. Nobody's going to try anything they think they're going to fail in.

Gary initially acts upon the differences of his students by executing the following compromise: "I usually try to pick a point [of instruction] somewhere in the middle [of

student ability]—maybe even more like two-thirds down from the top—with the idea being that I'm striking down the middle of the bottom two-thirds."

With the belief that the lower-level students are more heterogeneous and less proficient in their academic skills than the upper-level students, the teachers structure their applications with these differences in mind. Gary offered the following example:

> At the beginning level there's a lot more demystifying the whole field and the area. More holding their hand, encouraging them, trying to make things *really* simple, easy, and clear to understand. At the more advanced level—I've been more aware lately of the fact that I need to wean them away from that. I'm sure that they sometimes are more frustrated, because I'm not more specific with the advanced students in my assignments and with my direction. I intentionally don't do that, which is kind of fighting my natural tendencies. I sometime worry that I'm holding them back a little bit—especially in the introductory level classes.

Bill revealed that,

> The introductory courses are more of a lecture-regurgitation type program. The upper level courses are more procedurally driven, but you still have some interaction there. They're good students. The upper level courses are more interactive; I like that better. My students tell me that I'm not the same personality as the level of courses goes up. I'm more of a hard nose—a real hard nose—in the [beginning level] course, but as they get toward graduation, they say, 'You're not such a bad guy.' In the upper level courses, it's more of a yeah, you can discuss technical points, you can do some other things. It's a perceived

different situation. If you're in [upper level subject], the assumption is you're a [field] major, therefore, this is your life, this is your job.

Natalie seems to maintain a similar perspective and frames her students in the following way:

> In the upper level classes, those are the people that have gotten through the introductory classes and now are going on to more intense [subject] for a special reason. They have a goal in mind. They are more evenly talented, if you will. It's not quite as difficult to teach the upper level, because everyone has pretty much a common background to build on.

Assessing and Responding to Classroom Behaviors

Consistent with the teachers' emphasis on content mastery, attentiveness and comprehension are considered to be key indicators of educational attainment in the classroom. Implied outcomes are dependent upon how the teachers process these behaviors. Gary shared his insight into the cognitive domain of teaching:

> At the same time, you're thinking about the material, thinking about how you're going to present it, you're also trying to pay attention to the students. How are they reacting to what you're saying? Are they paying attention to you?

Like Gary, Bill associates attentiveness with the ability to learn: "If you look over the class and the people are making notes on the homework they completed, they understand, they ask me questions."

However, several exceptions were made when the teachers acknowledged that it is not always a given that students who appear to comprehend the material are actually grasping the course concepts. Some of the "signals" that are significant to the teachers

include students who are "nodding their heads" versus the "blank stare" or the look of confusion. Gary honed in on this and shared his observations:

> Every little body language signal becomes 'you' in some way. One student is sitting there shaking their head yes, and if you aren't careful, you start thinking they all understand. That's a bad sign. We joke about the glazed eyes. You start having to look at facial expressions and try to get something out of it. Is the look in their eyes more like panic or boredom?

Bill responded to these dynamics with the following anecdote:

> I use my daughter's favorite expression. She said, 'Dad, you know if the class isn't getting it when they nod and smile and wait for their name to be called. They sit and nod or they smile, they haven't got a clue what you're talking about.' The more I thought about it, the more I've looked, the more I've taught, she was right.

Bill agreed that,

> If you're just babbling along up in front of the class to lecture, you look out there, and if you're an instructor, you know. You start looking out there and everybody says, 'we understand,' and everybody says, 'we got it, we got that up and down,' they haven't got a *clue*. So you look for little signs like that.

Gary offered a dual interpretation of students' non-verbal cues in the classroom:

> One student is sitting there shaking their head yes, and if you aren't careful, you start thinking they all understand. Or just sitting there staring at you, not even taking notes. That's a bad sign. It can mean either, 'I already know this and I don't need to take notes,' or, 'I'm so lost I don't know what to write down.' If they look panicked, then I'm starting to figure they're confused.

He paused to reflect on these behaviors, then admitted that:

> I have personal prejudices and preferences, but students [who are 'getting it'] are paying attention. The ultimate is when they're sitting there nodding their head: 'I know exactly what you're talking about.' They're agreeing with you, which is not just understanding. Even if they're not reacting that way, they look like they're comfortable; they're casual.

Natalie concurred with Gary's perspective:

> You get somebody who wants to fidget or scribble off on the side, that pretty much tells me one of two things: either they already know the stuff and they are bored to death, or they have no clue and couldn't buy one if they had a million bucks. Going from that kind of behavior to behavior where they're actually paying attention and watching what's going on and taking some good notes usually tells me that I've struck something someplace, and they do understand what I'm saying.

In her final analysis, Natalie decidedly supported the proficiency of her students by concluding that,

> Most of those [students not paying attention or not taking notes] are the ones that know the material. I've sort of paid attention over the years, and those are pretty much the ones—they're in a class that they don't really want to be in and they really don't have much use for it, and just feel they don't have to. For the most part, they're right—they don't.

The teachers did not hesitate to maintain other explanations for students not paying attention in class. A common assumption is that a number of students are most

likely uninterested in learning the course material, despite their abilities. "They show up to class but they don't seem interested in learning anything." More often than not, the speculations on inattentiveness suggest that students have disengaged from the learning process. Under these circumstances, student motivation remains in question.

The teachers' reported observations are concentrated on students' receptiveness to the learning process. Student responses play a crucial role in influencing the teachers' teaching behavior in the classroom. Changes in instructional technique are deliberately introduced to engage students in the learning process and impart a solid *understanding* of the course material. However, these particular accommodations have their theoretical and practical limitations, as the teachers ultimately expect their students to take responsibility for staying focused on their studies.

Nonetheless, these expectations do not come without their share of frustration over the students who do not embrace the traditional norms for learning. Despite all efforts to increase the motivation to learn, Gary noticed that, "Occasionally, then, there are other students who you feel are not trying, they don't care, and they're not paying attention. Those are the ones it's hard not to get impatient with." He went on to say that,

> Even though the class is easy for them, there's no real incentive for them to get more than an A. I can give them more stuff, point them in directions, but, unless they're going to get credit for it, they don't want to be bothered.

Bill pointed out that,

> Some of the kids this term and other terms that I've had that are underclassmen—I say they are all 'Marcel Marceaus,' because you're asking questions and they look at you and they don't respond. Even the A students don't respond.

The same set of dynamics seems to try Eric's patience as well: "We notice that some students don't ever answer. Even though they know the material, they just don't like to speak up in class. It's unfortunate. I don't know how to deal with that."

As the teachers continued to speculate on student performance, it was evident that the teachers' resolve is tested by more than one subset of problem behaviors in the classroom. Second only to inattentiveness in the classroom are a host of other behaviors that are decidedly negative and no less counterproductive to the learning process. The following section reveals what the teachers' have distinctly identified as negative student attitudes and behaviors. The discussion they give to these dynamics reveals how they are manifested in the learning environment.

Negative Student Behaviors. Negative attitudes and behaviors seem to indicate the apparent difficulties that some students have adjusting to college life. The teachers have inferred that a correlation exists between these dynamics and students who are perceived to be academically underprepared or unmotivated. Kathleen shared a broad observation:

> I think that [attitude] is something that's always difficult. I think to some degree they come in with that to begin with—that attitude: 'I'd much rather be taking a [subject] class because that's my favorite class.' I think sometimes that you've got to combat that before you can ever get them into anything else. They have a bad feeling to start out with, and that doesn't stop just because they go to college.

Natalie is also quick to detect students who appear to be resistant to the learning process: "They just can't do [subject]. They don't tend toward that, they don't like it; they don't like being put in that sort of situation."

Like Kathleen and Natalie, the teachers are sensitive to the variety of ways in which students attempt to cope with their academic difficulties. They are apparently able to distinguish one response from another based on their functions—ego-defensive behavior, self-defeating behavior, disruptive behavior, and chronic absenteeism.

A majority of the teachers described ego-defensive behavior as "self-saving" behavior that students engage in to justify their conflicts with the coursework and cope with their persistent negative feelings. For Natalie, the behaviors seem to be rather telling:

> I have a couple of students in class this term that I had last term who wanted to continue to snipe at other students with nasty little comments said just loud enough for the other students to hear. They are separating themselves from what goes on in the [subject] class and holding themselves above that, so that they can snipe at people that are beneath them who are involved in the [subject] class. By holding themselves above it, they can say, 'Sure I failed, but I didn't really try because I didn't really want to.'

Many of these behaviors are apparently deflected onto the teachers as well. These behaviors are perceived as a form of challenging if not blaming the teachers for the students' difficulties. Natalie observed that, "They'd rather just sit there and scowl at you because it is 'your fault' that they can't do the [subject], rather than try. If they try, then they might find out that they really can't do it." Gary concurred with a similar response: "They almost dare you to try and teach them something, because it's my responsibility as the teacher."

The teachers also interpret these and other behaviors as self-defeating in nature. "They feel that, 'what's the use, I'm not going to get it anyway.'" "They're not going to try if they think they'll fail." In this context, these dynamics are a part of a "bad behavioral cycle" and are attributable to the fear of failure.

The teachers shared like explanations for "disruptive" behaviors that pose similar problems in the classroom. Students whispering among one another during class time or deliberately interrupting the class have been cited as examples of this behavior. However, the teachers acknowledged that these behaviors are not restricted to students who are struggling or failing—students perceived to be academically able do "act out" in class from time to time. The extent to which these incidents present a problem to the teachers depends upon how much they interfere with the flow of the class. Eric shared the following interpretation:

> If they don't tell me, there's no way of telling that they have any problems. Other than if they're disruptive in the classroom, then that can identify that something's a problem. I have a few of those. They're not very nice. I try to subtly let them know that they should stop—not making jokes. If the problem persists, I'll slowly let the person know that someone over here in this corner is talking while I'm trying to teach here. I don't like to make other people feel uncomfortable, especially if they're in my class.

Problem behaviors do reach a threshold when classroom disruptions are profound. For example, Gary stated that,

> I had someone in a low-level intermediate class this last quarter during the day. They didn't seem to want to do the work. Kind of the challenge thing, by ignoring

me, by talking while I'm lecturing and presenting. We have a real problem in the [class]rooms, too. They're off [engaging in other activities] while I'm presenting something up on the blackboard.

Natalie emphatically stated that,

It irritates me to no end. Talking to a neighbor, I guess, is the one that irritates me the most personally, because not only do they disturb their neighbor, they disturb all the people all around them. It's obvious what's going on to the some of the other students in class.... What I usually do is wait until I can hear a comment and then say, 'I beg your pardon? Did you have something to say?' I don't like that behavior. I think it's rude. That kind of behavior does bother me.

On the other hand, Natalie did acknowledge a number of potentially distracting behaviors that are not necessarily problematic to her or to some of the other teachers:

Negative behaviors...they pretty much run the gamut from somebody coming in and laying their head down on the table and sleeping through the entire class, to someone who never takes a single note or pays attention to anything that's going on the board. I don't care if they sleep; I don't care if they write a note to their girlfriend. If they want to waste their money, fine. I do not require my students to stay glued to me. If they have something else to do, as long as they're not bothering their neighbor, that's their choice.

Eric also seemed to take some of the "lesser" distractions in stride:

I tell students I don't care if they come in late or not. If they want to leave early, that's ok. I think they know it doesn't bother me. The only real problem I have is with 8:00 [a.m.] class and the night class."

Kathleen's reaction to the topic of classroom disruption seemed to be the most tempered:

> To me, disruptive is somebody who would yell or swear or put pencils up their nose. They don't do that here—they do in the public schools. Nobody is disrupting because they get the attention of everybody else. That happens when they're younger. In college it's not funny, and the other students don't like it. Every once in a while somebody puts their head on their desk. Every once in a while you have a student who wants to answer every question all the time. Compared to the public schools we have nothing. We don't have discipline problems. I don't know that we have problem students.

Her interpretation is that many classroom behaviors are ones that could potentially occur in most any adult, public setting:

> You have some that are belligerent. We've all had some that have come in and maybe are under the influence of drugs or liquor, or, who don't want to do the work. That's not what I consider really disruptive. Every once in a while I have somebody who's got an attitude, or, somebody who's a little snotty or snippy or somebody who talks out loud; but that happens in the real world, too.

Student absenteeism stands out as one of the most problematic behaviors for both teachers and students alike. As a general rule, Natalie stated that, "You know, we always have a certain percentage that we just don't see. Those students stop coming and I don't see them anyway, so I can't even talk about them." Bill concluded that, "Some of the other students—they just don't show up to class. I have very little interaction with them. I don't regard their work ethic as what is needed to graduate."

Gary interpreted the justifications for absenteeism from what he believes to be the students' point of view:

> 'I really don't want to fail this class, but I don't much care about anything else as long as I can get out of it. I'm going to skip as often as I think I can get away with it.'

He went on to say that, "I can perceive it, and other students can perceive this attitude by the student or these students. Their lack of attendance; they're coming in late."

Though the teachers are willing to confront these behaviors in the classroom, they recognize the advantages to appealing to all of their students as a means reinforcing productive behaviors. Consequently, the same strategies used to motivate their students are also an alternate source of intervention in the classroom. For example, Kathleen believes that it is advantageous to discuss the importance of having goals as a way of motivating students to manage their personal problems and their college careers. She explained that, "I spend a lot of time in my class talking about goals, because I think the students need to understand that you can have some control and some impact if you think ahead, plan ahead, and then have a track to go on."

Under similar circumstances, Bill takes a demonstrative approach to motivating his students to come to class: "If we meet ten times a night, folks, that's $55 [a night]. If you don't come to class that night, take $55 dollars out of your wallet and throw it out the window." Beyond his best efforts, Bill believes that he has to "draw the line" with students who are ultimately not motivated enough to take some if not all of the responsibility for their education:

I come to class every day; I teach. If they're trying to meet you half way, you bend over backwards to help them. If they're not responsible enough to come see someone, to go to the Learning Center, to do something else, your responsibility ends. You can only do so much, and if they're not willing to meet you halfway, there's nothing you can do.

All of the teachers in the present study have basically arrived at the same conclusion that Bill has. Despite the disappointment that this may bring, there are only so many compromises the teachers are willing and able to make. The onus of coming to class and attempting to learn lies with the student.

Assessing and Responding to Classroom Dynamics

The data suggest that the teachers are aware of the conditions that characterize the classroom. The ways in which they manage the cognitive aspects of the learning environment are relative to their concerns over the impact that these dynamics have on outcomes of achievement. How the teachers coordinate these constructs is a reflection of their own goals for teaching. The following excerpts highlight the strategic side of teaching at the College, where observation and timing are everything.

Practically speaking, the teachers' use of time and technique in the classroom is often contingent upon the receptiveness of the students. "What influences how I get things done is the responsiveness of the class." Kathleen revealed that, "I guess as far as what I do, its going to be influenced by the group dynamics. I think bigger classes are more responsive." Bill decided that, "If they're unresponsive in class and they're not asking or answering questions, then you have nothing to play off of. Then I'll stick to the lecture." Natalie explained that, "[What influences my teaching is] how their questions

are running. If they're understanding what I'm showing them, and I don't have all kinds of people asking questions, then we proceed pretty much with that pattern."

Gary also makes several instructional adjustments based on a variety of behavioral cues:

> Within the class there are things that go on that change what you do. If you start seeing that you're getting mixed signals and a lot of students may be starting to feel that way, then maybe you've got to take the whole class and kind of slow down, step back. Maybe it's something you thought they understood and they didn't.

The teachers' assessment of the students' level of engagement in the classroom is critical to maintaining motivation. Kathleen explained that,

> I suppose the personality of the students [will influence what I do when I teach]. For example, last term I had a group of students in one of my classes that had a ball the whole class... they talked to the whole class. If they were talking, I just let them talk, because I knew there was learning.

Manipulating the chronology of each class allows the teachers to redirect the attentiveness and energy level of their students, keeping them interested yet not over-stimulated. For example, Kathleen determined that,

> Anything that involves a lot of thinking or if it's a test, I would start that at the beginning. I know they're more alert at the beginning. At the end of class, I do things that may take less thought, or maybe more activity on my part and less on their part, because they really do wear down. I try to change something about every 15-20 minutes, and that keeps them alive and awake a little more.

In demonstrating sensitivity to his students, Bill stated that,

> Night class we talk from 6:00 to 7:00. Then at that point I gauge the mood of the class. Being a Thursday night class, a lot of them are typically mentally beat up by Thursday night. If you talk awhile; then you look at the class, you can tell immediately—almost within 10-15 minutes—if they've had bad weeks. They're very lethargic; they're very non-committal.

His evening agenda winds down with a similar respite: "By a quarter of nine [p.m.] or so, we start drifting into more stories than I do lecturing, and I try to get into experienced-based [subject]."

Personal Influences and Educational Dynamics

The data suggest that a significant relationship between personality and process has developed over time. Individual styles of teaching have emerged in the classroom, though their effects are not entirely unintentional. Gary offered the following insight into the personal domain of teaching:

> The influence, yes...what's going on in the classroom is kind of like magic. I'm perceiving the students and have my own feelings and my perception of what they're doing—their perceptions of what's going on, and of me, and attitudes and feelings.

Personal influences eventually become professional preferences that are deliberately incorporated into the classroom. For example, establishing clear expectations at the beginning of the term is believed to foster a stronger class structure and function. Kathleen explained that,

> I personally am fairly structured, and I think that's the way my classes are. I also tell the students day one, if they want to read the paper, go somewhere else to read it. I also tell them that I don't want any heads on their desks. I establish that on day one that I do not like that kind of behavior.

Eric explained the benefits of this approach:

> I just teach in a straightforward manner. Students know that they can come to me. When I tell them yes, it means, yes. When I tell them no, it means no. I think students appreciate that. They may not like it, but they know they can trust whatever I tell them.

Regardless of his students' ability, Bill stipulated that, "I tell them up front, 'if you don't do the work, you're not going to do well.' Once they understand my philosophy, it's not problem."

For the most part, taking a direct approach with students is second only to the creation of a comfortable classroom atmosphere. Kathleen explained the importance of this:

> I try very hard—starting out at the very beginning—to make things very light-hearted. I might even tell a joke the first day or say silly things the first day so it kind of helps put them at ease. I really do try hard to do that because they usually feel kind of tense.

Gary stated that,

> I always make it very clear that I run a very casual class, and I adopt that attitude right from the start. 'If you have any questions or problems, let me know right

away.' Having a positive attitude on my part. So you have to, at the beginning level, make more of an effort to let them know so they have confidence in you.

Like Gary, Eric also chooses to instill a sense of security in the classroom: "Because I don't like to make anyone uncomfortable, I don't call on anyone individually. I always learned it better when I was comfortable in class, so I didn't have to be on edge, *and may they not call on me!*"

As the teachers attempt to create a dynamic classroom environment, the professional rapport that they build with students gains interpersonal significance over time. Gary readily acknowledged that, "Of course, we're getting a lot into personal styles [in order to gain trust and confidence]." He was quick to recognize that, "There are things like my personal attitudes, my personal feelings, my confidence, the type of day I'm having, how well things are working, and how well I feel I can explain this or not."

The teachers' enthusiasm over the subject matter is essential to the interpersonal aspects of the learning process. Eric shared the following philosophy: "It's important [to bring excitement into the classroom] because [subject]—it's one of the dullest subjects you can think of, and I'm a [subject] leader.

Natalie's sense of enthusiasm is also dynamic:

> I try real hard to show that I really enjoy [subject], and I do. To describe how I am in class, I'm somewhat animated, but not a lot. I do try different ways of presenting things. I do try to vary my approach. Definitely the animation and variety, both of those [are important]. If you were to stand at the board doing what I do for a living, with no intonation, no joke, no 'Hey look! Here's a problem, look at this part!' it would get really boring. They'd all fall asleep.

At the same time, she is conscious of the personal impression that she makes in the classroom:

> It's all being on stage—that's the whole idea of what we're doing here. We present our material, and in doing that, we present us; and if we're interested in what we're presenting, that comes through, because we are just actors.

However, these qualities do not necessarily imply a shared intimacy with the students. For example, Natalie prefers to maintain her personal space:

> They know that I'm a little more formal or stiff before class starts—and after class—than some of the other instructors might possibly be, but that's variety. I'm not super friendly with my students. I'm a bit more on the distant side. I've never been comfortable sharing secrets with people. It's just not something I do.

Eric relies on the social distance found in his line of work:

> "It's really objective, that's what I like about [subject]. It's very safe and secure, so you really can't be challenged. A student can't come in and say, 'You don't like me for whatever reason, and that's why I got a C.'"

Yet, the teachers are not implying a sense of indifference on their part. Regardless of their personal preferences, their passion for teaching reflects a genuine concern for the welfare of their students.

Summary

As diverse as the Pine Lake College population is, so are the many dynamics that the teachers take into consideration when planning and implementing their instructional strategies. Observation, timing, and experience are the foundation for the decisions that they will eventually make in the classroom.

As they assess the variety of student behaviors in the classroom, individual attentiveness stands out as a primary indicator of interest, comprehension, and motivation among students. Deficits in any one of these cognitive processes often signify deficits within the other domains.

Other performance-related problems described by the teachers include the negative attitudes that students manifest in unproductive behaviors in the classroom. These behaviors are identified as defensive, disruptive, and self-defeating in nature. Left unchecked by the students or the teachers, these behaviors often precipitate absenteeism.

Teaching strategies that minimize these deficits and motivate students to learn are routinely implemented in the classroom. The effects are reciprocal in nature and are reflected back to the teachers during class time. As the teachers interpret these experiences both in and outside of the classroom, they are eventually internalized on a professional and personal level. Consequently, each new classroom encounter becomes a collective experience that enables the teachers to anticipate future educational outcomes.

Beliefs About Students

At the heart of this study is the exploration of the teachers' beliefs about their students. What characteristics and abilities do the teachers perceive of their students? How do the teachers' perceptions shape their beliefs about student motivation and academic achievement? How do the teachers feel about the successes and failures of their students? In the third and final section of this chapter, the teachers offer a series of developmental descriptions of their students in several social, academic, and institutional contexts. The discussion they give to their students will reveal the teachers' responses to

the key questions above as they share their long-range view of educating a diverse population of adult learners.

Differences Among Students

The teachers make sense of their students based on the initial differences among them. They account for these differences primarily on the basis of demographic factors such as age and personal background, and on academic factors such as motivation, ability, and performance.

"Students range in age from eighteen to sixty-five, but most of them are older, or non-traditional." According to Bill, "The average age seems to be twenty-five, twenty-six years old and up. My day classes are traditionally twenty-five and under. In the day class you find more unmotivated students. In the night classes we have more older students. I've had a lot of fifty-year-olds."

The teachers also differentiate among students depending on where they reside—either on or off campus. Natalie made the following distinction:

> Part of it's dorm students and home students. Working students and non-working students. People that have home responsibilities, single-parent families. The ones that are living in the dorms having pizza every night are riding around in their cars with no responsibilities. Those things really do divide those classes right up.

Motivation seems to be a distinguishing attribute when correlated with age and residence. Bill's observations were similar to Natalie's: "In the day class, you find the more unmotivated students. Those are generally the dorm students, the eighteen-year-olds."

Other traditional demographic characteristics used to describe students were not overlooked; observations of gender and race were also reported: "A majority of our students here are female." "We have very few Black students on campus."

The teachers also described students in terms of personal (psychosocial) characteristics. Their initial observations reflect their concern over the potential risks to academic preparedness. For example, most of the teachers have concluded that many students come from families that do not stress education to their children. "They never really planned on going to college." Eric explained that, "The parents are not that concerned with their children's education, so they're not involved and students just flounder on through."

Other social stresses, such as family conflicts or chemical dependency, are known to compete with students' professional priorities. According to the teachers, academic performance is compromised when students devote more time and attention to their problems than to their studies.

The teachers assume that their students are attending Pine Lake College in order to make some changes or improvements in their lives. "Students want to get ahead in life." "Some of them are here to get a better job." However, Bill pointed out that some student ambitions appear to be less than academically motivated. He suggested that, "A lot of students are here *only* for the job;" while "Some students are only here to party, until they get kicked out." Eric assumed that, "Some students are here because they're fulfilling a parent's desire." The teachers' collective observations imply that these motives are lacking in intrinsic value when they appear to be at the expense of students' intellectual growth and development.

The teachers also discussed the need for a college education under exigent circumstances: "Some students are coming to school because they've been laid off, or need to retrain." "There are people who are divorced and need to take care of themselves and their children now."

Some of the references to school enrollment were directed at the nature of the College itself. Eric seemed certain that, "They come to Pine Lake because they want a job, and they don't want to spend all those years in a major university." He also outlined some additional circumstances:

> Others live in the area and would rather go to a big name university, but there are none close by, so they go locally. Some can't go anywhere else because they have children of their own, or they have job requirements in the area so they really can't go any place.

The teachers' perception of the nature and type of Pine Lake student is also a reflection of the recruitment and draw of students to the College in particular. In other words, the teachers believe that a certain type or caliber of students attend Pine Lake College. Bill determined that, "A lot of students come from the bottom third of the high school graduating class, so they were never on a career path to be Rhodes Scholars—but they're here." Gary's thoughts on the matter were similar to Bill's: "They're the ones that couldn't make it into the big universities." Kathleen's estimation was similar to Bill's and Gary's:

> The great majority of our students are not what we could call typical college prep, even out of high school. We have some students who have a way above average IQ, but I would say that probably most of our students have pretty average IQs.

Types and Kinds Of Students With Whom Teachers Work With

As the teachers described their students, performance and ability emerged as the most prominent and distinguishing features of the Pine Lake College student population. Furthermore, the perceived differences among students apparently are the product of the interaction effects between these two academic indicators. An analysis of the teachers' responses resulted in three major distinctions among the types of students on campus—students who are "good," students who are struggling, and students who are failing. Eric summarized the academic caliber of Pine Lake students on a continuum:

> Some are going to be great, some are going to be good; some are just going to get by. We do have some that are magnificent—that are impressive. Others will do like I do. Good. Not great, but good. Then there are those who sort of just squeak by. That's what I expect. I think 20% will do great, 20% will squeak by, and the rest will be good.

The "Good" Student. The teachers often referred to the students who earn high marks as "good" students during their interviews. "We have a lot of students who are quite bright." "The good ones figure it out." This term was *not* used as a judgment of students' personal character; it simply described students who demonstrated strong academic performance. Gary explained that, "You see the light bulb come on, and you see them making major changes in what they're learning." Kathleen also observed that,

> You can just kind of see the light go on sometimes. Sitting in the back of the room and all of the sudden they kind of perk up and they finally understand. Or, to watch them explain something to somebody else. Sometimes that's when you

really know that they get it. That's kind of the light that goes on, the spark you can see sometimes.

Signs of students who *grasp* the course material are described as an "illumination," or an enlightening event. It definitely stirs a positive reaction within the teachers, especially when students who are struggling with the material suddenly "catch on." Natalie shared an impression that mirrors Gary's and Kathleen's:

> Once in a while it's just really obvious that they understand, because, as our [former colleague] used to say, 'the light bulb goes on.' You can see it happen. Occasionally you get that dramatically happening. You get someone in the middle of the class saying, 'Oh ho! That's what that meant!' and I love it. Sometimes it's just their comfort in class that tells me that they're doing better.

Apparently, there is more to being a "good" student than earning good grades. Gary believes that, "A good student does not have to be an A student. A good student is one that works at it—works hard at it—and asks questions...." Kathleen believes that,

> [A] good student is not necessarily smart. A good student to me is somebody who comes to class, works on assignments; makes an attempt. If they get stumped, they come in. To me, a good student is one who works hard at it.

What emerged from the data is a general consensus that motivation, rather than intellect or ability alone, is the defining factor in academic achievement.

Because of their ability, the teachers do not appear to have specific concerns about the "good" students. This does not mean that they do not care about the well being of these students. It is just that the academically talented students are thought to be capable of passing their classes in a relatively independent manner. Gary maintained

that, "It's the old teaching controversy that the A students probably would almost learn no matter how bad the teacher was. They're going to learn anyway, almost no matter what you do."

Students Who Are Struggling. The teachers are keenly aware of the students who do not perform well in their classes. These are the students who are underprepared or perhaps unmotivated and are subsequently struggling with their studies. During the interviews, the teachers identified a number of characteristics and behaviors associated with these marginally functioning students. Their descriptions included one or more of the following dynamics: lack of attention, lack of motivation, difficulty in grasping the course concepts, and ultimately, poor grades. Eric provided the following example:

> I identify [student performance] mainly by test scores. On the tests that we give, I keep a running average so that I can tell what a student has made on this test and how they're doing so far. [For example,] 'I think based on this test or the previous two tests....' That gives me an indication.

Kathleen observed that, "[Some students are 'goofing off'] by reading a newspaper, putting their head on their desk or looking out the window, doing their math homework." Gary simply described the phenomenon as students who have "glazed eyes."

Test scores, behaviors, and overall performance are a few of the determinants that the teachers use to distinguish the "good" students from the ones who are struggling. However, the identification of students who are struggling is not always that clear cut or simple. As Gary noticed that, "They wanted to be more passive. It's hard to tell because they're usually so quiet. Any communication they have with me is almost more on a hostile basis." Bill stated that, "In the classroom period, all of our work is done outside

the class. We don't do any work or very many homework problems and stuff. Their struggling would be away from the classroom." Eric explained that,

> If a student volunteers to meet me if they have a problem, some other type of problem, then I would know. Other than that, I have no way of knowing. If they don't tell me, there's no way of telling that they have any other problems, other than if they're disruptive in the classroom.

The signs of a struggling student are not always palpable, and the opportunity to witness such problems does not always present itself.

Many of the teachers offered more in the way of explanations as to *why* some students do not do well in college. They pointed to past educational failures as likely sources of students' current difficulties: "Students who didn't do well in high school were frustrated, the work was too hard." Gary also assumed that, "They may have had some bad experiences in high school and got turned off to education." Along with the frustration, Kathleen introduced an added element of fear: "The student that says, 'I was never good in [subject]'— they're obviously afraid. They're worried if they can succeed."

Despite any negative educational experiences, Gary eventually pointed to student ability and reluctantly admitted that,

> There are times then I tend to question the intelligence level of some of my students. The simplest things they don't seem to get. [Perhaps] they're dumb. That this person has some overall major problems, deficiencies—whether it's emotional, personality, mental, behavioral, social—and they're just not going to make it.

His statement seems to reflect what several of the teachers have implicitly questioned over time.

On the other hand, the teachers take exception to those students who are identified as "struggling," yet do not necessarily "give up" or fail. These are the students who continually attempt to grapple with the course material and manage to pass their classes, even if the final grade is marginal. Though the teachers admire their perseverance, they are still aware of the difficulties these students experience. As Gary suggested,

> Now we want to talk about the ones that do try hard and still don't seem to get it. I think that sometimes it's mental ability. I try to feel that this is just a weakness, not their personality, in what they know. Just because there's this one area that they just can't do, that doesn't mean overall anything about who they are and what they know and what they can do. They could be a brain surgeon, they just can't get [subject].

Natalie also reflected on the frustrations experienced by students who work very hard:

> I think the idea that they can see that there are other people that understood it right away. I think that's very frustrating. The fact that they have to work so hard to get what everybody else is able to get. It's at least the way they perceive it, and that's not always true.

Nonetheless, students who are noted for not "giving up" are perceived to be motivated, even though they are functioning under a struggling status. According to Eric, "If you fail it [the class] and you get up and you take it again, then that shows that you're serious. But if not, then you won't." Based on her observations, Natalie believes that persistence pays off: "Most of the ones that really try manage to get it done." These

students are the exception to the rule and are given credit for taking responsibility for their education.

Students Who Are Failing. It is clear from the teachers' descriptions that not all students who are struggling make it through college. Many run the risk of failing altogether. The teachers believe that the barriers to learning are compounded by students who are not interested in their education or do not apply themselves to their studies. To the teachers, statements such as, "I'm here because I have to be," or, "I'm here because I have to take this class," are reflective of students' negative attitudes toward education. They see these dynamics as both contributing to and resulting from poor academic performance.

The teachers apparently associate these attitudes with behaviors that are manifested in unproductive student responses, such as defensiveness and resistance to the learning process. Natalie believes that, "The visiting back and forth [in class] says, 'It's not important to me [the student]; I really don't care about this.' It is a mechanism that they use to cope with the fact that they are failing." She went on to explain that,

> There are some students that would rather quit early instead of fail so they can say, 'I wasn't there for half the class, how could you expect me to get that?' It's a self-saving excuse...it guarantees that they will fail. That way, they have something to blame for their failure.

Kathleen also explained the reasoning behind this type of behavior by assuming the student's point of view:

> Whenever you have a situation where you think you're going to fail, [some students say], 'I didn't care about it anyway. I really didn't try hard enough. Now

if I have really tried, then I probably could do it.' But, if a student acts like he doesn't care and he fails, then he can say, 'I didn't lose anything.'

The teachers agree that making excuses and blaming others for one's failure is decidedly indicative of the failing student. Consequently, these are the students who feel uncomfortable in the classroom and generally alienated from the learning process. Yet, they also noted that some students who are failing offer no defense at all: "They just don't seem to want to do the work." "Some students come in class and sleep." Either way, many of the teachers regard these behaviors as cycles of learned helplessness driven by the fear of failure. Kathleen gave the following interpretation: "The students that say, 'I was never good in [subject]—they're obviously afraid. They're worried if they can succeed." As long as these problems are left unresolved, the potential for failure exists: "Some students get so frustrated that they just quit coming to class." "Some students quit coming to class altogether." Natalie anticipated the problem with a sense of sarcasm: "Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had classes of students that came every day and all wanted to be there and all participated?!"

In a broader context, the teachers assume that the performance of failing students is relative to their individual life circumstances. Personal problems that adversely effect educational experiences often result in negative attitudes that perpetuate poor academic performance. Given the powerful impact these dynamics have on academic achievement, they are reexamined in a future section of this chapter under the context of student motivation.

Conclusions Regarding Beliefs About Students

The teachers identified a variety of personal and academic traits that characterize their students and often discussed them in relationship to one another. Several configurations emerged with the belief that some students tended to perform at a higher level simply because of innate intellectual ability, or as a function of age. The teachers seem to concur that the older (non-traditional aged) students are more goal-oriented and more mature on average than some of the younger students—especially the freshmen and sophomore students living in the dormitories on Campus.

The teachers generally recognize the students who perform either very poorly or very well academically. However, the consensus among them is that most students "do okay" if not better. "Most of my students will pass my class." Gary stated that, "Half to two-thirds of them have that attitude: 'I'm here and I'm going to learn.' As long as I gave them direction, they were going to learn something—partly because they had that attitude."

It is interesting to note that students who performed at least on an average level did not receive as much discussion from the teachers as students who exhibited either high or low academic performance. These students do not seem to stand out with any extreme performance attributes or draw any extra attention from the teachers. The teachers do not share any disregard for the (academically) average student, it is just that these students are perceived to be capable of functioning rather independently. Bill articulated a more detailed conceptualization of these particular students:

> The middle-of-the-road students you lose track of mentally. Their potential is to get that job and stay there. They're not going to kill themselves for the A's.

They're going to get decent grades so they get a job and that's all they care about. Those people, they're nice people. They're average.

In the long run, the teachers believe that it is a concerted effort that carries many students through college, with long-term attendance (senior status) contributing to students' success.

Sources of Motivation

An analysis of the data reveals that personal motivation consistently stood out as a means in which to understand their students and explain their performance more than any other academic and personal variable alone. The strength of this dynamics was significant enough to generate an extended discussion of its effects during the interview process of this research. By no coincidence, the teachers' assessment of student motivation parallels the perceptions that they have shared in the previous profiles of their students.

In the following sections, the teachers' understanding of what motivates their students to study and succeed at Pine Lake College is presented in greater detail. The first section explores the teachers' conception of the major sources of motivation. The second and third sections reveal how the teachers analyze the complex interaction between influences on motivation and performance outcomes. The fourth and fifth sections explore the teachers' evaluation of the academic, institutional, and developmental dynamics of student motivation and their changes over time. These sections are followed by a conclusion on student motivation and performance. In the sixth section, the teachers share their affective responses to the consequences of

motivation and performance. These topics are followed by a final summary of the research findings at the end of this chapter.

The teachers believe that personal motivation is inherent in the decision to attend college. The reasons behind these decisions are both extrinsic and intrinsic in nature and seem to substantiate the teachers' predictions of students' future scholastic motivation and performance.

The teachers cited several examples of the perceived relationship between motivation and performance: "Their parents pushed them or they came here to get a degree of some sort...but they were never highly motivated to do well." The teachers also believe that those who attend college just to "get a job" seem to share in a modest level of motivation and subsequent marginal performance. Kathleen basically conveyed their assumptions with a rhetorical question: "Why do most people go to college? I don't think we have a lot of students who are here because they're here to learn. They're here to get a job." Bill also believes that, "They come here to get a job." Given the set of circumstances, extrinsic motivation is appears to be conditional, and the teachers have their doubts whether or not these motives have an enduring effect on academic achievement.

As a general rule, wanting a good job is not necessarily regarded as a negative in and of itself, nor does it necessarily guarantee poor performance. However, when these aspirations are met with a lack of priorities in the classroom, the value of an education seems to be depreciated. One teacher in particular lamented that, "The concept of learning for learning's sake is coming few and far between. 'I'll learn if it gets me something; if it gets me a better job.'" Eric also expressed his disappointment in the

perceived changes in students' priorities: "I've talked to some secondary ed teachers, and they say this is generally a problem nationwide, where students are not that concerned with the education itself." He also observed that, "The students that we're getting now as opposed to the ones when I started here 10 years ago are a lot different. They're not as motivated; they're not as caring.

According to the teachers, intrinsic motivation plays a defining role in the lives of their learners. Bill definitively stated that, "Internal motivation impacts classroom behavior a lot. If you're going on to college, your freshmen are the motivated students, to survive, generally speaking. The non-motivated students do not survive." Students perceived to be intrinsically motivated are also thought to be more interested in learning and more concerned about their education in general. Years of observation suggest that these are the students who are genuinely interested in learning for the sake of learning. Gary remarked that,

> Some students are attending Pine Lake College to learn more than just the subject matter. You will find that some of your better students will adopt that attitude, too; not as often as I'd like, but, especially the ones who've been around and have done well.

Bill believes that, "Most generally, the self-motivated student here has a firm idea of where he or she wants to be. Not necessarily career, [but] where they want to be and why they're doing what they're doing."

The teachers share a basic belief that students who are intrinsically motivated usually perform better than students who are extrinsically motivated. Yet, there seems to be a consensus among them that most students are willing to "give it a try." "Most of

them want to learn something; probably half to two-thirds of them." Natalie observed that, "The ones that stick around really do try very hard."

Assessing Motivation and Performance

Kathleen's estimation of the degree of student motivation seems to speak for most of the teachers:

> A fourth of the students probably really work hard and will do anything it takes to get an A. A fourth of them try really hard, but if something better comes up, they'll take it. A fourth of them are kind of there and participate when it's convenient. I'd say probably in any class, at least 10%, maybe 15% of the students don't participate, don't show up, or don't do anything.

The faculty is of the opinion that students who perform well in college have most likely done well in the past. Gary explained that, "That's the difference, the ones who are doing well typically are determined to do well." Where strong academic ability is a "given," motivation seems to be an inherently linked characteristic.

Yet, as Gary's comment seemed to suggest, the amount of *effort* students invest in their studies outweighs scholastic ability as an observable outcome of academic achievement. The teachers were quick to qualify motivation as an independent variable and acknowledged those students who struggle in college yet persist in their studies: "They're all here. Sometimes some of them have a fair amount of absences, but they came here. They made the effort."

By the same token, the teachers did not hesitate to point out the academically able students who do not always apply themselves to their studies. "They just do what they need to do to get an A, and that's it." Gary observed that, regardless of ability, "They did

just enough to figure out, 'This is going to be on the test. Whatever I [the student] have to do I'm going to, and that's all I'm worried about.'" The teachers also noted that, "To some students, a passing grade was all they cared about." "Some students come in with the attitude, 'I'm here, show me what to do, then let's get on with it.'" Bill concluded that, "They don't have the drive or the dedication to do it." As time goes by, this is not as much of a surprise as it is a let down for the teachers, as Kathleen explained, "Sometimes I'm disappointed, for example, when a student I see has potential and doesn't do their work or doesn't come to class."

Influences On Motivation

The teachers identified a number of individual factors they believe to have an influence on motivation and performance. They recounted the pre-existing conditions and mitigating life circumstances mentioned in previous passages of the interview data. Speculation on the potentially negative experiences took precedence among the teachers. Gary assumed that, "Maybe they've had some bad experiences. There's probably some kind of situations that have led them to creating this attitude that they have." Bill noticed that, "A lot of students blow it off and don't do well because it's your old high school 'I don't like the teacher,' or 'I don't like the material. I'll show them.'" Eric offered the following observation:

> They come to Pine Lake with an attitude that they're going to make it all the way through anyway, so they really don't make that much of an effort forward. They just have to sit in the class, and they'll get a passing grade. It's hard to take freshmen students and change their belief systems, their value systems, just as one instructor.

In Eric's estimation, simply wanting to sit in the class and "get by" is a negative educational experience in and of itself.

Without exception, negative educational experiences are most often associated with resistant attitudes and subsequent low motivation. "I think that maybe we have a lot of students who maybe act like they don't care, but the truth of the matter is that they think that they can't do it because they failed before." The teachers also observed these dynamics manifesting themselves in other ways, such as defensiveness and self-doubt. For example, Gary revealed that,

> They've gotten into the habit, behavior, where they don't believe that they can do well, and so they don't try. I have some who say, 'Teach me.' They almost dare you to try and teach them something because it's my responsibility.

Personal and family problems were readily implicated in college performance. "A lot of our students come in with a lot of personal problems." "These people have a lot of money problems." At the very least, these problems tend to create distractions in students' studies: "They always have some problem that they need to take care of; their schoolwork is not as important." Gary confided that, "I tend to perceive it more often as mental, emotional blocks, rather than mental ability." Kathleen shared a similar perception: "I think we have students that are wounded in life and maybe haven't had a lot of successes, therefore, maybe they don't have a lot of self-esteem, particularly in the [subject] classes." Bill emphasized his response to the problem: "I've known more about medical problems, boyfriend problems, kid problems than you would *ever* really want to know." He also agreed that, "There's been some really delicate problems, and it has impacted their performance. Their concentration is just not there...."

Outside obligations were also acknowledged as competing priorities. Gary explained that, "All it takes is a sick child, or personal sickness and health problems. They don't have the time to put into studying and reading and making the effort." He added that,

> My suspicion is that they did a lot of other things, they have jobs. It's like they're getting by and that's all they care about....They don't want to expend any effort or time because they have other things that are of importance to them—their social lives.

Academic and Institutional Factors Impacting Student Performance

According to the teachers, there are several academic developments that shape student motivation and performance in the college context. Years of experience have enabled the teachers to highlight the scholastic transformations their students go through during their college careers.

Much of the teachers' discussions centered on the Pine Lake College courses that their students had to take. They concurred that the courses students enroll in are among the strongest institutional variables effecting academic achievement. This seems to be apparent when students are attending classes that they do not like or do not perceive as being of any value. For example, Bill remarked that,

> Everybody is in that [subject] class because they've got to get it to graduate.... Motivation is not there for any of them, because they've got to take the class, and that does make a difference. They're not interested in most of it.

Kathleen admitted that, "There isn't anybody here that takes [subject] classes because they want to be a [profession], they take them because it's required. I think that

is something that is always difficult." Gary echoed the same sentiment: "A lot of students, no matter what you say, don't see any value in taking [subject] classes." He also assumed that some of his students were thinking, "I'm going to skip as often as I think I can get away with it." Natalie conceded that,

> If you get somebody who decides after the first class that they don't really need it, and they're only coming back for the test and they show up for the test and fail it, there's not a whole lot you can do for those folks.

The teachers are also aware of the students who avoid enrolling in courses that are perceived to be too difficult. "Most of them are obviously taking course studies that don't require much [subject]." "They're looking for an easier way out; trying to find a program that isn't as tough as [subject]." On the contrary, for students who liked or valued their courses, the teachers noticed a vast difference:

> I have to admit actually that percentage [of students not wanting to be in the class] is a lot lower for my students, because I'm teaching [subject], and they know [skills] are important on the job. They're interested in their job.

Course grades are considered to be a key catalyst in the learning experience at the College. The strength of this factor impacts students and teachers alike. In Eric's estimation,

> To some students, grades are everything. The biggest motivator we have is grades. It's sad, but that's the truth. If a person isn't motivated by a good grade or isn't encouraged by a poor grade, then it's kind of hard to motivate them. What it should be is it should be more concerned with learning the stuff. If they can't pass, they don't get the grade.

Gary revealed that,

> Sometimes grades become a little bit of a problem because they're also an incentive. You don't want them to get frustrated and give up because they're having troubles...so you want to give good grades. I sometimes try to be lenient with my grading policies. On the other hand, I kind of need them as some kind of an external motivating factor for some of the beginning students, to get them to make the effort to do what it is they need to do.

While striving to earn good grades is initially regarded as a form of extrinsic motivation, the teachers do see this as a positive, especially when the students' lives gain momentum. One of Bills' former students came to mind: "One student was on governmental assistance and is now a supervisor for Michigan State University, or the State of Michigan, and is doing real well—making good money."

Developmental Changes In Student Motivation and Performance

According to the teachers, how students cope with the academics early on is rather telling: "Some students learn real quickly what it takes to get the grade." Bill realized that, "If the students didn't do well in the beginning classes, they wouldn't survive in the advanced classes anyway." As Eric concluded, "Sometimes it takes one or two terms and they finally realize, 'Hey, I want to stay here, I've got to do some work,' and they finally get it."

Long-term enrollment apparently has a cumulative effect on motivation, performance, and outcomes of learning. The teachers have observed that as students become increasingly acclimated to the learning process, they become more practiced and proficient as time goes on. The teachers attribute scholastic achievement to students

learning "how to be a student." Eric explained that, "At the end of their academic program, the more advanced students are much more homogeneous. They're much closer together [academically]. They're able to build on a knowledge base of past courses, on into the advanced sequences." Bill reflected upon similar circumstances: "The junior and senior level students have a much better background, and there's more interaction."

Increases in motivation are apparently thought to coexist with the various changes in student development. Bill's observation was made in response to his previous statement: "The upper level classes are all majors. I've had more absenteeism problems in the [lower level subject] classes. But, the upper level classes, there's much more interaction. There's much more motivation to do well." Like many of the teachers in this study, he attributed these differences to age, time, and other circumstances:

> My night classes are for the most part twenty-five plus, and there's a difference. They've been out working, and they're much more motivated to do the work, to understand, because they see the implications in a hurry.

On the other hand, if poor motivation persisted, Kathleen and the rest of the faculty were basically resigned to the fact that, "Those students stop coming and I don't see them anyway."

The college environment tends to stimulate an internal shift toward college completion, especially among those students who have been enrolled in the College for several terms. The teachers have suggested that student motivation is likely to increase at or near this particular time, because, "They're getting close to having to get a job, they're starting to do a lot better." Bill explained that, "I have other students who are

graduating in [subject], and they have to take it to sit [for the subject exam], so it's a different motivation. They're much more motivated." Eric pointed out that,

> They want to learn something because they're getting close to the point where they have to go out and get a job and do the stuff; so learning how to do [skill] is important, because they're going to be doing it in a couple of months.

Summary of Student Ability, Motivation and Performance

The teachers' assessment of student ability, motivation, and performance was an essential part of their reflection on the quality of their students' college careers. Their initial assumption was that most students came to Pine Lake College to better their lives in some way, given the fact that they made the effort to enroll.

Without exception, the notion of "effort" emerged as the most provocative dimension of student motivation. The teachers believe that if all students made an effort to succeed in the college context, a majority of them most likely would, regardless of their abilities. "All students are bright enough [in ability]. If they put forth the effort they could be technically competent to do the work." Kathleen articulated a similar assumption:

> The biggest factor, I would have to say, is if you're willing to spend time, you can do ok. If you're not willing to commit to the time, then they probably, regardless of what their IQ is, are not going to do very well.

The teachers maintain that the students' belief in their ability to succeed is critical to motivation and performance. Kathleen believes that,

> In most of my classes, if you come to class and do the work you can get a good grade, unless you're way below average. If they think they can do the work they

> really will try—if you make it at a level that they feel comfortable that they can do it.

Natalie agreed: "Most students really do, if they think they can do the work, try to stay on track." Gary added the following qualification: "There's more than just intellectual ability in doing well in school. There are attitudes and work behaviors and things that all come into this...emotional stability and stuff." The only real exception to the rule is if a student is seriously underprepared and lacking in scholastic ability.

Teachers' and Students' Reactions to Scholastic Performance

Despite the ample opportunity to learn, it is beyond the teachers' understanding why a number of students are only marginally involved in their education. Bill reiterated that, "I'm kind of a driven student myself. I'm self-motivated, and I'm also economically driven. Some of our students here throw down $750 [a class] and don't show up to class. I've never understood that."

For students who are having a hard time with their courses, emotions run high for both students and teachers alike. Natalie described the following condition:

> Those are the people generally that work so hard at trying to get it done, and when they can't, they just are so depressed because they know that there's just no way that they can think that way. That's supreme frustration.

She continued to give a detailed account of how students cope with the emotional excesses that they experience in the classroom:

> A student that is frustrated in [subject] class is going to strike back at the source of the frustration. That source of frustration might be me, it might be the other people in the class that do better than they do. Early on if you have somebody

that's having trouble, they'll just drop out. If they can't do the stuff, they aren't going to stick around. There are those that preserve their own self-image by quitting early, because if they stayed, they knew that they would fail. It would require a lot of work, and they just aren't willing to do that. Sometimes I think they are looking for some reason to blame failure on other than themselves.

The teachers related their own struggles in coming to terms with their students. The feelings expressed were quite personal at times. Gary revealed his own difficulty comprehending the situation:

> Because of the type of person I am, that's when I have trouble understanding, sometimes perceiving, people who don't seem to want to do their best. They don't seem to want to try. It's like my own frustration in that I don't know why they don't understand.

Kathleen emphatically stated:

> I do not understand students that don't come to class. I don't mean once or twice, but I mean consistently. Last night, I had this girl that just got up at 9:00 and walked out. It would be like getting up and leaving a movie before it was over. I don't understand it!

Bill shared the following reaction:

> Some of the real bad students you get close to because you try to help them or save them, and they don't want to be saved—'Just go away.' At some point in time, I will help you. If you're not willing to help yourself, don't waste my time.

On a personal level, he admitted that,

> If they have that opportunity and they just flat out blow it because they don't care...I have a real problem with that. It's terrible to say, as an individual they may be nice people, but my esteem for them would drop....

These issues have even left the teachers wondering about their own abilities as teachers. Kathleen voiced her self-doubts: "I think as teachers we all have a tendency to take all the responsibility. If students don't do well, 'What did I do wrong?' I feel that the students aren't putting forth their best effort, I feel it's my responsibility." Gary shared a similar sentiment:

> When it starts getting bad for quite a few students, the frustration level gets really high, sometimes I start feeling bad. I realize I'm not doing a good job. I feel it's okay for me to feel frustrated sometimes, too.

Eric responded to the situation with more affect than usual during his interview:

> There's not much you can do for them. If they're unwilling to try or if they come across as 'I'm totally lost,' my personal feeling, it's again sad. I'm in the education business and have students who are not learning. It's not a happy feeling.

After pausing for a moment, he added that, "What's even more upsetting is the student who doesn't pass and doesn't really care. The person who fails and doesn't care that he failed means that that would be a very poor student."

From a practical perspective, the teachers' frustrations are exacerbated by the constraints of time. The scope of their responsibilities as teachers has been limited by amount of time available to meet the needs of all of their students, let alone the ones who are struggling or failing. Natalie's first response was to anticipate the options available outside of the classroom:

There will always be [time constraints]. There's never going to be a classroom that's got enough time to satisfy everybody's needs. I like to try and get them help outside of class, because I know I don't have time in class to get to them to help them with that.

On a personal level, she admitted that,

That's a tough question. That's one that's really hard to be able to settle. They know that I'm available for office hours. It frustrates me to no end. I have no idea what to do to help them. Other than sitting down with them, sometimes I can explain my way through a problem to them, but it's a definite one-on-one. They can't do it in a group.

Eric offered a firm description of his professional boundaries:

I look at my responsibility as to the group mainly, that's my number one responsibility. As to individuals, I think it's up to me to identify which ones are having difficulty, approach them on my own, encourage them to come to see me, or go to see the Learning Center people. I don't look at myself as being a private tutor, and that's a line I draw. I can't help you on a one-on-one basis consistently.

Bill mediates his professional responsibilities with those of the students:

[It] depends on why they're having the hard time. If they're doing the homework and not doing well, I have much more sympathy. Then you have people that have done nothing. Then they say' 'Well, I'm totally lost.' Well, sympathy goes out the window because they've done none of the underlying work. Like self-motivation, [the students have to make an effort]. [If not], then I have no responsibility to them.

As the conversation ensued, the teachers conceded that no amount of effort on their part alone could resolve the lack of student motivation. Gary explained that, "You try to help them out as best you can, but if they're not motivated to do the work, there's very little you can do." Eric agreed that, "Until they decide they want to learn, all the encouragement from the professors or the counselors isn't going to help a bit." Natalie illustrated her version of the circumstances: "If they choose not to show up, you can't go out in the dorms and say, 'get out of that bed and get your clothes on and get over to class!'"

In the final analysis, the teachers unanimously concluded that a lack of motivation *and* academic ability nearly guarantees a student's failure from a course, or failure from the College altogether. Natalie gave a concise description of the problem:

> I have people that can't do it [the work] and don't want to be there. They are probably one of the hardest batches to work with. They have no incentive. They are probably the ones that are hardest to reach. They don't want to be in another [subject] class so they'll fail again; and they are guaranteed that they're going to fail again. They're really tough to get through to, to get to do anything at all.

Beyond any professional recourse, a solution to the problem of chronic underpreparedness continues to elude the teachers; and coming to terms with the status quo has done little to alleviate the dissonance that they have experienced. Gary admitted that,

> It's very tempting to give up on. To label them as 'there's nothing I can do because they won't make an effort;' I have problems with that. Maybe I'm not patient enough. Maybe they can get and will get it. Who am I to say you should

change your major? Sometimes there's a point where you feel we, I, the institution is doing them a disservice by not saying, 'You're working in an area where you have a big deficiency. Maybe you should try something else. Maybe you're wasting your time and your money.

Gary seemed to be suggesting that "letting these students go" might be a more conscionable decision, yet, he continued to be uncomfortable with accepting failure as an option. He expressed his reluctance on a personal level:

I have to be honest in that I tend to personally err toward the encouragement of them—not taking responsibility of telling them that they're not going to get it. Now a bit of this is because I tend to be passive and non-confrontational. That's part of my personality right away. I tend to at best tell students, 'You need to see me outside of class. We need to talk about this.'

Eric's convictions were quite clear:

I'm not going to soft-soap it. I'm not going to be overly polite to the point were the truth is hidden or impaired. If they come to me and ask me a question, I will give them a straight answer, about the content of the course or their potential in the class; or, should they drop it or should they stick it out?

Bill simply stated that, "Those that don't catch on I will counsel into another area."

Natalie analyzed the dilemma in a broader context:

Other than saying that their mental capacity is just not sufficient to absorb the type of abstract material that's necessary in [subject], there really isn't a whole lot more that you can say.... I think the college is taking money under false pretenses. There's no way in the world they will ever be able to take that class

and pass it. Unfortunately, with our open door policy, the policy really has no control over who comes in. But there are some people that just really shouldn't be here. It's not the spot for them.

The impressions articulated by Natalie seem to be shared by all of the teachers, especially when they conflict with the realities of institutional life. By policy, student diversity is polarized by the open-door enrollment procedures at Pine Lake College—those who can meet the teachers' and the College's educational standards, and those who can not. In practice, the teachers' academic standards are not so easily maintained, given the margin of preparedness in the classroom.

Despite the difficulties, it seemed important to the teachers to reiterate that, "A ['bad'] student is a relative term. As a person, they're not. Just in that course they don't comply with what they should do," as Bill suggested. Gary confided that, "I try to feel that this is just a weakness, not their personality, in what they know. They're human."

Conclusions Regarding Motivation and Performance

In the classroom, the act of teaching involves the transmission of the course concepts and the development of content mastery. Instructional sequences are predicated on the primary elements of ability, motivation, and performance. These practices are mediated with an awareness of the students who are succeeding, students who are struggling yet trying, and students who are struggling and failing.

At the same time, the teachers believe that learning outcomes are significantly influenced by the amount of effort that the students put forth. Factors such as interest, attentiveness, and attitudes toward learning represent sources of motivation that also

shape the learning process. These are the dynamics that the teachers attempt to redirect in a manner that helps their students to succeed.

The teachers' personal styles are also considered to be an advantage in the classroom. Impressions that stimulate instruction and captivate the students are assumed to enhance the learning environment.

Under difficult circumstances, however, the teachers have not only expressed their dismay over students who do not attempt to participate or do well in their classes, but also their frustration and sadness over those who do not succeed. Their emotional reactions come with the recognition that students who are both underprepared *and* unmotivated to succeed seem to be too marginally uneducable. Often times their resolve is accompanied by the resignation that there is only so much that they can do to help these students, given the limited amount of time both in and outside of the classroom. In their own private moments, the teachers' have even had their doubts over their own ability as teachers.

Though their ideals for teaching are not always achieved, the teachers have remained steadfast in their roles as professional educators. Their desire to educate their students far outweighs the disappointment that comes with an education that has failed.

Summary and Conclusion

Upon the conclusion of all five interviews, specific steps were taken to condense and qualify the great volume of information gathered from the teachers in this study. Horizonaling the data effectively removed any repetitive or incomplete statements made during the interviews while preserving the meaning of the expressed responses. The data in each interview were subsequently coded and clustered into horizons that were similar

in content. This process prepared the data for the identification of common "meaning units" contained in the teachers' responses. The treatment of the data culminated in the development of the individual textural descriptions from these meaning units for all five of the teachers (see Appendix C). The condensed narratives contained common themes that were used to format the data in a uniform manner, facilitating the comparisons made across all five data sets. They described the "what" of the teachers' teaching experiences.

The individual textural descriptions provided the data necessary for the construction of the composite textural description—a collective representation of the teachers' overall perceptions and experiences. A preliminary analysis of the individual textural descriptions yielded three universal themes that served to restructure the contents of the data—An Overall Sense of Teaching, Beliefs about Students, and Approaches to Instruction. Examples of the teachers' perspectives were cited to support the findings and the subsequent interpretations given in each of the respective areas. Together, they represent the essence of the teachers' beliefs regarding the preparedness of their learners, and the potential relationship between their beliefs and their conceptions of teaching.

The composite textural description served as the basic unit of analysis for the composite structural description presented in Chapter Five of the research. The initial methodology was informed by the following research inquiries: How do the teachers make sense of such a diverse student body? How do the teachers determine the ways in which they will teach their students? An analysis of the data revealed the meaning inherent in their beliefs about their students, and how they accommodate scholastic differences in the classroom.

In chapter five, the composite structural description is followed by a theoretical discussion of these dynamics in relationship to the literature in the field of postsecondary education.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Chapter five begins with an analysis of the teachers' beliefs about the preparedness of their students, their teaching practices, and the perceived relationship between these constructs. A discussion of these and other dynamic elements of teaching will be framed in terms of how the teachers attempt to educate their students in the context of Pine Lake College. Collectively, these data represent the composite structural description—a culmination of the meaning or the "why" regarding the teachers' beliefs about their students and their work at the College.

The teachers' beliefs are reflective of an implicit theory or model that is used to guide the work of the teachers. In the current study, the teachers' beliefs and subsequent teaching practices are interpreted within the context of a coping model of teaching.

In the latter part of chapter five, a theoretical analysis of the related research literature in higher education has been applied to the current study's major findings. The analysis is followed by a conclusion to the research findings and suggested future implications for research and practice in the field of higher education.

The Coping Model of Teaching Practice

Understanding the practice of teaching involves a discussion of its primary elements—the teacher, the learner, the content, the process, the ideals which guide instruction, and the socio-cultural context in which instruction occurs (Pratt, 1998; 1992). These elements stand in particular relationship to each other. A given teacher's commitment reflects, in the service of his or her ideals, one or more of these relationships

(Pratt, 1998). In regard to the teachers' perspective, these elements provide a framework in which to explore the beliefs they hold about the preparedness of their students, and how their beliefs potentially shape their stated teaching practices.

In the context of Pine Lake College, the notion of teaching seems to be shaped by three forces that potentially work in opposition to one another: 1) the teachers' basic beliefs about teaching and learning; 2) the criteria for which the teachers were hired; and 3) the College's policies on open-door enrollment and standardized curricular objectives.

In the teachers' estimation, teaching requires that they maintain their standards of teaching and learning while simultaneously meeting the needs of their students and the demands of the institution. As a result, the implicit theory or model that seems to guide the practice of these teachers appears to approximate a "coping" model of teaching. In the following sections, this researcher has elaborated on this model as it reflects the beliefs and practices of the teachers.

Commitment to Content and the Influence of Context

It is evident from the data that there is a correlation between the teachers' practices and the College's agenda. Hiring the teachers to impart their subject-matter expertise is compatible with the College's designation as a career-oriented institution. This practice supports the Institution's mission regarding the preparation for entry-level careers, and coincides with the academic objectives that have been stipulated throughout the College's curricula. In turn, the institutional context serves to reinforce the teachers' ideals for teaching. The teachers in this study were educated under similar standards and have incorporated principles of content mastery into their own teaching practices. Their

commitment to content is further reinforced by other mainstream educational policies and practices and broader social values that stress personal accountability.

The organizational context also influences the teachers' methods of teaching, but in ways that are less direct. The College offers a variety of practical enrichment programs for the teachers, but it does not specify in the ways that they do with the curriculum and content the instructional methods that the teachers should subscribe to in the classroom. It is left to the teachers to instruct their students accordingly.

Commitment To Content Meets With Motivation and Performance

In the practical domain, the learning process is challenged by several dynamics that have emerged within the college classroom. The context represents the critical juncture between theory and practice, where the characteristics and abilities of the students conflict with the teachers' ideals of teaching. These discrepancies are exacerbated by the increased diversity of the student population at the College. With modest acknowledgement of the College's open-enrollment policy, the teachers are aware that they are now coping with educating an even greater number of diverse and underprepared students than they had initially perceived or experienced. How they mediate among these competing forces is at the core of understanding the coping model of teaching.

Mediating the Tension

An analysis of the data reveals that the teachers' ideals of teaching are shaped by the contexts of the Institution and society. Yet, tensions arise when their commitment to content mastery is compromised by the dynamics of underpreparedness in the classroom. Among the students who will struggle with the coursework, a certain percentage of them

will not "make the grade" or complete their college education. The pressure is compounded by the fact that there are differing standards and often competing understandings of what level of academic proficiency is intended or acceptable, and who or what should define those outcomes—the teachers, the College, or the abilities of the students. Adhering to the College's prescription for academic proficiency is debatable to the extent that the teachers are limited by the abilities of the students. By the same token, the academic standards prescribed by the teachers are not always attainable for much of the same reason. A broad-spectrum analysis suggests that these discrepancies are further exacerbated by the lack of agreement over the feasibility of today's academic standards.

Despite the tensions that have culminated in the classroom, the teachers have developed a specific pedagogy that they believe to be intrinsic to the challenges of teaching at Pine Lake College. The next section describes how these principles are related to their practical methods of coping with these forces.

The Process of Teaching: Instructional Methods as Mediating Strategies

The teachers perceive a degree of tension over the need to cover the course content and the need to address the preparedness of the learners in their classrooms. As a result, these concerns have shaped the teaching process. In order to cope with the tension, the teachers' approach to handling these forces is best described as mediation. It is a reflection of their commitment to content and their desire to maximize the dimensions of learning for all of their students.

Standard lecture formats are structured around the course content and the various levels of student ability. In practice, these priorities are sustained with a variety of instructional exercises intended to reinforce the different levels and styles of learning in

the classroom (Angelo & Cross, 1993). The teachers tend to prefer hands-on or group activities—assuming that the students do, too. These practical applications enable the teachers to mediate a majority of their students' needs within a limited period of time. This concept of teaching appears to reflect past process-product paradigms that emphasized outcomes of effectiveness in the research in education (Fang, 1996).

However, since adhering to the curricular criteria of the College is also important, the teachers' instructional adaptations appear to be at the margins of their pedagogical approaches. These practices signify the teachers' commitment to the content element of teaching as much or more so than the process of teaching itself, although process is certainly not an unintentional consequence. Because they view a number of their students as having relatively low levels of motivation, the teachers acknowledge the need to motivate their students to learn as an important aspect of their work. Failure to do so may weaken the educational process and the incentive to learn, especially for underprepared students (Lowman, 1994).

To the extent that instructional methods provide reinforcements to the learning process, strategies that accelerate the learning process are not necessarily congruent to the needs of underprepared learners. The teachers are not inclined to run the risk of alienating their students with methods and materials that are too advanced. On the other hand, for the teachers who err on the side of caution, this often means simplifying the material in order to accommodate these concerns. The risk of responding in the remedial context, however, is the possibility of slowing down the learning process to the point of boredom (Monahan, et al., 1989). Regardless of their approach, the teachers realize that a certain percentage of their students are still going to be discarded.

The coping model of teaching represents a functional interpretation of the teachers' practices. The teachers' practices are informed by a complex combination of perceived characteristics and needs of their learners. Differences in academic ability are mediated with instructional strategies in the classroom. Meaning schemes are reinforced by the context of the College and the social values implicit in the model.

Affective Responses To Academic Underpreparedness

The teachers have identified a handful of pedagogical strategies for redressing the needs of academically underprepared students, yet they find themselves caught between the dilemma of content mastery versus student ability. Early on in their careers, many of the teachers' reacted to the performance of underprepared students with a sense of disillusionment—even disbelief. They did not fully understand the magnitude of the problem or why some of these students were not even attempting to succeed in the college context.

Though the teachers have become more knowledgeable about these dynamics over time, they still provoke a certain amount of tension and disappointment within them. All of the teachers have questioned why these students would "blow an opportunity" at college and not "try harder." Some of them have gone so far as to question the standards of the administration—that some of the seriously underprepared students should not have been admitted to the College in the first place. In their quietest moments, the teachers have also questioned their own abilities as teachers.

These perceptions are what influence the process of planning, mediating, and in certain instances, letting go. The teachers believe, for the most part, that that they have done everything in their power to mediate technique over time in the classroom. Beyond

their best efforts, the teachers contend that the students are the ones who are ultimately responsible for their learning. The consensus is that if the students are unwilling or unable to benefit from the learning process, then it is the students and not the teachers who have failed themselves in their education.

This is not an act of indifference on the part of the teachers, nor is it an act of self-preservation. It is a reflection of the teachers' strong commitment to the ideal that characterizes their beliefs about teaching—content mastery—which they are ultimately accountable for by their institution, their profession, and society at large. Despite their strong sense of disappointment when students are struggling, the teachers will continue to reconcile their wishes for their students to succeed with their sadness over students who fail.

Theoretical Implications

A qualitative exploration of the teachers' beliefs has provided insight into their personal thoughts about their work as teachers, and the population of students that they are educating. In the following section, these perspectives have been reinforced under a broader research context—a synthesis of the related research on teacher beliefs and practices with the beliefs of the teachers in this study. These constructs have also been used to generate future implications in this area of adult education. These implications are discussed at the end of chapter five.

The present findings have been integrated into several key pieces of research in the areas of student preparedness, teacher beliefs, and the practice of teaching at the college level. The broad framework is centered on three significant bodies of research from the field: 1) teachers' perceptions of underprepared college learners (Pitts, White, &

Harrison, 1999); 2) Clark and Peterson's (1986) Model of Teacher Thought and Action; and 3) Pratt's (1992) General Model of Teaching. The framework provides an academic understanding of the teachers' thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in the context of higher education.

Characteristics and Beliefs about Underprepared Students

To the extent that students have revealed aspects of themselves in the classroom, the teachers perceive a number of their students to be deficient in several basic academic and cognitive skills (Dunn, 1995; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Henderson, 1992; Mealey, 1990; Judd, et al., 1985; Olagunja & Jordan, 1982; Brier, 1979). However, their notion of underpreparedness seem to be informed more so by their impressions of student motivation than by specific levels of academic achievement. For example, some academically low-functioning students are still regarded as "good" students if they are perceived to be applying themselves to the learning process.

The perceptions revealed by the teachers in this study bear a striking resemblance to the findings in the study conducted by Pitts, et al. (1999) regarding the effects of academic underpreparedness on college faculty. Their study involved a total of fourteen faculty members from two open-admission liberal arts universities. The qualitative aspects of the study captured the stress that the teachers reportedly experience when dealing with the dynamics of underpreparedness.

Similar to the participants in the study by Pitts, et al. (1999), the teachers in the current study have described many of the same academic, cognitive, and behavioral difficulties manifested from students struggling in the classroom. Academic underpreparedness is characterized by substandard performance in the classroom (Grubb,

1996; Dunn, 1995; Henderson, 1992); while cognitive impairments (Serna & Lau-Smith, 1995; Miller, et al., 1990; Wade & Reynolds, 1989) are corroborated with students' negative attitudes toward education and self-doubts regarding their ability to succeed (Garcia, 1995; Apling, 1993; Tinto, 1993; Downs, 1992; Judd, et al., 1985). Psychosocial disturbances are manifested in self-defeating behaviors in the classroom, increasing the potential for students to skip class or drop out of school altogether (Garcia, 1995; Keeley, et al., 1995; Thombs, 1995; Tinto, 1993; Downs, 1992; Shaughnessy, et al., 1990; Monahan, et al., 1989; Shaughnessy, 1989; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981).

Because of the many academic difficulties found within the student population, the teachers apparently have a hard time overlooking their students' weaknesses enough to focus on their potential strengths. The similarities between these responses and those of the faculty in the study by Pitts, et al. (1999) suggest that the teachers in both studies hold a deficit perspective of their students (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992; Fingeret, 1984).

The deficit perspective is first compared to the identification of a middle-class culture of education and is accepted as the norm. Those who do not measure up to this standard are perceived to be lacking socialization in mainstream cultural expectations (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992). Though recent studies have decried a deficit orientation among educators (O'Banion, 1997; Freire, 1987), the data in the current study suggests that it still persists, despite evidence to the contrary and the call for its elimination (Dirkx & Prenger, 1997).

Though ability versus ambition is a debatable criterion in the research on academic achievement, the teachers in the present study concur that the lack of motivation is one of the greatest problems affecting student performance in the classroom

(Dunn, 1995; Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Kanoy, et al., 1990; Mealey, 1990; Stage & Williams, 1990).

Dunn (1995) found the effects of low achievement to be relatively independent of academic ability. Dunn's study measured the academic ability of students (N=152) experiencing scholastic difficulty at the postsecondary level. The subjects were divided into three separate groups based on the nature of their difficulties: 1) learning disabled (diagnosed with a formal disability); 2) self-identified as having a learning disability (specific problems identified by students for more than a six-month period); and 3) low-achieving (students with a GPA below 2.6, yet not having met the criteria in the other two groups).

The results of her study revealed that the students who were identified as low-achieving obtained the highest scores on several measurements of aptitude and ability. More importantly, this group of students did not attribute their difficulties in a college setting to a specific learning disability. The study suggests that low motivation alone can contribute to poor academic performance, regardless of academic ability. It also confirmed the significance of this variable and why it should not be overlooked.

In the current study, however, the teachers have voiced some interesting exceptions to the dynamics of student motivation. Though low motivation is perceived by the teachers to be a significant obstacle to academic achievement, all of the teachers have stated that they believe that most if not all of their students could succeed in the college context "if they really *tried.*" Yet, it is not entirely clear to what extent the teachers may attribute low motivation to an intrinsic learning deficit, such as low

intellect, or to other learning or behavioral disabilities that can be more easily remedied with some means of instructional intervention.

This rather vague assumption represents somewhat of a paradox when applied to low-ability and low-achieving students. If these particular students are unwilling *or* unable to put forth the effort to learn, then would a series of academic or behavioral interventions readily guarantee their success in the classroom? Can simply "trying harder" so easily rectify such a powerful problem? Either way, the teachers would concur that there are no easy answers to these questions and that remedying poor performance is no small task.

While the teachers do not seem to think that the majority of their students are beset with academic and psychosocial difficulties, the teachers do share the belief that when these dynamics are strongly or severally pronounced, their students will struggle if not fail altogether. Similar concerns are supported by observations that are congruent to those made by the faculty in the study by Pitts, et al. (1999)—students who need the extra learning and support services are the least likely to participate in the available programs (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994).

In comparison to the information documented in the study by Pitts, et al. (1999), the majority of the teachers at Pine Lake College have, in fact, discussed their attempts to moderate the tension that does develop in their line of work. They assume that problems in the learning process can be ameliorated with the appropriate academic applications. These assumptions are supported by number of research studies that have been supplemented with strategic classroom instruction (Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Mealey, 1990; Judd, et al., 1985; Blum & Spangehl, 1982).

Clark & Peterson's Model of Teacher Thought and Action

The educational process at Pine Lake College is an expression of the relationship between the teachers' beliefs about the preparedness of their students and the teachers' stated teaching practices. Clark and Peterson's (1986) Model of Teacher Thought and Action was used as a tool in which to analyze the dynamics involved in this process, and as a reference point in which to understand some of the exceptions that occur within the teachers' practices in the current context.

Clark and Peterson (1986) offer a comprehensive model of teaching that addresses the cognitive and practical domains of teaching: 1) Teachers' Thought Processes, and 2) Teachers' Actions and their Observable Effects. The model reflects a conceptualization of the preactive, interactive, and postactive phases of teachers' thought processes in relationship to dynamic classroom activity. Figure 5.1 is a graphic depiction of the relationship between the two domains of teaching:

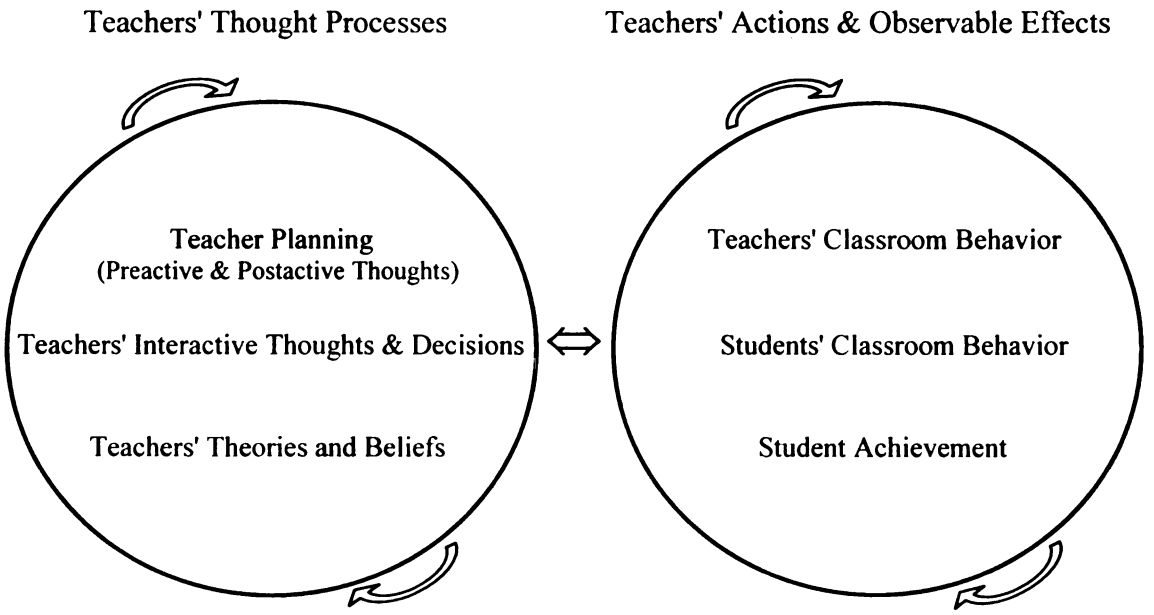

Figure 5.1 A graphic representation of teachers' thought processes and action, as adapted from Clark and Peterson (1986).

Clark and Peterson (1986) acknowledged that the largely unobservable aspects of teachers thought processes present methodological challenges to the research on teaching, while teacher behavior is more easily subjected to empirical research methods to the extent that their effects can be observed in the classroom. However, past process-product research has typically assumed that the relationship between teachers' behavior, students' behavior, and student achievement is causal and unidirectional. While Clark and Peterson do not claim that their model has empirical validity, they assume that the relationships among these variables are reciprocal.

In the first domain of the model—Teachers' Thought Processes—three categories represent teachers' conceptualizations of their students and their teaching practices: 1) teacher planning, 2) teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions, and 3) teachers' theories and beliefs. In the second domain—Teachers' Actions and their Observable Effects—three categories represent major behavioral constructs central to the process of teaching: 1) teachers' classroom behavior, 2) students' classroom behavior, and 3) students' level of achievement. A transactional analysis of the phenomena within and between the two domains of teaching yields theoretically significant interaction effects that reflect the reciprocal nature of the teaching process.

Relative to the first domain of Clark and Peterson's (1986) model—Teachers' Thought Processes—it is apparent that *teacher planning* is an important activity for the teachers in this study. Similar to the findings in the study by Clark and Yinger (1979b), planning allows the teachers at Pine Lake College a measure of control over their instructional activities. These activities are reciprocated in the category of teachers' classroom behavior in the second domain of the model—Teachers' Actions and Their

Observable Effects. The teachers' thought processes and their potential effects are now realized in a functional interpretation of the model.

The teachers' planning activities are significantly influenced by one of the most important aspects of the present study—what the teachers in this study believe about the abilities and motivations of their students. As a primary focus of the current study, a closer examination of the teachers' implicit beliefs about their underprepared students reveals that they are consistent with the "deficit perspective" proposed by Fingeret (1984).

These and other beliefs held by the teachers are theoretically represented as a part of the thought processes established in the first sphere of Clark and Peterson's (1986) Model of Teacher Thought and Action and are assumed to be reciprocated with the second sphere of the model—Teachers' Actions and their Observable Effects. Given these assumptions, the potential for the teachers' instructional activities can now be understood in regard to the three categories represented the second sphere of the model: 1) teachers' classroom behavior, 2) students' classroom behavior, and 3) students' level of achievement.

Corresponding to the teachers' classroom behavior, lecture and practice sequences are primary strategies used to engage learners of all academic abilities in the classroom. However, since the student deficit perspective is clearly a function of the teachers' thought processes, the teachers' practices may be clarified to the extent in which students are able to keep pace with the course material. These strategies are reflexive of the students' classroom behavior category and the students' level of achievement category respective to the second domain of Clark and Peterson's (1986) model. These activities

are influenced by ability and achievement and are similar to the remedial processes that Pitts, et al. (1999) address in regard to the instructors in their study.

These belief-to-practice strategies seem to represent accelerated aspects of Clark & Peterson's (1986) model, especially where they are centered around enhancing student performance and motivation in the most efficient manner possible. The effects are evident when the teachers' beliefs about struggling students prompt a more rapid response to the recovery of student achievement. However, the teachers' adaptations do not appear to go beyond the margins of content mastery.

A comparison of Clark & Peterson's (1986) study to other research in the field provides a relative understanding of how the teachers actively engage in their teaching practices. Revisiting the research by Pitts, et al. (1999), their findings reveal the coping responses of college-level instructors dealing with the effects of student underpreparedness. These responses are reflected in three practical categories: 1) instructors' own teaching behaviors, 2) course content, and 3) evaluation of students' abilities.

A comparison between these two model can be made by juxtaposing the three categories proposed by Pitts, et al.(1999) on to the three categories in the second domain of Clark and Peterson's model—teachers' classroom behavior, students' classroom behavior, and student achievement, respectively. In both models, the process of teaching is reflected in the reciprocal functions of teacher behavior and student ability. Given the consistencies between these two models, further analysis of the teachers' teaching behaviors in the current study was transacted in respect to the three practical categories proposed in the study by Pitts, et al.

Similar to the instructors in the study by Pitts, et al. (1999), the teachers in the current study engage in a certain amount of remedial or compensatory education in their classes when several students are struggling with basic skills or concepts. The content is driven by a variety of innovative applications (corresponding to the instructors' own teaching behavior) in an effort to address the various levels of student preparedness (in relationship to the evaluation of students' ability category). At the same time, the teachers will not accommodate their students' needs to the extent that it may compromise the integrity of the curriculum (corresponding to the instructors' own teaching behavior category as it relates to the course content category, respectively). Since the course coverage must continue for the class as a whole, the teachers' practices are limited to the time available during each class and each term. Students unable to keep pace with the curriculum will need to seek help outside of class (corresponding to the evaluation of students' abilities category).

An analysis of the data reveals the practice of mediation, but it also reveals a heightened focus on the preparedness of the students in the classroom. However, the motivation behind the teachers' practices—preserving the course content—seems to be more explicitly revealed in the course content category in the model by Pitts, et al. (1999) than in the categories of the second domain of the model by Clark and Peterson (1986).

With few exceptions, the teachers in the study by Pitts, et al., 1999, and the present study cope with many of the same concerns in much the same way. Major findings in both studies reveal the value conflicts between the subjects' educational standards and those of today's college student body. Students perceived to be academically underprepared and unmotivated pose a threat to the teachers' preservation

of the their academic and social standards. Because of the teachers' commitment to the ideal of content mastery, it appears that they allow for even less adaptation of the course content than the instructors in the study by Pitts, et al. (corresponding to the instructors' own teaching behavior category and the course content category proposed by Pitts, et al.).

These conflicts reportedly evoke a certain amount of emotional distress among the teachers. The tension has apparently culminated in the teachers feeling less effective on the job, though it was not as pronounced during the interviews with the teachers in the current study as in was among the instructors in the study by Pitts, et al., 1999. Their reactions do not appear to be congruent with the "depressive" or "detached" responses identified in the research by Pitts, et al.

In the current study, the teachers' ability to cope with the teaching process is intentionally predicated on the use of instructional strategies in the classroom (Pitts, et al., 1999). A review of the research reveals that their educational objectives are comparable to the principles of a student-centered paradigm presented by Mealey (1990). Mealey delineated the three areas of the strategic learning paradigm proposed by Paris, Lipson, and Wixson (1983): 1) whether studying and performing well on tests is meaningful to students; 2) how students perceive the usefulness and efficiency of strategic learning; and 3) how well students can manage their time and study habits.

Students exposed to the strategic learning process become skilled in deciding when and how to apply these principles to their studies. These skills are critical to their ability to identify the significance of new material in a meaningful context. Intended outcomes are assumed to promote personal awareness and intrinsic motivation.

A theoretical application of the strategic learning paradigm (Paris, et al., 1983) to the teachers' beliefs can be interpreted in the context of Clark and Peterson's (1986) Model of Teacher Thought and Action—Teachers' Thought Processes (the first domain) and Teachers' Actions and their Observable Effects (the second domain). In respect to the first domain, the principles of the strategic learning paradigm parallel two of the teachers' beliefs about the essentials of teaching in that: 1) they are consonant to the needs of their learners, and 2) they are fundamental to academic achievement. In respect to the second domain, the principles reflect the practical intentions of the teachers in this study—classroom activities revolve around motivating students to learn, and emphasize the social value of performing well in college.

The teachers' commitment to academic achievement appears to be supported by the rational behind the research—the "fusion of cognitive skills and motivational determination" (Mealey, 1990, p. 598). Research in the field of education suggests that the teachers are not alone in their thinking on this matter. A number of studies emphasize the importance of raising levels of self-esteem and motivation, and promoting personal responsibility among low-achieving college students (Jackson, 2003; Dunn, 1995; Serna & Lau-Smith, 1995; Kanoy, et al., 1990; Mealey, 1990; Stage & Williams, 1990).

However, though the teachers in the current study have acknowledged how critical these conditions are, they have made little or no specific reference to any formal assessment of these qualities in the classroom. In fact, the teachers' practices seem to depart from the strategic learning paradigm in respect to one key ideal—they support the development of content mastery through more traditional means than the objectives of self-regulated learning proposed in the paradigm (Mealey, 1990). The teachers may

subscribe to the benefits of strategic learning, but it is perceived to generate more deviations in cognitive processing and subsequent classroom time due to the number of students with limited ability to abstract this approach to learning (Lowman, 1994). The standard lecture format is regarded as a more predictable means of delivering standard instruction within a reasonable period of time.

Summary

The models developed by Clark and Peterson (1986) and Pitts, et al. (1999), effectively illustrate the essential relationship between the beliefs of the teachers in this study and the perceived needs of their underprepared learners. A comparative analysis reveals that the teachers' commitment to the goals of student achievement is reflected in practices that can be reciprocated within and between both models. Classroom activities revolve around processing academic information and enhancing classroom performance. To the extent that students are limited in their ability to abstract various approaches to learning, the teachers assume that the lecture method is a more viable option for maintaining mastery of the course concepts.

However, there are several external contexts that account for a number of deviations from both of the models' traditional functions when applied to the teachers in this study. Conditions such as the College's academic policies and the greater norms of society at large all have an impact on the lives of the teachers and learners at Pine Lake College. An explanation of their interaction effects extends beyond the parameters of Clark and Peterson's (1986) Model of Teacher Thought and Action and the study by Pitts, et al., 1999. For these reasons, an application of Pratt's (1992) General Model of

Teaching will be used to examine the teachers' beliefs about their underprepared students in a broader context, and how they may be reflected in their teaching practices.

Pratt's General Model of Teaching

In 1992, Pratt identified five conceptions of teaching from a cross-cultural perspective. These conceptions are informed by the practice of teaching and reflect the relationships and processes involved in teaching. The five conceptions of teaching represented in Pratt's General Model of Teaching are as follows: 1) the teachers (roles and functions), 2) the learners (nature and type), 3) ideals (purpose of adult education), 4) the content (what is to be learned), and 5) and the context, (external factors that influence teaching and learning) (Pratt, 1992, p. 205). These particular elements are found to vary in predominance within each culture studied and are realized in a constellation of beliefs, orientations, and actions that characterize each conceptual framework. Pratt's analysis of the five cultures in his study revealed more conceptual variations within each culture than between each one, respectively.

Among the five conceptions of teaching, one model in particular seems to capture the beliefs and practices of the five teachers in the present study. The Engineering concept of teaching offers a comparable representation of the Pine Lake College teachers' beliefs and their stated teaching practices. This concept frames teaching in terms of the content to be delivered:

> In this sense it was primarily "teacher centered" with a heavy emphasis on the transmission of information. Teacher expertise and intentionality were primarily associated with accomplished performances, efficient "coverage" of content, more productive management of time, and/or the development of instructional

materials....Content was to be reduced, broken down, and organized for efficient delivery and testing....Learner differences were either reduced to student effort or assumed to have been accommodated through individualized material or strategies. (Pratt, 1992, pp. 210-211)

The shared similarities are concentrated in the process of teaching. As suggested by the model, the teachers are focused on imparting academic information in the most *organized* and efficient way possible. However, because of their awareness of the impact that individual effort has on academic achievement, the teachers seem to be oriented to the learners' disposition more than Pratt's (1998; 1992) perspective might suggest. By providing the academic incentives necessary to increase the potential to learn, the acquisition of knowledge takes on characteristics that favor content mastery beyond what is conceptualized in Pratt's Engineering construct.

In reference to the context element of Pratt's Engineering concept of teaching, these ideals are realized in the current cultural context—the social institutions that shape the teachers' ideological and professional domain. The data in the current study suggests that these effects are instrumental in qualifying their practices at Pine Lake College.

Pratt (1998; 1992) suggested that it is not uncommon to find that teachers who hold a dominant conception of teaching have most likely adopted the ideologies of the institution that they are a part of. In reference to the research findings, "This conception was voiced within each culture, most often by people working within contexts characterized by well-defined content or skills to be learned and some form of institutional accountability, for example...vocational and private sector training" (Pratt, 1992, p. 211).

In the present study, this ideology is supported by the compatibility between the teachers' goals of content mastery and the designated course objectives. However, there are additional qualifications that catalyze the nature of this relationship. The teachers have a limited amount of time (in ten-week terms) in which to educate a number of students who are academically unable or unmotivated to learn. Therefore, the teachers have responded to these conditions by engaging in accelerated functions of Pratt's Engineering concept of teaching. Mediation is a means of coping with underprepared students with more "productive time management strategies in mind" (Pratt, 1992, p. 212).

Great Expectations

In a broader context, the teachers' belief about personal accountability is clearly reflected in mainstream social thought. In practice, this belief is grounded in the assumption that students are responsible for their own education. In the research arena, this assumption is also advocated in the treatment of underprepared learners—its social value is intrinsic to the character and development of student motivation (Dunn, 1995; Tinto, 1993; Kanoy, et al., 1990; Mealey, 1990; Stage & Williams, 1990).

Yet, for the teachers who have internalized the significance of social responsibility, they have experienced both dissonance and disappointment when finding that their students are not willing or able to put forth the effort to succeed in college, regardless of their academic potential. The teachers' perception of students' lack of effort and ability are held in stark contrast to the dominant social standards of our time, as well as to their own past educational experiences. Students' attitudes toward learning are seen as evidence of a shift away from learning for the sake of learning itself, much like the

instructors in the study by Pitts, et al.(1999) had implied (Astin, 1985; Sprinthall & Collins, 1984).

On the other hand, should the teachers be surprised by their observations when, after all, Pine Lake College's primary agenda is career preparation? The College's enrollment consists primarily of students who are seeking the skills necessary to obtain solid employment in relatively short order (Zeiss, 1998). The quick and "efficient transmission of information" (Pratt, et al., 1992, p. 210) is, quite frankly, what many of the students on campus are looking for. Consequently, what appears to the teachers to be a lack of personal investment in academic excellence may actually be a product of the latter—the motivation to secure future employment. In this context, the efforts on the part of the students are assumed to be no less genuine than in any other academic or social circumstances.

Though the teachers may argue that a shift in priorities does not excuse students from deliberately disregarding their studies, the Institutional context is somewhat paradoxical to the extent that the teachers have, in fact, advocated future employment and the merits of their profession as an effective means of motivating their students to learn. Is it possible for competing expectations to become mutually reinforcing ideals?

Summary and Conclusion

Several key pieces of research have been applied to the data in the current study, capturing the relationship among the teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning, academic ability, and their subsequent methods of instruction. An application of Clark and Peterson's (1986) Model of Teacher Thought and Action assumes a reciprocal relationship between the teachers' thought processes and the teachers' classroom

behavior. These behaviors share a reciprocal relationship with students' classroom behavior and student achievement and are reflected back on to the teachers' beliefs about student ability and planned instruction. In the current context, the teachers' attempt to mediate among their beliefs and practices has resulted in a coping strategy of teaching. What the model does not access, however, is the dissonance generated from the discrepancy between the teachers' expectations and the students' lack of preparedness.

A comparison of the teachers' practices to Pratt's (1998; 1992) General Model of Teaching does indicate how they strategically cope with their students. The teachers' practices resemble Pratt's Engineering concept of teaching, yet the concept also broadens the rationale for their instructional strategies in relationship to the contexts that they operate within—the parameters of the Institution and the norms of society. The conditions are such that the teachers strive to maintain the standards of content mastery and personal accountability within their practices. Yet, establishing these standards in the classroom becomes a difficult task when faced with students who fail to identify with or adapt to the dominant culture assimilated in an educational context. Similar to Clark and Peterson's (1986) Model of Teacher Thought and Action, an application of Pratt's (1992) General Model of Teaching also does not indicate the effect that this dichotomy has on the teachers' affective domain. Other than the study by Pitts, et al. (1999), the implications remain largely unexplored in the research in higher education (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992).

The teachers are committed to teaching an academically diverse population of students at Pine Lake College. Their efforts to address the diversity are instituted through a series of educational and motivational applications in the classroom. What the teachers

may be missing, however, is the opportunity to attend to the individual needs of each learner through more independent means of instruction. They have likely dismissed many of these options in the event that they may increase demand on the time required to negotiate them.

Implications for Future Practice

The data in the current study confirms the trend toward increased student diversity at the college level (Grubb, 1996). As a result, teachers working in open-enrollment institutions such as Pine Lake College are necessarily coping with a wide range of student preparedness in the classroom. Similar to the subjects interviewed in studies exploring teachers' perspectives on adult learners (Pitts, et al., 1999; Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992), the teachers in the present study are well aware of the problems that characterize their underprepared students. The findings are also congruent with the research defining student motivation as a major factor in academic achievement (Mushinski-Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Kanoy, et al., 1990; Stage & Williams, 1990). As the teachers attempt to address these issues, their efforts to mediate motivation, ability, and content mastery play out in the classroom.

What lies ahead for future practice in postsecondary education parallels what has and has not been said about the topics of student preparedness and teacher beliefs. In the following two sections, the potential for the future is realized in an analysis of the academic research on the treatment of student preparedness and teacher beliefs.

A comparative analysis of the problems and the prospects inherent in the research provides an essential framework for future consideration in the field of higher education. These dynamics are presented in respect to an inductive order of the contexts that they

exist in—the classroom, the institution, and society at large. In keeping with the primary focus of this study, suggested implications will be centered on teacher beliefs and underprepared students in particular.

Treating the Underprepared Learner

While many of the earliest prescriptions for treating the underprepared learner began with the development of instructional applications (Serna & Lau-Smith, 1995; Roueche & Roueche, 1993; Monahan, et al., 1989; Judd, et.al, 1985; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981) and academic policy (Browne, 1986), we are reminded that many of the research initiatives intended to treat the underprepared learner were designed with only a marginal amount of input from college-level teachers. Professionals in the field of education are also reminded that many of these strategies were also lacking in applications that would specifically address the psychosocial impairments known to impede the learning process. As a result, questions inherent in these designs remain largely unanswered and can be articulated as follows: 1) how do underprepared students respond to these classroom strategies? 2) do college-level teachers impart these strategies in their purest form, or do they adapt these applications to fit their conceptions of teaching and learning?

Before addressing the first question raised, it is important to reestablish the cumulative response of today's academic interventions. In an effort to move away from the limitations of content-based paradigms, today's strategies are concentrated in the cognitive aspects of learning, i.e., critical thinking, metacognitive awareness (Serna & Lau-Smith, 1995; Mealey, 1990), and transformational learning (Mezirow, 1994; Daloz, 1986). Changes in self-awareness and personal growth increase the potential for learning

permanency. In a broader context, these constructs echo the dominant culture—self-responsibility and individual accountability.

Assuming that these newer initiatives hold the theoretical and practical potential to increase learning and social skills, then a response to the first question becomes critical: how do underprepared learners receive these strategies when formally applied in the classroom?

If we are to accept Lowman's (1994) assertion that all students prefer instruction that is clear and interesting, then theories that espouse abstract principles such as critical thinking, for example, may generate too many deliberations for the underprepared student to process (Jackson, 2003; Keeley, et al., 1995). Observations shared by the teachers in the present study seem to support this stance—that underprepared students prefer if not require specific directives and simple explanations when first being introduced to a new concept. In the current study, the data reveals that Bill and Gary were very firm in their convictions regarding this approach. Students who have difficulty grasping the course concepts typically experience delayed gratification from the learning process. These experiences are often accompanied by reactions of frustration and resistance to the learning process (Sample, 2002).

On the other hand, researchers such as Monahan, et al. (1989) caution practitioners not to "water down" the academics, thereby running the risk of boring their students. Yet, Kathleen's observation clearly highlighted a more critical and overriding concern. During her interview, she emphasized the following:

> They're pretty scared to begin with that they're going to succeed—that's pretty obvious from the very beginning....You take very small steps, and you see that

they succeed in every small step that they get....Nobody's going to try anything they think they're going to fail in.

The research on learning dynamics affirms the use of this belief-to-practice sequence in the classroom (Judd, et al., 1985; Blum & Spangehl, 1982; McDonald & Cotroneo, 1981). Recent reviews also suggest a return to the simple and concrete methods of the past (Roueche and Roueche, 1993).

The data in the current study suggests that the teachers are receptive to classroom strategies that challenge the students' thought processes, yet their intentions are concentrated on instruction that readily mediates course content and ability over time. Their teaching strategies appear to indicate an affirmative response to the second major question posed at the beginning of this section of the research: Do the teachers adapt their selected teaching strategies to suit the needs of their underprepared learners? Again, the data suggest a "yes" response to this question. The teachers' decisions regarding what they believe to be the most beneficial for their students do prevail.

Whether the applied teaching strategies are either basic or advanced, it is important for researchers and practitioners to understand their measurable effects on human cognition. For example, consider Mezirow's (1994) transformational learning theory. Mezirow suggests that students can increase their cognitive potential by extending new concepts to broader circumstances in life. Educating students in this context is said to result in a holistic "transformation" of academic and social life.

If applying this theory to the population in the present study, questions arise regarding the students' potential to undergo specific "transformations," given their limited ability to process such expansive principles within a ten-week term at the College.

Specifically, would performance outcomes significantly improve under these conditions, or, would higher grade-point-averages accumulate over time?

Though the teachers at Pine Lake College have observed the potential for developmental changes among their upper classmen over time, past and present research (the present study included) tends to favor meeting the immediate needs of underprepared students. The preferred paradigm suggests starting out with simple, pedagogical instruction before introducing any abstract educational applications (Lowman, 1994).

The Future of Teacher Beliefs and Practices: Elements of Time, Technique, College Policy, and Social Norms

Outcomes of student achievement are predicated, in part, on the decisions that teachers make in the classroom. Based on this assumption, it is recommended that researchers conduct more studies measuring teachers' perceptions and practices in the field. Specifically, researchers and practitioners could gain significant insight from research designs that deliberately explore the unspoken notion of what teachers believe "works best" for their underprepared students.

Equally important are the indications that these and other beliefs held by the teachers' in the current study are influenced by contexts that are broader than classroom influences alone. These are the combined forces of the College's parameters and the greater norms of society. Their power and pervasiveness throughout this study suggest why these dimensions deserve critical attention in regard to teacher beliefs and future practices in postsecondary education (Kasworm, et al., 2002).

For example, consider the teachers' practices in the context of Pine Lake College. Most of the teachers in this study felt compelled to mediate their beliefs about content mastery with the realities of the brief, ten-week term. By no small coincidence, these

constraints were found to retroactively impact the teachers' initial beliefs about what teaching strategies were most effective with their students within a restricted amount of time. The interaction effects are significant and give rise to several critical questions for future practice: Should the teachers acquiesce to their beliefs about effectiveness under these conditions, or should future practice advocate adjusting the length of the college term in order to meet the qualitative needs of both teachers and learners?

If responding affirmatively to the latter, would extending the length of each term influence the way in which the teachers maintain their educational standards, or would it potentially change their ideals for teaching altogether? Would extending the length of each term have an impact on students' academic potential and their receptiveness to social responsibility, relative to the teachers' responses? The answers to these questions remain largely unexplored and hold great deal of potential for future innovations in the practice of higher education

Another practitioner's dilemma regarding time, technique, and teacher beliefs is the manifestation of students' psychosocial and personal problems in the classroom. These dynamics are significant to the extent that they impede student motivation and academic performance (Thombs, 1995; Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Jessor, et al. 1991; Shaughnessy, 1989). However, similar to the related research findings, the teachers in the current research have shared their reluctance over addressing these issues as a matter of principle. Some of the teachers have expressed their discomfort over involving themselves in students' personal affairs, while others maintain that attending to personal agenda does not fall within the scope of their professional responsibilities (Dirkx & Spurgin, 1992). For most of the teachers in this study, the element of time has also

diminished the likelihood that they would intervene in the affective domain. Consequently, the teachers have abstained from a number of potential opportunities to work with these issues within the college context.

Yet, how can these issues be overlooked in practice if they weigh so heavily on student performance? Given the implications for intervention, how can we suggest that students take responsibility for their education if 1) they cannot or will not resolve their personal problems; and 2) College personnel have demonstrated a marginal involvement in these matters? Addressing the personal problems that impact student performance will take more than the application of academic strategies to treat the cognitive and behavioral dimensions of underpreparedness. Mealey (1990) supported this argument based on similar findings in her research: "...at-risk college students must become aware of (a) their negative attitudes toward learning in general, and (b) themselves as learners specifically before they can change (p. 599)."

This researcher suggests that college-level faculty and staff take advantage of the opportunity to reinforce the latter prescription in several contexts—the classroom, support services programs (Hittman, 1995; Prager, 1995; Judd, et al., 1985), or freshman orientation. Abraham and Wagnon (1992) concur that student orientation is a critical advancement in the effort to help students succeed in college.

As the analysis expands to broader contexts impacting teachers' beliefs about student underpreparedness and the future of teaching, two nearly inseparable issues have dominated the research findings in the present study—open-door enrollment and the pervasiveness of social accountability and self-responsibility. These are the external conditions that influence the relationship between teachers' inner beliefs and their

outward teaching practices. As these dynamics are reexamined in the remainder of this section of the research, they come with the suggestion that they be acknowledged in the course of teacher education and the future of administrative planning (Kasworm, et al., 2002).

First, we are reminded that open enrollment policies in postsecondary institutions were implemented as a part of a very provocative and very promising mission for a "second chance" at a college education (Letteri, 1980). However, for the teachers in this study, the reality is that there are an increasing number of students in their classes that are unprepared to succeed in the college context. Research on the topic of underpreparedness substantiates the number of students who fail to be mainstreamed into the postsecondary educational process (Grubb, 1996). Unfortunately, at-risk conditions may persist when the safeguards put in to place for underprepared students do not always alleviate the disparities (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994; Bray, 1987).

The first problem is that the designation of remedial classes does not always serve the academic needs of all underprepared learners (Bray, 1987). Second, these classes do not necessarily address the principles of every academic discipline. For example, though this researcher has witnessed underprepared students struggling with a number of subjects in the social sciences, there are no remedial psychology or sociology courses to be found at the postsecondary level. Most college-level remedial services are relegated to basic math and English prerequisites, even though students may require the same deliberate intervention in other field-specific areas. In some instances, students may obtain assistance from the teachers of those courses, but this is subject to the time and

resources available to the teachers. Their only other recourse is to seek support services on campus, if such services are available *and* the subject matter can be accommodated.

Another concern is that the majority of these remedial programs cater to the academics only. Until recently, colleges have done little to address the psychosocial issues that also handicap underprepared students, i.e., substance abuse and child care (Hittman, 1995; Prager, 1995). Unfortunately, no learning support service can remedy any academic *or* personal problems when the very students who need these services are reluctant to utilize them (Richardson & Sullivan, 1994).

Yet, Pine Lake College is committed to providing a quality education that promises self-sufficiency in an entry-level career. The mission is a direct reflection of the standards of accountability held by society. However, the number of underprepared students matriculated to the College is such that the notion of accountability seems to fly in the face of the Administration, and the teachers who are expected to educate these students. How can students and teachers meet such expectations when a portion of the student body holds social standards that are marginal to mainstream thinking and skills that are marginal to the educational process? Can the Pine Lake College teachers indeed reeducate and re-socialize underprepared students within a matter of ten weeks a term, or would the expectations of Pine Lake College be subject to change?

The academic and social ramifications are compelling and hold the potential for institutions such as Pine Lake College to reevaluate their definition of open enrollment, or its practice all together. By stirring the debate, however, critical questions resurface. If teachers perceive the practice of open enrollment to be a threat to their standards, and to their students' quality of education, i.e., the potential for failure, does this not represent

a real threat to the future of higher education? On the other hand, would the termination of open-enrollment practices reopen the moral debate regarding social agency by reversing society's mandate to let students back into college (Letteri, 1980)? If students end up on the losing end of either proposition, society will ultimately absorb the impact—the economic and social ramifications of a marginally educated workforce.

The implications for the future of higher education bring about some immediate concerns for Pine Lake College and other postsecondary institutions. Present considerations may include redefining enrollment standards, i.e., "raising the bar" for admission, or reformulating more effective services for underprepared students.

Implications for Future Research

Past and present research findings suggest that remedial strategies at the college level would benefit from revisions that are informed by new research-to-practice initiatives. Past problems have been cited regarding the lack of teacher involvement in the development of research designed to treat underprepared learners. The omission is such that critical constructs regarding the teaching and learning process remain largely uninformed by sources closest to the learning environment. Consequently, teachers' perceptions of these research outcomes are not necessarily compatible with their perceptions of their students' needs in the classroom.

Though recent trends such as critical thinking (Mealey, 1995) and transformational learning (Mezirow, 1994) are theoretically sound, teachers may question the efficacy of these and other strategies in their particular environment. In the current study, their educational value may be indicated in the teachers' ideals for teaching, but the

viability of these strategies is ultimately determined by their ability to challenge the learning process without hindering the teachers' coverage of the course objectives.

Bridging the gap between academic development and teacher education would provide an opportunity to address the missing variables in past research paradigms. By forging a closer relationship between teacher beliefs and student agency (Jackson, 2003), new constructs can be developed to treat the underprepared learner. In the current study, the teachers' sensitivity to the balance of educational initiatives and academic ability sets an example for future models of research on teaching and learning. In fact, the implications for academic achievement are paralleled by the research regarding student performance. The compatibility between the teachers' approach to teaching and the needs of underprepared students is reflected in Kanoy, et al. (1990) review of Hunt's (1971) original assertion:

> ...students with lower cognitive complexity need a more structured class environment, more thorough syllabi with clear, carefully constructed directions, and more accountability to the instructor on a regular basis. These students also need a great deal of challenge and support; that is, they need assignments that force them to use their most highly developed skills as well as to acquire new ones (p. 139).

By controlling for the practical preferences of teachers and learners, researchers can develop paradigms that minimize the potential paradoxes that can occur during the instructional phases of the learning process.

If we are to truly understand the dilemma of academic underpreparedness at the college level, we need to conduct more research on the perceptions and practices of

postsecondary teachers. More inquiry into how teachers make sense of their students and how they handle the challenges of educating this subpopulation of students (Pitts, et al., 1999) would give the much-needed insight into the significant life force of teachers. Qualitative analysis can provide a deeper understanding of how teachers develop their thoughts and practice their beliefs from a phenomenological or narrative perspective. Studies that triangulate the findings on teacher beliefs (Nunn, 1996) with data gathered from carefully controlled in-class observations of the teaching experience can augment our understanding of the research in this area of postsecondary education.

By measuring the effects of teachers' classroom practices, perhaps research could find the answer to the one question that continues to challenge educators today: what makes a classroom "click?" Critical aspects of the teacher-learner relationship suggest that students also need to figure more prominently into this line of inquiry. Focusing on students' perspectives of the teaching and learning process may perhaps reveal what really does "work best" for them. Finally, since the process of teaching and learning transpires under a variety of institutional contexts, i.e., open enrollment, researchers could advance the field of postsecondary education by controlling for these contexts in future studies.

In the field of education, the process of teaching and learning is a complex and dynamic one. In a unique series of discoveries along the way, the call for a better understanding of teacher beliefs brings this research study full circle: what the teachers believe about their students is shaped by their personal and professional experiences; how they go about teaching their students is a significant function of their beliefs.

Understanding the world of teaching from the teacher's perspectives will shed more light on the process of teaching and learning, and on the shape of future educational practices in the new millennium.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

A STUDY OF COLLEGE LEVEL TEACHING EXPERIENCES

I agree to participate in a study on my teaching experiences at the college level. I agree to meet with ____[Researcher's Name]_____ on the following date _____ at the following location _____ for an interview regarding my professional experience. The interview is expected to last approximately 60-90 minutes. I also grant permission for our conversation to be audio tape-recorded. I understand that the audiotapes will be kept in strict confidence and that only the above-named researcher, the research committee chairman, and research committee will be allowed access to them. No one from the [Pine Lake College] campus or the College system will have access to these tapes in any way, shape or form.

I understand that the information I provide in this interview will be kept confidential and anonymous. I understand that at no time and under no circumstances will I be identified by name or in any other association in the final report regarding this project or in any other material produced as a result of this research. I also understand that I may withdraw from this research at any time before, during, or after the course of the interview process without penalty.

Teacher's Name	Researcher's Name
Teacher's Signature/Date	Researcher's Signature/Date

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

How did you come to be a teacher here [at Pine Lake College]?

How did you get involved in teaching the courses that you do?

- What interests you about teaching these specific courses?
- Do you have other responsibilities at the College besides the course you teach?

Describe your experiences here at as a teacher.

- Describe a typical day in your life as a teacher here.

Describe a typical class period for me.

- How do you get started?
- What sorts of things influence what you will do with student while you are teaching?

Think of a time that you were especially effective in your teaching.

- Describe that experience for me.

Think of a time that you were especially ineffective in your teaching.

- Describe that experience for me.

What is it that you are hoping to achieve through your teaching?

What are the students like in the courses that you teach?

- Describe a typical group of students that you might have within any given term.
- In what ways are they similar?
- In what ways are they different?
- What are their reasons for being here at [Pine Lake College]?
- How do they come to be in the courses that you teach?

What are some of the biggest challenges you face as a teacher of your courses?

Closing statements:

> We have covered a lot of ground today. Do you have anything else you wanted to say or add that we have not touched upon in our conversation? Are there any questions that you would like to ask of me?
>
> I want to thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.

APPENDIX C-1

INDIVIDUAL TEXTURAL DESCRIPTION #1: "ERIC"

I am a [profession]. I worked for the [organization]—nobody liked me there. I taught at Cleary College, then went back to being a [profession]. I hadn't originally sought out to be a teacher, per se, but Pine Lake College called with an opening. I was a [profession]—[subject/classes] were the logical ones to teach. The only other area I could have possibly taught in was math. The only courses I could do well in were business and math. I could never understand psychology.

We teach five classes [full time], and that's twenty hours a week, and office hours and lab is another 10 hours. Everything else would be voluntary, except we have to attend student orientations six times a year, three in-services, and graduation.

I think that [subject] is that a lot of it would be either you can do it, or you can't. I would not have taken [subject] in high school unless the counselor cornered me and told me I had to take [subject]. I've met people in real life who just barely make it through a [subject] program, then excel in the field, and other who are straight A University of Michigan graduates who fall on their face. There are a lot of people out there who are not [subject] majors who are [profession]. I think this is a profession where students always have a job. If they can do the work, they can be a success, because everyone needs [profession]. Most [Pine Lake College] students get jobs in [profession]. [Subject] is the best subject there is, and you can quote me on it. It's numbers, and it's really objective. There's a right answer and a wrong answer [in subject]—no subjectivity involved. It's safe and secure; it makes me feel more comfortable. A student can't say "You don't like me for whatever reason, and that's why I got a 'C'." With the types of tests that we give, either you're right or you're wrong, whether you like it or not. On this campus, it's a smaller community. We were able to encourage each other in their standards. [The team approach] has helped a lot—being able to communicate with fellow faculty, getting different ideas on "what to do" type of questions, and to find out what everyone else is doing.

[A major problem] is...too many classes to teach. We're teaching...20 hours [a week]. It doesn't give you any time to do anything other than teach in fair form. There's a lot of preparation, and you're not at your best. A lot of people look exhausted teaching that many classes. [It] makes me not as effective as I could be. I can't assign outside projects as much as I would like to. To assign a term paper requires a tremendous amount of work outside office hours, lab, and class. A test is a lot easier [to grade]. In our area, research is becoming more and more important. We can't do it [because of time constraints]. I have proposed and been totally ignored on having outside term papers, common research projects system-wide. If it's a [subject] problem, have a [subject] expert grade it; then an English professor grade it as to content to find out where we're creating deficiencies.

At a place like Pine Lake [College], that's a big worry if someone else who's teaching [subject] is making it too easy. When I was a student, we were told that [Class] was designed to flunk you out of the College of [major], to find out who's serious about being in business, and who isn't. All [subject] majors [at Pine Lake] have to take [subject], so we'll find out if you're serious. There's a great tendency [at Pine Lake

College] not to have a course designed to flunk students out. It's to try to get students to do a lot better. [I have] mixed emotions. I survived through the old system. These are the standards, you jump over these hoops or just go home. Just out of a sense of integrity, I've never passed anyone that I think won't make it. We found that if you pass a student who's not doing passing work, you're not doing them any favors.

There are administrators who are encouraging faculty to let the students pass. On another campus I worked on, we had administrators who were telling us to hand out passing grades. We got a report that the median [grade] was a B+ on that campus, for all classes, which is sort of ridiculous, because a median grade should be a C if we go by the strict bell curve, or just college-wide. It should be for our system, but we find out the median grade is B; which means there are just as many getting B+, A-, and A as there are all the other grades, which sort of takes away from the value of a good grade. We worry about some of the other campuses, because we have this [major] exam, and students are not doing terribly, but are not getting good grades in the class. I think that's why we have the [major] exam, because that was a major problem. These exams we give should be an indication that there's a widespread discrepancy between the score they get on the test and the score they get in the class. What we did to solve the problem was to say, "Everyone who wants to pass has to have a C- [grade] or better to go on to the next class. A 'D' would be passing, but if you want to go on, you had to have a C- or better."

We have a number of part-time faculty who say that they don't want to fail students because they don't want a bad report. They need the job, so they don't want to rock the boat—so everyone gets real good grades. I have job security, so that doesn't affect me. You've got [full-time] faculty here who are insisting on standards, because in our area, if we get them past [subject] into [subject], and they don't know the material from [subject], they're dead in [subject].

We do multiple choice [questions] in [class], because that's the type of questions they're going to meet with on the [major] exam. In effect, we're teaching to the test, which is something I don't like to do. If you don't, then they're not as prepared as they could be. That's a big constraint on our ability to teach.

We have a problem here [regarding] continued employment. One of our people has been told he's going to be laid off. Who's going to be next? That's a concern. Why should I put forth any extra effort? I may not even be here next quarter. [That] is a deterrent to my ability to teach. We are expanding in some areas, yet contracting in others; but that's usually done on a system level, and those decisions are made before we even meet. Some of them are the right decisions, some are not.

It's important to bring energy into the classroom, because [subject] is one of the dullest subjects you can think of; and I'm a [professional] leader. I always learned it better when I was comfortable in class, so I didn't have to be on edge, *and may they not call on me*. I don't like to make anyone uncomfortable, I don't call on anyone individually.

Part of education is instilling in each student a confidence in themselves in what they've learned. [It is important] because they're going to be [profession], and they have to be confrontational many times. It's very hard to be confrontational unless you're very secure in yourself and your position that you're taking. I'll give you an example. I was a taking freshman speech, [and] the first week we gave a speech. They tape-recorded it, and we didn't see that until the end of the second semester. We had to give another

speech, 3-5 minutes, similar. We listened to it, and we were all amazed at the improvement we had made. It was so gradual, but this was really a shocking improvement. That gave us all confidence. It felt good, because public speaking is something very important, and I was never good at it. I was a stutterer, and still am. A lot of students don't like taking the speech classes here at Pine Lake; many try to get out of taking it. Whether you like it or not, [public speaking] is one of the requirements of being alive, especially for being a [profession], because you have to do reports in front of people. Many times it's a hostile group; they don't want you to deliver your point; they don't want to agree with you. I learned that when I worked at the [organization]. My speaking was always a challenge to me. That could be a problem for students.
I'm more concerned that they pass the test than that they learn anything. In theory, if they learn something, they can pass the test; so I am struggling to keep myself teaching so they learn, and let them take their chances with the test.

Learning how to do [subject] is very important, because they're going to be doing it in a couple of months. The [professionals] that came out when I did, I think, were a lot better prepared that the ones we have now. I've talked to some secondary ed. teachers, and they say this is generally a problem nationwide, where students are not that concerned with education itself. When we were students, we had parents who were very concerned about their children's education. If a student was doing poorly, a parent got involved. I'm told nowadays that's not the case. Parents are not that concerned or involved with their children's education, and students just flounder on through. There does tend to be a reluctance, I'm told, to fail students. When I was a student, they'd keep somebody back a year if they thought it would be helpful. We found that if you pass a student who's not doing passing work, you're not doing them any favors at all.

They live up to my expectations. Some are going to be great. We do have some that are impressive—magnificent. Others will do like I do—not great, but good. I think 20% will do great, 20% will squeak by, and the rest will be good. That's what I expect. I can identify with [just squeaking by], because when I was a student, that's the way I was in my liberal arts classes. Give me a C [grade] and I'll be happy.

A lot of people are laid off, don't have a job. Some just want to be [profession], and they're barely making it just to get by. I've had some students say that their parents wanted them to be a [profession]; which I can identify with, because my parents wanted me to be a [profession]. Others live in the area and would rather go to a big name university, but there are none close by, so they go locally. Some can't go anywhere else because they have children of their own, or they have job requirements in the area.

In my courses, they're [major], business administration, computer, or medicine majors. Some of them are in the technical areas who come to see me. I've never had students take this course as an elective.

[Major] students are very independent, I think, by the very nature of the course. When they get past that, they're pretty much independent, forceful, opinionated people. As freshmen students get going on further, they're not asking for help as much. They want to solve [their problems] themselves.

Most of our students are female; in the [major] program, they're mostly female, too.

I don't find [students] to be similar. I can't divide them in to groups the way that I could when I was a student. When I went to school, we had anti-war people, athletes,

people who were more classifiable. I know it's not politically correct. [Students] don't seem to have the cohesiveness as when I went to school. Here it seems to be more of a melange. I tell them apart by age.

I compare students here to the students on the [other] campus. Students here seem to be nicer, more behaved, more vanilla-type students—ordinary, not rambunctious. In [other location], we had students who were much more volatile, with more criminal records. These students [from the Mid-Michigan campus] seem to be more normal. When I used to teach in [other location], students who came over [from Mid-Michigan] did not do very well in my classes [not doing well on the exams, poor attendance]. My first inclination was that these students were not as good as the ones on the [other] campus. Then I found out that they were.

I'm surprised to hear the numbers that get arrested here. I think last year much of our students were arrested and had to go to court for having a wild, drunken party. That was shocking to me. I didn't think they would do that. Even when I was a student it was not that bad. I don't think of these students here on this campus as being that involved in drugs and alcohol. It also surprised me to find out that Pine Lake has drug-sniffing dogs going through the dormitories, which is shocking to me. I did hear of a number of alleged rape cases over in the dormitories, which was shocking to me, especially when I heard the individuals involved. I would not think that of them.

A typical class will have some kids right out of school. They know each other from high school, and they'll sit in their little groups. We have students who have been out of school for 5-10 years, and they sit alone until they start learning who different people are. They all seem like one big happy family, until I suggest a seating chart. These students come to me, "Don't sit me next to so and so. I don't like this person." It seems like everyone likes everybody and there's no disagreement. Then I find out its not that way at all. There are some students that just cannot stand other students for whatever reason. I think they stay together too long in the same program. I think [it surprises me] because I'm separate from that. I guess I've grown to not expect that much from them.

I have a few [students who are disruptive in class]. They're not very nice. I try to subtly let them know that they should stop [and] not make jokes. I make announcements to the whole class, not trying to identify anyone in particular. If the problem persists, I'll slowly, subtly let that person know that, "Someone in this corner is talking while I'm trying to teach." Finally, [I'll] single out the person as a last resort. I think that would make that person and other people feel uncomfortable, especially if they're in my class; because, again, I learned best when I felt comfortable in class, when I enjoyed the class.

Usually the A students will be A students, maybe a B for a third of the class. Some will go A student—B student for the second [course], and up to A students in the third [course], because [subject] and [subject] are two different areas. We usually tell students that if they like [subject], then they'll probably do well as a [profession]. If that's the case, you're finding which area you want to go into. Very seldom do you find students who pick both.

I think our results on the [major] exam are encouraging. Our students do very well with that, so that does make me quite happy.

The students that we're getting now as opposed to the ones when I started here 10 years ago are a lot different. They're not as motivated; not as caring. We find them gravitating toward other areas; getting out of [major]. They're going into management,

computers, or into the medical department. They're looking for an easier way out; trying to find a program that isn't as tough as [major].

We notice that some students don't every answer. Even though they know the material, they just don't like to speak up in class. It's unfortunate. I don't know how to deal with that.

The problem here is we keep getting students who are making it through the system just barely, and think they're going to do better in later courses. In reality, it's just the opposite. You usually do your best in your freshman courses, and your grades tend to go down, unless you start changing your attitude toward education.

The big problem is in the first quarter class [subject]. If they can get past that, they can survive. Their big difficulty—traditionally it's 50%. When I went to school, 50% were expected to drop out. It's worrisome when you have a class where everybody passed, because [subject] is such that you expect to have 20-30, 50% failure. Ours is slightly less [than 50%]. To many students, it's their first exposure to [subject], because you don't have it in high school. If it's a class that I'm teaching, it would be shocking to me [if all students passed], because for 10 years, you figure you have a good idea.

Normally students don't fail. Once they make it past the first year, and the first quarter of their second year, they can usually survive to their Bachelors degree. Their grades may deteriorate a little bit. Some of them will improve if they start getting serious. As I find students get toward junior and senior status, they do concern themselves more with learning and with a good grade, because they're getting close to the point where they have to go out and get a job and do this stuff.

I know in the class I teach, their grade is usually within one full grade of the [major] exam. If they get a C on the [major] exam, their grade for the class will be maybe a C+ or a B-. There's not that big a disparity. I do expect that they will do poorly on the final exam compared to the other classes, because my other test coverage is two chapters each, the final covers eight. The students would normally get a C, C+, B- on this test. Occasionally, they'll do better on the final than they do on the course, but usually not. They don't have to pass the [major] exam in order to pass the class; the weight they have on the [major exam] versus the other tests is such that a student can.

To some [students, grades are everything]. To some, they want the grade whether they understand anything or not. I've had students who fail who were expecting to get an A because they're an A student. With those, it's not encouraging. The comment [from students] was, "You don't understand, I passed that class." We would say, "But you didn't learn anything." The fact that they got a passing grade tells them that they learned enough in [subject], and the fact that they're stuck [in the second subject] must be some other problem. They should be motivated [by learning how to do subject]; but, [with high schools now being reluctant to fail students], they come to Pine Lake with an attitude that they're going to make it all the way through anyway, so they really don't have that much of an effort forward. If they can't pass, they don't get a passing grade.

I look at my responsibility as to the group mainly, that's number one. As to individuals, I think it's up to me to identify which ones are having difficulty, approach them on my own, encourage them to come to see me, see counselors, or go to the Learning Center.

[I identify students who are not doing well] mainly by test scores. I keep a running average [of the scores] so I can tell what a student has made on this test and how

they're doing so far. What I think based on this or the previous two tests, that gives me an indication. After I grade the test and hand it back, students get two scores—one is the test, and one is the cumulative grade. If you're below a C, come see me and we'll talk. Some do, most don't. If students volunteer to meet if they have a problem, then I would. Other than that, I have no way of knowing if they don't tell me. Other than if they're disruptive in the classroom, then that can identify that something's a problem. In some cases, students just want to be a [profession], so it's their choice to squeak by. They can't make it but they're trying, even though it's hopeless.

The person who is trying and doesn't pass, that's just one of those things. What's really sad is the students who get very upset because they don't pass. I'm in the education business and have students who are not learning. It's not a happy feeling. The person who fails and doesn't care that he did means that that would be a very poor student; and you'd have to concern yourself with this person's ability to face life, because failing is something we all do, but it's not something we all like. The ones who are doing poorly could do better if they would apply themselves. The feeling that I have is that there is not much you can do. I've done all I can do; the student has to see the responsibility for their own education.

I really don't care if my students or my supervisor like me or not, I never have. Students get used to me, and they know what to expect. I just teach in a straightforward manner. As the years go by, I'm pretty much consistent in that particular class, teaching that particular way. It's just that I'm going to do what I think is best, and that's the way it is; being able to teach them, give them enough information so that they can learn. Students know they can come to me. When I tell them yes, it means yes; when I tell them no, it means no. I'm not going to soft-soap it or be overly polite to the point that that the truth is hidden or impaired. If they come to me and ask me a question, I will give them a straightforward answer about the content of the course or their potential in the class. Should they drop it? Should they stick it out?

I've had three supervisors tell me that in my classroom I'm a totally different person than they meet on a day-to-day basis. I'm told I'm very energetic, very alive, very upbeat [in the classroom]—it's important to liven up the topic. Whereas, when they meet me outside of class, I'm more sullen, withdrawn.

[To start class], I take attendance—real exciting. I make snide remarks to those who come in late. I tell students I don't care if they come in late or leave early, that's okay. I think they know it doesn't bother me. The only real problem I have with tardiness or leaving early is the 8:00 class and the night class.

We have a pretty structured curriculum and discipline, which is, in general, guided by the [major] exam. There's so much material that they test over. Our material is pretty finite, and textbooks cover most of that. We try to put research in to take them out of the textbook, but that would be at most 20% of the class. The other 80% is all task—homework over chapters. Now they're changing the format [of the major exam], so we all have to change our programs, curriculum, subjects, and textbooks from maybe two quarters to three quarters, to meet whatever the new challenge is.

When I start teaching the class, I like to review what we've gone over the last time, and we'll go through homework that was assigned. I ask questions. I don't pick students out individually, I just ask at random and anyone can answer. If they don't understand it, or if I don't get the right answers, or any answers, then I can deal with it

right then. I'll go over the next chapter, which consists of lecture and drawing on the overhead. At least I can present it in a way slightly different from the way the textbook does, so they get two angles to solve the same kind of problem. What I teach is determined by the course syllabus and the chapters; then I try to bring out past experiences of when I came across a problem or a situation. I try to factor real life experiences into the class, which works out okay sometimes.

We have very little one-on-one contact [with the students]. In class, the only time they'll ever have any contact with me is if they ask me a question and I give them an answer. What we have done [to help students who don't speak up in class] is have group projects, then divide the class up into groups. Everyone gets to be the group leader, and the group leader has to get up and talk—explain what the group's decision is. If I'm speaking for myself, I may be reluctant; if I've got three people who agree with me, then I might feel a little bit more confident. [That way] we can introduce them to speaking in the class. Those are the little techniques that I learned to build the confidence to speak in front of people.

I like to test in a manner in which other people are not. A student comes to me, they get to learn about multiple choice questions. When they go to another professor, they'll learn how to answer short answer, essay questions. We do multiple choice in [subject], because that's the type of question they're going to meet with on the standardized exam, which is something I don't like to do because we're teaching to the test. If you don't, though, they're not as prepared as they could be.

The number one motivator we have is grades. It's sad, but that's the truth. If a person isn't motivated by a good grade or isn't encouraged by a poor grade, then it's kind of hard to motivate that person. What it should be is more concern with learning the stuff. It's hard to take freshman students and change their beliefs and value systems, just as one professor. They come in after 12-13 years of education knowing what they want, knowing what encourages them and what doesn't. It's kind of hard in your first two quarters to change that. After the first year, we sort of take them away from that type of belief, at least in the [major] Department. In our area, like math or science, they have to be able to perform and come up with a result, or they won't pass. I like to see a lot of students pass because I think this is a profession where students always have a job.

What I like to do when I give back a test is put on the board how many people got A's— D's, and how many failed. I put up those results, and the ones from prior quarters. I point out to students, in order to get a passing grade, your score has to add up to 350 points, or you don't pass. I let them know that I have failed students in the past. It's a numbers game. Whether I like you or not makes no difference.

What I do [to instill confidence in students] is work in terms of papers—that helps. I think trying to encourage them to do the work on their own helps give them confidence. I also give check figures, which they can know when they get to the end of a problem if they have it right. The ability to go back and find their answers is very important.

The only [students] who come to see me would be those that are having difficulty, and that's usually outside of class. Typical is the student who comes in and says they're totally lost. I say, "Tell me what you do know." In half of the cases, it's just some minor problem but their solutions didn't work out, and they're all shook up. You identify what the problems are, and then you send them back out to work on the problem. They come

back sometimes, usually they don't. I think usually they figure out how to do it and take it from there. Some students know what the problem is; they don't have the time so they don't come in to see me. A few do, so I give them my home phone number so they can call me.

We also encourage them to go to our Learning Center where we have accounting majors who will help students. We have some perpetual failures who have taken the class and failed, and failed again. We'll take a student like that who is trying and set up regular appointments at the Learning Center to try to get them so they can learn enough to pass. It's helpful to the Learning Center [because they know what is expected with the instruction and the homework]—they can be more effective. I think that if [students] know what to expect, they can learn a lot better. I'll go and check to see if they have set up an appointment—regular appointments.

Other than having trouble with homework, students will talk to me about a career in [profession], because my experience is so wide. They look to me as someone who's been out there. The third area would be to complain about other professors, which I tell them that's not my area to deal with.

For those students that are struggling in class or don't succeed, then failing them is one option. I'll explain to them what they can do to try to pull out a C, but in some cases it's just mathematically hopeless—"Drop the course now," or, "You can do it, I've seen your work." There's not much you can do for students if they're unwilling to try, or come across as, "I'm totally lost." At some point, the student has to take the responsibility for their own education and stop having other people try to motivate them. Until they decide they want to learn, all the encouragement from the professors or counselors isn't going to help a bit.

[Effectiveness] is whatever the concept, they learn how to do it at least for this week and next week, and they can take the test and pass it—that's all I want. I'm always effective in my teaching. I personally don't think so, but students have repeatedly told me this year after year, supervisors have told me that year after year—that I do such a wonderful job. I don't think I so. I think I do a good job, I think I cover the material, but I get rave reviews all the time. I can't evaluate myself. I just do the best that I can.

The only problem I had is once. The course I taught was [subject], which is an area that I never taught in. I never took the course, and I never did any work in that area. It was what I felt was a unique situation for me, because I make no claims that I can teach this class. I went in thinking I'm going to make a mess of this. My supervisor knew that I knew nothing at all about it. I would study the chapters and do the homework the night before, come in and lecture on it. I got one of the highest ratings I ever got in that class from the students. They actually came back and told me that was their best-prepared part they'd ever had [on the major exam].

Overcoming administrative interference [is one of my biggest challenges]. We have seven campuses, at least; and have [the major professors] from all of them meet together and come up with policy regarding curriculum, programs in [subject/major]. The problem we have is a number of them [from the nonunion campuses)] are coming to the meetings having been ordered how to vote. The union employees are more able to speak freely. Usually the nonunion employees outnumber the union ones, so we wind up having all kinds of problems—telling me that this is my decision when it is not; telling me I supported something when I didn't.

The [curricular policies are] basically done by one individual who thinks he knows about accounting, used to teach it, and did an extremely poor job. He wants things done his way, and the words go down via the different members of our system. We're told we have to approve something, then it goes around to all the campuses that the [major] Department approved this, which, in reality, we did not. If they have a particular agenda item that they want passed, and it doesn't pass during one style of voting, they'll change the style of voting to see if it'll pass that way.

I've just about reached my limit of teaching tolerance. I'm interested in getting back as a [profession]. My attention span is not that great [in regards to long-term employment]. I've been here [at Pine Lake] for over ten years, longer than I've worked anywhere else, which is a very long time.

APPENDIX C-2

INDIVIDUAL TEXTURAL DESCRIPTION #2: "BILL"

I was working as a [profession], and the firm was down-sizing, so I applied [at Pine Lake College] and taught for a year part-time, and then full-time. At the time we only had a two-year school [at Pine Lake] 10 years ago. I taught just [subjects], and [other subjects in the program]. I've taught everything in the curriculum except [subjects].

I have 5 classes [this term]; three are introductory, two are upper level. The upper level courses interest me more than the introductory. The junior and senior level students have a much better background, and there's much more interaction—I like that better.

Probably the self-motivation [is one of the biggest frustrations of teaching]; and the lack of concern sometimes for their own well being—blowing the opportunity. If you come here and you want to take an opportunity that's presented to you and you do well with it, we can do wonders for you. If you have an opportunity and you're just going to blow it off, that's frustrating. I have a real problem with that; it bothers me. It's terrible to say, as an individual they may be nice people, but my esteem for them would drop. A lot of the kids here, especially the 18- 19-year-olds, don't realize the opportunity they have, and they blow it. They'd rather party. Another one that's really frustrating is [that] they get that $6.50- $7.00-an-hour job and they think they're making a lot of money. I say, "You're making a big mistake." They solve short-term problems without a long-term solution.

Teaching to me is a good profession. I was never trained to be a teacher; never took a methods class. I tell everyone that ever taught, if they ask me about mentoring, I say, "Take all the good things you can remember about the good teachers and throw away all the stuff that you have on the bad teachers, and then develop your own style. Don't be me, because you can't." A lot of people in the area I'm in walk into class, and immediately they turn their backs on the class and start formulization on the board. [Students] spend the whole period copying down what they're writing and have to go away and learn it later. I'm of the opinion, talk about it first, then do some examples. That's a point I think is relevant.

[I hope to achieve through teaching] is to see people achieve their potential. Their potential could be a [profession], [or] the president of General Motors. That's fine. I'm just as proud of each one of them. If you teach, you try to get students to get to their potential. If you don't, it could be your fault, it could be theirs, or a combination of both. In [subject], you've got to understand the details to do well. The testing and whatever else takes hours of concentration to prepare for. If it's not in your area, perhaps, they have to understand all the details. If you're in a philosophy course and you understand the basic question, you're okay. Not that you don't have to study hard in the other courses, but I'm saying [subject] much more detail-driven. All students are bright enough [in ability]. If they put forth the effort, they could be technically competent to do the work.

What influences how I get things done is the responsiveness of the class. I'll give you an example. Tonight's class will be very responsive. I'll ask questions, they'll bring in their own opinions, and I might lead a discussion—*and not talk as much about the*

chapter as they think I am. If the class is very unresponsive, it's more of a lecture-regurgitation process, because you have nothing to play off of.

A lot of our students come from the bottom third of the high school graduating class, so they were never on a career path to be Rhodes Scholars, but they're here. Their parents pushed them or something, but they were never highly motivated to do well. Perhaps athletically, but the academics were never where they were at. Some do see school as a lot of grief or anxiety, and some kids look at it as a nice place to party for a year before they get thrown out, and that's true, too. The second group is because they've been in the workforce, and they know to get advancement or to keep their job, they need education.

Generally, the self-motivated student here has a firm idea of where he or she wants to be; not necessarily career, but where they want to be. They're going through all this grief and anxiety because they know when they get into the job market, they've developed a skill that's transportable between companies. I think that's the real dichotomy—or self-motivation.

You can always tell test anxiety carryover, as I call it. I have a class at noon, they had a bad test in the class before that, and the anxiety carries over. They're worried about the last class, the test, and it affects their performance in your class.

Some of the kids this term and others are like "Marcel Marceaus" because you're asking questions and the look at you and they don't respond. Even the A [grade] students don't respond.

In the day classes and the [subject] class, you find more unmotivated students. Those are generally the dorm students, the 18-year-olds. Doing the work [is a way of gauging students' motivation]. One guy who worked 60 hours a week for GM [General Motors] and he always had *everything* done. Another lady worked part-time—15 hours a week—never found the time to get anything done. The person who works 15 hours a week can't find the time—that tells you a lot about motivation—they're not. These people seem to not be worried about wasting money, and I never understood that. Some of our students here throw down $550 and don't show up to class. I said, "We meet 10 times a night, that's $55. If you don't come to class that night, take $55 dollars out of your wallet and throw it out the window." For a lot of them, it's really hard for them to think that everything they do in life is motivated by their own self-interest. It's really tough for them to do that. It's not a criticism, it's just a fact.

[Internal motivation impacts classroom behavior] a lot. If you're going to go on to college, your freshmen are the motivated students—to survive. The non-motivated students do survive, but not forever. Sometimes that carries over until they get some maturity. Sometimes it takes one or two terms and they finally realize, "If I want to stay here, I've got to do some work;" and finally they get it. A lot of the time they don't wake up.

The night students [in subject] are the 25+ [age] who've been out working, and they're much more motivated to do the work, to understand, because they see the real implication in a hurry.

You get to graduate school and you get people that are almost overachievers. Get to the doctoral program, and you get the people that have no life. It's motivational, but to get there, you've got to really be self-motivated to do something like that.

You have a completely heterogeneous group of people in [subject] to the advanced [subject].

The introductory [subject] classes are usually populated with some majors and non-majors. Some of them come here and they want to be an accountant because everybody tells them they make good money or whatever. Then they find out it's real work, and it will be real work their entire career, and they don't want to do that. A very small percentage of the students are in it for the career, degree, or the money. I've had more absenteeism problems in the [beginning [subject] classes. They don't want to be here. "It's too early." The other students in [subject], if they don't get it, they're worried about the common final and things like that. They're not worried about the material as such, just if they can go on to the next class.

The upper level classes are all majors. Here, there's much more interaction. There's much more motivation to do well; they are motivated internally. They are here because they're preparing to take the [major] exam. They need a class to fulfill the requirements to sit for the exam. In this one [upper level] class, the [Association] changed what they needed, and this is the class you have to have to sit for the exam. I have other students who are graduating in [subject], and they know they have to take it to sit, so it's a different motivation.

If I were talking about the [subject] I taught, that would be more to the question [of differences among students], because we have no [subject] major [in this area]. Everybody is in that class because it's on their rotation, they've got to get it to graduate; so that would be a different teach altogether. Motivation is not there for any of them, because they've got to take the class, and that does make a difference. They tell me they don't like it; they're not interested in most of it. They think of [subject] differently than [professionals] think of [subject]. I try to get across, "Look, guys, if you don't understand this, don't vote." I try to get it in terms of that.

The students are usually not bad, they're not a bad class. Once in a while you get a student that just hates you, or they think they do. It's your old high school, "I don't like the teacher," or "I don't like the material." A lot of students do well in [subject] class; a lot of students blow it off and don't do well.

You go to class with the idea you're going to get some understanding across, and that's the only thing you can do. [You get across to] 25-40% [of the students]. [The rest] may retain enough to do the test. The logic escapes a lot of them. Explaining anything mathematically is a mistake. They try to regurgitate instead of understand. I'm much more for understanding, especially in [subject]. If you talk to them a week later about the topics we've talked about—not a clue. Once a student becomes acclimated to the idea that the [subject] classes do not have a continual review, the ones that understand have no problem.

A good student does not have to be an A student. A good student is one that works hard at it, and asks questions. Some of the better students don't care if they make a mistake. They've got the intellectual strength to say, "If I screw up, not a big deal. I learn, I go on." I think that's the difference.

Some of the A students I wouldn't hire, though some of the F students I wouldn't hire. They don't have the dedication to do it. Even some of the A students don't come across as a students being the kind of person I would like to hire, work with.

The vast majority [of students] are in the middle—the B-C students. The people in the middle that are not floundering, but are not doing "A" student work; don't come to see you. They're satisfied with what they've got and they do what they've got to do. I don't think [that I address them any less in class]. The middle-of-the-road student, if they're called upon, will answer the question, but they're not going to really venture out. They're not willing to take that risk. Some students realize that they don't want to be [professional]. They're not going to kill themselves for the As. They're going to get decent grades so they get a job, and that's all they care about. They're not good people, they're not bad people—they're average.

You remember 5-10% of the people you have. It's not because they're not nice people, but that's just the way it works out. Perhaps it's a function of being a teacher, too. You have so many people; you get closer to few students than you do to everybody else. I've been here over 10 years; I can probably name 20-25 good students, and I can probably name you some of the ones that got mad, ran out of class, and screamed and shouted. Middle-of-the-road students are those students you lose mentally.

[In terms of students that do not perform well in class], it depends on the student. I've had students I've failed, but they still talk to me. Some of the other students, they just don't show up to class. I have very little interaction with them. I don't regard their work ethic as what is needed to graduate. [They] could be doing the wrong thing. They think they want to be a [profession]. They think "Mommy and Daddy" told them to be a [professional], go to business school. This is not what they want to do, and if you do something you don't want to do, [students] resent it a lot, and it shows. Not necessarily toward me, just that they don't want to do this. Maybe they should get a degree in art history.

There's a litany of personal situations [that would also describe students that aren't doing well]. I've known more about some of the women here than I ever really wanted to know—medical problems, husband problems, kid problems. Boyfriend problems I don't consider as legitimate as marital problems. All these kids are like what, 18, 19 years old? There's been some real delicate problems, and it has impacted performance. Their concentration is just not there, and in [subject], at a certain level, concentration is the key.

[A] bad [student] is a relative term. As a person, they're not. Just in that course they don't comply with what they should do. I've had students that flat out got a zero. They were not motivated to do the work. The [academically] poor students haven't got a clue where you are. I use my Daughter's favorite expression. She said, "Dad, you know if the class isn't getting it when they nod and smile, and wait for their name to be called. They sit and nod or smile, they haven't got a clue what you're talking about." The more I thought about it, the more I've taught, she was right. You start looking out there and everybody says, "We understand." They haven't got a clue. This is something I've sensed. So you look for little signs like that.

In the classroom period, all of out work is done outside the class. We don't do very many homework problems in class; their struggling would be away from the classroom. Generally, if they don't do the homework, they're not going to do well.

[How I feel about students having a difficult time] depends on why they're having the hard time. I walk around the class a lot of times when I'm doing work in class. If you look over the class and people are making notes on the homework they completed, they understand, they ask questions. Then you have people that have done nothing. Then they

say, "Well, I'm lost." Well, sympathy goes out the window because they've done none of the underlying work to figure out how to do the problems. If they come to me and say, "I'm lost." "Lost where?" "I don't know." I'll tell them, "Then go away and do some work and come back and we can talk about it." I can't just take something out of the air, because they have no idea; they haven't done any work. If they're doing the homework and not doing well, I have much more sympathy, and we spend a lot of time.

Some of the real bad students you get close to because you try to help them or save them, and they don't want to be saved. "Just forget it; go away." "At some point in time I will help you to a point. If you're not willing to help yourself, don't waste my time." I hate to see people waste their potential. If they really can't catch on, I might suggest that they consider another area [of study].

I tell them up front, "If you don't do the work, you're not going to do well." Once they understand my philosophy, it's not a problem. You try to prepare them so the fall isn't quite as big as it could be. I try, "If you go to work, folks, what kind of grades are your employers going to give you?" The employer wants A+, A students. They don't want to have to go back and redo all the work. If you make too many mistakes, it's called unemployment.

There are no "answer books" when you go to work. As I tell them, "You can predict the future, everyone can. All the future is is the outcome of the decisions you make today. What you decide today, there's the probability of that happening tomorrow. The future is short term, because you've decided you are where you are today because the decisions you've made in the past. If you do not wish to do the work, your future will not be what you think it is." [Students who can't make decisions] are doomed. The percentage of those students become fewer as they get up the level. That's a function of age.

In my studies recently, I'm very much involved in human capital development. I say, "You're here to develop your human capital, your mind, because that's the only thing that you have to offer your employer. If you want to be a [profession] and that's your life goal, and you're happy doing that and you're doing the best job you can do, you've fulfilled your potential." Some people's potential to do that job—that is a high potential if they come from an adverse situation.

The18- 22-year-olds, never work, never been in the real world, haven't got a clue what I'm telling them. It's a function of age, and [the 18- 22-year-olds] are going to learn it the hard way. A lot of [them] think I'm an idiot, but that's the type of student. "You're old, what do you know?" The people who are 25-30 and worked in the work force, and come back, doing this the hard way part time at night, understand *exactly* what I'm telling them.

My students tell me that I'm not the same personality as the level of courses goes up. I'm more of a hard nose, real hard nose in the [upper level] course, but as I get toward graduation they say, "You're not a bad guy." It's a perceived different situation. I would think that my personality has changed [in the upper level classes]. It's a different assumption. If you're in [subject], you may be here because you've got to take that one [subject] class to get out of here. If you're in [subject], [the] assumption is you're a [subject] major, therefore, this is your life, this is your job. It's different, and they're much more involved in the course, and they ask many more questions.

I have a very strict policy. I teach in an organization that is dominated by female students—a lot of them close to or within my age group. I always say the same thing: "As long as I'm the teacher, I am [Title/Last Name]. The day you graduate, I become [Name]." You have to be incredibly aware—I do as a male—of issues that abound these days when you talk to female students. I'm very conscious of all that, because things can be misconstrued. I place the same limitations on everybody. When I have students come and talk to me, I leave the door ajar, not shut. I never leave my chair—you know—these are subtleties you do in that area. I tell them, "If you're going to be a professional, be a professional." As such, you have to understand, it's never going to happen. [Those dynamics do not influence my interaction with students] in the classroom. But away from the classroom, if you're talking to someone individually, the dynamics change. You learn to adapt to that early on, or you don't survive.

A lot of students can be very supportive, too. They know you're having a problem with a student, they may volunteer—"I'll help him out." They'll be very supportive in that respect, and that's very helpful. You almost become friends in a certain context, and that helps an instructor get through the bad days.

I'll use night class [to describe one or two typical class periods]. Night classes are long—three hours and 40 minutes—four hours. I sit down and we'll chat before class: "How are you?" "Let's get going." But when I stand up, they know it's about to start. I stand in front of class and they all know I have a couple of sayings I always say. Night class we talk from 6:00-7:00 [p.m.]. At that point, I gauge the mood of the class. Being a Thursday night class, a lot of them typically are mentally beat up. If you talk awhile, then you look at the class, you can tell almost immediately, almost within 10-15 minutes, if they've had bad weeks. They're lethargic, noncommital. You gotta understand that they're under stress at work; they've got problems elsewhere, and being in class is not what they want to do. If they're somewhat anticipatory and asking questions, you can tell what frame of mind they're in. I get through all the material, but I give people a chance to really gear down, instead of coming in running. We'll take a 30-35 minute break. By a quarter to nine or so we start drifting into more stories that I do lecturing, and I try to get into experienced-based, "When I did this; when I did that." The last 30 minutes is more of a story time with a point, so it's not lecture.

In the day class, I don't have the opportunity [to gauge the mood of the class]. A 90-minute, hour-and-a-half class, whether they're in a good mood or a bad mood, it's irrelevant—you have to cover "X" amount of material in so much period of time. You can sometimes tell what kind of mood they're in, but it's much less flexible during the day than at night. Eight o'clock in the morning you can look for work problems, or problems with the dorm people—"I don't get up." You really have to try to get into it.

I do teach at opposite ends of the spectrum when I'm in class—[subject] to the advanced. In beginning [subject], it's all procedurally driven. It becomes rote memory at some point, because it's the standards of the profession. "You gotta do it this way;" more of a hard nose. You have to get that stuff down before you can expand upon that later and get into other areas. Early on, [students] say, "I got the right answer, but it's not procedurally correct;" and that's what takes getting used to.

For the students, when you go from the big leap in [subject], it's always from [subject] to [subject]. [Subject] is very much repetitive—it's almost a constant review all term. For [subject] and then after, or [subject], we cover a chapter, never to be heard of

again the rest of the year. In the upper level courses, it's more of a yeah, you can discuss technical points, you can do some other things.

I have a real affinity to doing, in the [subject] level, a phenomenal amount of board work in my lecture. It's just a style that I have. A lot of people like to do all the examples on the board and all that stuff. I'm of the persuasion that if you can't explain it, you don't understand it. My whole theory there is I try to use words as much as possible when I talk about, "Do you do this?" "When do you do that?" I do explanations on the board, but I try to do it verbally first without the visual, then I do it in visual. I think it works.

I do try more than one [type of instructional method] if students aren't [responsive] to that in the classroom. Some people are visual learners, and some are not. That's why I do the lecture first, and then I do the stuff afterwards. Then, seeing a very demonstration-based course, then you do the homework. I put the visual on the overhead so they can see the problems. Then the side board gives me room to explain different points along the way if I have to.

I've used a couple of different approaches [to motivate students]. I've used one, I call it "the crusher." It's an exam. Students were not doing anything a year or two ago in the [subject] class. They were just like, "Yeah, we've got it." I gave them the exam—that days they couldn't have gotten this done—and they didn't. I said that they could take it home and do it. When they did that, some students put 18-20 hours into this test. I said, "Now you understand. If you are a professional, this is your life. You should know this stuff cold. They don't give raises to C students. If you go to work as a professional, you've got to be able to do that every single day." I push everybody if that helps. You ask them questions. In the [class], "If you don't know, go look it up. If you don't know, you better review."

You try to help them out as best you can, but if they're not motivated to do the work, there's very little you can do. If they come to see someone, see me if they don't understand. Talk with them; give them advice or incentive. Since they're paying $550 a class, or borrowing the money, I put a lot of responsibility on the student to come see me or do something.

I tell [students that are having a hard time] the following: "Come see me; (a) go to the Learning Center, (b) form study groups, see [another Instructor], see anybody else." I realize that some people like my style, some do not. Some people like me, some people, it's just personality, whatever. I say, "If you don't learn from me, I understand, we just don't hit it off. If you like [the other Instructors], talk to them. Don't just say, "I didn't understand," or didn't take an effort to go find someone who can help."

If they're trying to meet you half way, you bend over backwards to help them. I've come in on Saturdays; I've had review sessions on Sunday afternoon for my students. [The] whole class was invited—all 11-12 students—4-5 showed up. You can only do so much, and if they still don't [seek help], then it's up to them to try to work out the time frame to do it. Like self-motivation, [they have to take responsibility to perform well]. [If they don't], then I have no responsibility to them.

Those that just don't catch on I will counsel into another area. If you're not getting it by the time you're in [subject], I would say, "Maybe you should think of something else. That's not that you couldn't be good at something, but maybe this is not for you."

[As far as being effective in teaching], I'd look back, memory is nice. I think I probably flatter myself more being an individual, human being; that I was very good before, and I'm still good now. I've probably changed through time. I have done this differently, that differently. It may be subtle changes I've done, but the basic tenets of the way I teach are constant. The delivery may have changed a little here or a little there; softened the edges a little bit.

Probably in one of the [subject] classes I've had [I felt effective]. It's taking everything people know in [subject] and throwing it out the window and starting over again. We had a good class. Got everybody to understand, got it across, which was phenomenal. Usually, [subject] is a difficult teach at best, and the one class I was very happy with. They did incredibly well. Whatever I seemed to try worked. It was one of those kinds of deals where you could do the same thing in the next class and it blows up in your face. This time it sort of all clicked, and that doesn't happen very often. If you've ever taught, you know you can do the same thing in three classes, and two out of three times, it doesn't work; but when it does, it's really good. Whatever worked, I try to incorporate it into other classes later on, and it becomes a part of the way I am.

[What I would change is that] I talk fast for one. But, I'm getting better at that. I'm not as fast as I used to be, but I don't know if I've changed. Subconsciously, I change probably all the time, but to be consciously aware of that, no.

The first time I taught a class for LCC [community college]—it was a miserable 10 weeks. I'd never taught, ever. "Here's the books, here's what you've got to cover—see you in 10 weeks." I followed someone that they [the students] all liked as an instructor. You don't know what works, what doesn't work, how it's going. My lecturing style, almost everything [did not work]. Having been to college, you forget students are at beginning levels, [or if] they know different things. You assume they know this stuff, and they don't have a clue. You assume they're all highly motivated; that's not the case, and that was surprising. They're there because the boss said, "You're taking a class in accounting."

You make too many assumptions about the class. "They should be able to do this in this much time;" and that was a disaster. I wanted to do it as a seminar approach in [subject]; sit down and talk about the stuff. I thought that would be much better first time out for me, for them. The students didn't want that at all. They wanted the traditional stand up, yell at them, and "do it that way." It just didn't work well. You're dictating a class, at night, part-time; they work all day.

[The biggest challenges I face as a teacher are] probably when I reach the [middle] sequence. This is where the students finally decide they want to be [professional]. This is the goal, and you've got to get them over the point of being a student into being a professional, and that's the point. "You can study this and say 'okay, I've got it.'" "No," I try to tell them, "Look, this is your life now, this is what it takes to be a professional." You've got to get them over that hump, and that's the toughest part.

APPENDIX C-3

INDIVIDUAL TEXTURAL DESCRIPTION #3: "NATALIE"

I had been teaching at [Community College] for a number of years, and one term they assigned me a class—one they had given me [because] they had extra [students]. When I got in the class, a full-time instructor came in and said, "This is my class. What are you doing here?" They hadn't bothered to tell me that someone had bumped me out of the class. Went straight down to Pine Lake [College] in [location] and filled out an application. I started to work the next day. I was teaching [subject] [at Pine Lake], which I had never taught before in my life. I had no idea what half of the terms were. I taught at both places [campuses] for probably 6 or 7 years. Then I started back for my Master's degree at [University]. It's not really relevant to what I teach, but it was interesting. I couldn't go to school and teach at both places, now I'm just at Pine Lake.

I'm teaching [three subjects], and [subject]. In the fall [term] I will be teaching a [subject] class. I serve on the Professional Merit Committee and the North Central Committee to do one of the parts of the study for the presentation.

I like most everything about teaching. I like explaining. I enjoy answering questions. I like to have the students be able to understand something they didn't understand before when they leave my class. I like the individual one-on-one teaching, too. I enjoy having students who come to me and ask, and look at something so I can explain it and have them understand it.

We have had a few, especially coming through [subject] that went through Special Ed [Education] in high school, and just have not the capacity for doing the problems. Unfortunately, with our open door policy, the policy really has not control over who comes in. I think the college is taking [students'] money under false pretenses. [They] just really shouldn't be here, it's not the spot for them; there's no way they will ever be able to pass the class. That's frustrating for me, because I know I can't get them to the point where they need to be. It's frustrating for them, and sometimes for their friends who are in the class, because they try and explain it to them, and they just can't get it.

It's all being on stage; that's the whole idea of what we're doing here. We present our material, and in doing that, we present us; and if we're interested in what we're presenting, that comes through, because we are just actors.

Definitely the animation and variety, both of those [are important]. If you were to stand at the board doing what I do for a living, and just write one number after the other with no change in intonation, no joke, no "Here's a problem, look at this part!" it would really get boring. They'd all fall asleep. I think all [facets of instruction] are important problems to get the rest of the topic. When you get enthused, they get enthused. Sometimes it works both ways.

When I was teaching [subject], I had time to sit down with two or three students at time and talk about how to do the [subject]. That's very effective. There's a different type of teaching that goes on with a small group. If I have that same sort of time with any other of the classes to do that in a small group or on an individual basis, I find that's very, very effective. It gives a little bit more individual contact, and I get instant

feedback. If they do [understand], then we can go on. I can't stop to see if every one of the 35 people understand.

I think straight lecture with no opportunity for questions or for the students to practice what you're telling them is not effective. If they never have an opportunity to do anything but copy down what I'm writing on the board, they will have no experience in doing any of those problems. For a [subject] class, [participation] is *the* thing, because that's how they have to be able to do it by themselves. You almost have to force them to fail at something before they see that it's necessary that they practice, do the homework, and do this business in class with the rest of them. If they're able to take every problem that I give them and do it correctly, there is no reason for them to participate. If I can help them [see] that there's some use for [subject], that's part of my job.

To begin with, I think they figure that [participation] is kind of, "Okay, so she's wasting a little time." After they get started and they see that, "Well, I understood what she did on the board, but I don't understand it when it's right here." I think they see that they do need to go through that. It's almost like a demonstration of a failure for them to be able to realize that what they really need to do is participate. [Students] need to face the fact that they don't know everything that there is to know about the topic. They have to get to the idea that, "Yes, there probably is something I can learn here," before they'll participate.

Some students do not study well from lecture. They prefer to be home with the book and working on it on their own; and in a [subject] setting, that's entirely possible. There are a lot of them that learn best that way, so it doesn't really bother me in class. I do not require my students to stay glued to me. If they have something else to do, as long as they're not bothering their neighbor, that's their choice.

[What influences my teaching is] how questions are running. If they're understanding what I'm showing them and I don't have all kind of questions, then we'll proceed pretty much with that pattern. If I find that whatever it is that I'm explaining is not going over well, then I'll stop and go back and start over again and see if we can find out where it was that I lost them. Usually, they'll tell me, and we'll start from there and redo it. When I get done, finally I have some concept of the fact that they have absorbed as much as they could, and need to go work the problems to get the rest of the topic. Have you ever come into a class, and you looked around and they're all just not with you that day? I guess that probably affects how I teach, too. Sometimes you feel the same way, too—"If they don't care, why should I?"

I guess all of them are here for some reason that they hope is going to help them do something better than what they could do without us. I think that's pretty much everybody's idea when they come to school. Not all, because you get some that Mom and Dad said, "Either you go to work, or you go to school." So they're here, but not because they want to. Most everybody comes to the class prepared at least to give it a shot. What happens from there divides them all.

Part of [the differences among students is that] it's dorm students and home students; working students and non-working students. People that have home responsibilities, single-parent families, or fathers who are working to support the family and going to school.

[Other differences are] just the speed in learning. [Subject] is the type of class where you either have the people that do or the people that don't [understand the

material]. There doesn't seem to be a lot of middle ground. I guess it must be how they perceive the world. I just can't think of it any other way. There are people who are logical thinkers, and [subject] is logical. Then there are people who are not logical thinkers. You get a lot of frustration at both ends. The ones that see it right away get frustrated with those that don't. The ones that don't see it right away get frustrated with the ones that do.

If we're talking about some of the introductory [subject] classes, I have a variety of students—a real heterogeneous group. They come in with all kinds of backgrounds. I have the slow learner, I have the fast learner. I have the people who just manage to not get out of the class by taking that test; I have the people who have not clue at all about what's going on. [Subject] is the last and only one they'll ever have to take.

In the upper [subject] classes, they're much more homogeneous. [They have] gotten through the introductory classes and now are going on to the more intense [subject] for a special reason. The really low-level abilities aren't there anymore, [though] there are still students that have a hard time learning some parts of the [subject] and are difficult to teach. They all have some sort of a [subject] background that we can build on; it's not quite as difficult to teach [them]. They're more evenly talented in [subject]. Some of them are very good.

Negative behaviors, they pretty much run the gamut from somebody coming in and laying their head down on the table and sleeping through the entire class, to someone who never takes a single note or pays attention to anything that's going on on the board, or would prefer to write a letter. There's always the students that come into class 45 minutes late and then don't do anything, either; or, come in and sit for 20 minutes, pack up their stuff and leave without a word. I suppose some people would perceive [disinterest] as a negative toward them. I guess I really don't. I've done this for 20 years. If I were going to get upset because somebody didn't enjoy [subject], I'd be upset a lot. It's not so much that it's directed at me as it is at the subject.

Occasionally, I'll find a student that wants to make negative comments about people who are also asking questions. I have a couple of students in class this term that I had last term who wanted to continue sniping at other students with nasty little comments said just loud enough for the other student to hear. When that stops, you pretty much know you've got them hooked.

I don't care if they sleep, I don't care if they write a note to their girlfriend. If they waste their money, fine. If they know the material on a test, I guess I can deal with that; but when they start causing problems in class, then that bothers me. Talking to a neighbor, I guess, is the one that irritates me the most personally; because not only do they disturb their neighbor, they disturb all the people around them.

[Disruption] irritates me to no end. It's obvious what's going on to some of the other students in class, but I don't want to haul the kid up by his ears and say, "Hey, look here you dummy, sit down and shut up." You can't do that. What I usually do is wait until I can hear a comment and then say, "I beg your pardon, did you have something to say?" I do it repeatedly every time I hear that person say something. It doesn't take very long before they get the idea that, "Okay, maybe I'd better keep my mouth shut." If that doesn't work, then I'll just stop them on the way out of class and tell them it's just not appropriate behavior in this classroom. I don't like that [disruptive] behavior. I think it's rude. That kind of behavior does bother me.

Once in a while it's just really obvious that they understand; "the light bulb goes on." Occasionally you get that dramatically happening. You get someone, in the middle of class, saying, "Oh ho! That's what that meant!" and I love it. Going from that kind of behavior [not understanding the material] to behavior where they're actually paying attention and watching what's going on and taking some good notes usually tell me that I've struck something someplace, and they do understand what I'm saying. Usually, I will ask them to either explain to me what it was that we were talking about, or to do a similar problem and show that they do have the comprehension. Sometimes it's just their comfort in class that tells me that they're doing better.

You get somebody who wants to fidget or scribble off on the side; that pretty much tells me one of two things—either they already know the stuff and they are bored to death, or they have no clue. Sometimes it's a matter of not having negative behaviors [that signifies that students may be comfortable with the material]. Most of those [students] not paying attention or taking notes] are the ones that know the material. I've sort of paid attention over the years, and those [students] are pretty much the ones; they're in a class that they don't really want to be in, and really don't have much use for it, and just feel they don't have to. For the most part, they're right, they don't—they can still pass the test.

Some [students] do come in, especially in the [subject], with the idea that they already know [subject]. They [believe] that the only reason that they have to take [subject] is that they missed the cutoff point to waive it by one or two points on the entrance exam, the college needs their money, or, "I needed a job," or some other ridiculous reason.

That's a really difficult thing to deal with in the classroom, because the student is so positive that they are correct, and yet they aren't. If you say, "No, that one's not right," that absolutely devastates them. You have to be careful about that, too, especially when you've got someone early on that want to volunteer every answer. Some of those psyches are so fragile, as far as [subject] goes anyway, that that would just absolutely destroy them. You have to sort of take the answer and say, "Okay, let's look to see how that came about." They need to be convinced that they don't know everything that there is about [subject]. If you can't get them to the idea, those are the ones that don't come to class, because they feel there's nothing there for them. Occasionally, on the first test, when they don't do well at all, they have such a psychological reaction that either they start coming to class, which is good, or they drop right out, which is bad. [They] never come back because they're just not able to deal with that. If you get somebody who decides after the first class that they don't really need it, and they're only coming back for the test and they fail it, there's not a whole lot you can do for those folks.

There are students that are not logical thinkers—they just have trouble going from step1 to step 2. They want to go from step 1 to step 4 and back to 3, and [subject] can't be done that way. They've never been able to train themselves to do that kind of logical progression that's necessary to get [subject] done. Every once in a while you find one student who is *really* that way.

Most of them are obviously taking course studies that don't require much [subject]. They are studying things that they know are not going to require them to do the type of step-by-step things that [subject] requires. They don't tend toward that; they don't like being put in that sort of situation. They know they don't think like other people

think. Sometimes they are able to mimic the process even though they don't think that way themselves. Some of them are capable of doing some good writing, they just don't have the ability to do the [subject]. Some of them just never get it, even with trying hard. You do every problem in the book, and yet you give them a problem on a test where they're required to make a [subject] decision, and they can't do it.

They'll just get so frustrated. "I just can't do this because I don't know what it is you want me to do!" Every once in a while you have somebody who slams the book together, packs up the bags, and you never see them again. That's supreme frustration. Those are the people generally that work so hard at trying to get it done, and when they can't, they just are so depressed because they know that there's just no way that they can think that way.

Quite a few of them do try very hard; they just can't follow the process through. There are occasionally students that just absolutely have no clue of what you're talking about. When you say, "And now, what step comes next?" they have no idea. Other than saying that their mental capacity is just not sufficient to absorb the type of abstract material that's necessary in [subject], there really isn't a whole lot more that you can say.

A student that gets frustrated in [subject] class is going to strike back at the source of the frustration. The source might be me, it might be the other people in the class that do better than they do. The nasty little comments sometimes come toward the people who do better or who are interested in the class and have shown it by asking questions. It seems to me that when they are in that type of mode, they are separating themselves from what goes on in the [subject] class and holding themselves above that, so that they can snipe at people that are beneath them who are involved in the class. It's a mechanism that they use to cope with the fact that they're failing. The visiting back and forth says, "It's not important to me; I don't really care about this."

[Some students] preserve their own self-image by quitting early, because if they stayed, they knew they would fail. [If they're] having trouble, they'll just drop out; you never see them again. If they can't do the stuff, they aren't going to stick around. It would require a lot of work, and they aren't willing to do that. Those are usually the ones that don't come to class. The ones that do stick around really do try very hard.

Sometimes I think [they] are looking for some reason to blame a failure on, other than themselves; so if they don't come to class, they can say, "I wasn't there for class half the time, how could you expect me to get that?" It's a self-saving type of excuse. Those sorts of things that they do that will guarantee that they will fail. That way, they have something to blame for their failure.

Students that can't do the work and don't want to are probably the ones that are hardest to reach. Students don't want to be in another [subject] class so they'll fail again; and they're guaranteed that they're going to fail again. They have no incentive. They're really tough to get through to; to get them to do anything at all. They'd rather sit there and scowl at you because it is "your fault" that they can't do the [subject], rather than try. If they try, then they might find out that they really can't do it. Those are the ones.

Some of them are preoccupied with other things that have nothing to do with class. Some of them are hung over. I mean, they could care about the [subject]. If they don't want to be there, they aren't going to want to listen to what's going on. I had a woman fall term who was in this [class]; didn't want to be there and told me several times that she absolutely had no idea why they were forcing her to take this stupid class. You

know she could do the work, but she didn't want to be there. She finally dropped the class week 8.

If I can get them involved, if they will make the effort necessary to meet me half way, then we're all set. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we had classes of students that came every day and all wanted to be there and all participated? It's not going to happen; this is the real world. If they aren't going to pay attention, fine. I don't have time to deal with them always. If they choose not to show up, you can't go out in the dorms and say, "Get out of bed and get over to the class!" I don't care when they come or do not come. The only thing that bothers me is when they haven't been there for 3 sessions and they're asking questions that I've answered 4 times. I tell them that, "If you'd like to go over it again, stop and see me." I'm not going to waste my class time to go over something that they couldn't bother to come to class for.

You just have to let them fail, which is uncomfortable, but it's true. They have to come to the conclusion that they are responsible for what they do. I'm sure glad to see them being able to get through whatever [subject] they've got to take and on to something else, because I know they'll do much better someplace else.

That's a tough question [regarding students that do not understand.] That's the one that's really hard to be able to settle. I have no idea what to do to help. It frustrates me to no end. Those are the ones that are hard to deal with, because I'm just very step-oriented. I've done it for so many years that I have a hard time figuring out a way to explain to them how or why you have to do it this way; why it's necessary that they learn how to do that. That's really difficult for me to do because I don't think that way. It's really strange.

Other that sitting down with them, sometimes I can explain my way through a problem to them, but it's a definite one-on-one. They need someone to show them that there is a process, and it's not just a random picking of a number to write down on the paper. They can't do it in a group. They don't want to speak out in class, but I try to give them an opportunity where there are other people that are asking me to come over. A lot of them will wait until after I've assigned those two or three problems at the end of the class, and all the people that are able to do them have left. Then they'll ask me to come over and sit down and [will] ask questions on it. After the first week or two, they find that other people are [asking for help], so it's no big deal if they ask me to help them. I always wander the class during that time—always. I don't stay up in front. I'm there; I'm available. That's what I try and do.

I'm not super friendly with my students. I don't sit down with all of them and listen to all their complaints about their husbands, kids, home life, and the money they don't have. I'm just not that kind of person, and I think they know that. I'm a bit more on the distant, perhaps more formal side than some of the instructors they have; that's what I'm comfortable with. I'm sure that all probably comes through. I've never been comfortable sharing secrets with people; it's just not something I do. They know that I'm a little more formal or stiff before class starts, and after class, than some of the other instructors might possibly be, but that's variety. I may be a little less [friendly].

To describe how I am in class, I'm somewhat animated, but not a lot. I do try different ways to present things. I try to vary my approach. I try real hard to show that I really enjoy [subject], and I do. I like doing it. There are parts I like better than others. I

guess they figure that there's some little old lady who's done this for a long time, who really knows what she's talking about, and sometimes she can get it across.

That's really tough. I've never seen me on video-tape. All I have is my perception of how I come through, so I don't know how I appear.

Yesterday was a pretty typical day. I got into school probably an hour-and-a-half before classes started so I had time to get everything together, relax, figure out what I was doing. I planned ahead to see what each one of my classes had, checked to make sure I had what I needed for that particular class that was coming up. Got together the books and the overhead projector and went to class, held the class, came back, and usually I have some sort of break. Changed books, changed stuff in the briefcase, taught [class] again, and got back in at 10:00 and went home. That's Monday/Wednesday. Tuesday/Thursday I have an 8:00 class, which I do the same thing again, about an hour before class starts. Then I have 6-hour break. During that break I eat lunch; take a break from here. I escape for an hour—just do something different than this. Go take a quick nap, grade papers, prepare for class, and then go back into class again.

After greeting the students, and getting everything out of my briefcase, I take roll. Then we start in class by answering the new material that we're covering during the class period. During that time, the students have an opportunity to watch me work some problems and them I have them work some problems. We look at them together on the board to make sure they see what we're doing so that they can do the problem before they get out the class. In some cases, they do enjoy seeing [demonstration of the material], especially if it applies to something they know about. We'll talk about something practical, [subject-related], that they can see comes from real life.

Toward the end of the class period, if I have time, what I'll usually do is pick out two or three of the types of things that we've done in the book, and tell them that these are the ones that I'd like to have them do before they leave class. When they're done with working [subject], they come up and check their answers. If their answers are right, they're free to go; if not, I'll come and help them. That gives me a little time to go around and do some individual helping at the end of class before they get out and go do their homework.

They don't realize that they do need that participation until they are asked to do one in class while I'm in the middle of a lecture. I try early in the class to start this process of showing them that maybe there is something that they can get out of this class so that it doesn't come quite as much of a shock.

I try and get them help outside of class, because I know I don't have time in class to get to help them. The ones that have difficulty as far as what I do, individual contact means everything. That's the best way to help them—watch them do a [skill] and point out to them as they work through it what it is that they're doing wrong, then encourage them to develop that kind of thinking for themselves. I think that's absolutely essential.

We really do our very best here. We do a pretty good job in class, and the tutors, and even with some of the other [subject] instructors, in getting these people to somebody that can help them. We encourage them to try a variety of people. There are videos that we have available. Some people really like those videos—an explanation of something over and over again until they actually understand what's going on. There are textbooks in the library. Some check them out and look at a different way of having it explained.

We all try and help, and sometimes it's just not going to do any good. It's really frustrating for everybody—the instructors, the counselors, and the tutors.

I don't remember when [feeling especially effective in teaching], but I sure can tell you what the feeling was. It's exhilarating. You just felt like you were on top of the world and everything that came out of you mouth was clear, correct, and cogent, and to the point. They all understood, and it was wonderful. It doesn't happen every day, but I'm not perfect. If I knew [what brought on those feelings] I would repeat it every opportunity I get. I don't know. I used to think it was preparation; I don't think so any more. I can be as prepared one day as I am the next, and one day it's clear, and the next day it's not. I used to think perhaps it was the students, and I don't think that's true. I don't know what causes that change. Whether it's the enthusiasm I have for the topic we're discussing, that could be. If it's something I really enjoy, I'm sure that comes through. If it's something that kind of bores me, it probably comes through, too, so I don't know.

I've had a lot of days when I knew when I got started, that everything that came out of my mouth was mush. I fumbled through this and that. Sometimes it doesn't last a whole class period. Sometimes it's the first five minutes, and then I get on a roll. Sometimes it's the middle 10 minutes. It doesn't seem to be that I'm tired, because sometimes that's when I do best. You just get all "adrenalined" up and you're on a roll. Although, sometimes in an 8:00 class after a night class the night before, those first 10 or 15 minutes take a while to get warmed up. I don't know whether it's the attitude of the class.

Building interest, that's the number one challenge. If I can get them interested in doing the [subject], the rest of the class [and] the term run very nicely. If they aren't interested, they aren't going to produce. Showing that it's useful somewhere, that it's applicable to what they're going to be doing, is absolutely the very first thing that I have to do. I do it by showing my enthusiasm, and then by demonstrating that the [subject] applies to all kinds of different fields.

APPENDIX C-4

INDIVIDUAL TEXTURAL DESCRIPTION #4: "NANCY"

I sent my application in [to Pine Lake College] sort of blind, and I was called when they saw I had teaching experience. The [subjects] I and II and [subject] was what was available to teach.

We find out it's common now [to not feel well-oriented to the College]. I was hired Thursday and I started teaching three classes [the following] Monday morning. I think that someone had quit unexpectedly, so I took the classes that she was going to take. That's been about 10 years ago.

My Master's is in [major], and so I probably ended up teaching as many [subject] classes as anything else. Then you kind of evolve to the classes that you like, and then you teach those more often. Because I have another job, I try to schedule my classes fairly tightly.

Mostly I teach [two subjects], and [subject] and the [subject]. I also help [students] schedule classes [as an advisor].

It's rewarding to see students, when all of the sudden they're sitting in the back of the room and you can just see them saying, "I finally get it!" Also, particularly here at Pine Lake, it frankly is kind of an ego boost when you hear students say that they've never been good at [subject], they didn't like it, and you watch them evolve and realize that they actually can. They can succeed. Part of what you're doing is not only teaching, but you're helping build self-esteem, and I guess I like all that.

I think part of our responsibility as teachers in an institution like this is to try to help them see that with hard work, organization, they can do it. I personally have always felt that part of the class not only was the [subject], but helping them see that they can succeed.

As far as the mechanics, what hopefully I'm going to teach them is to be able to [do the subject]; and to [relate] your ideas to whoever is listening, or [relate] what you're [subject]. I also hope to achieve that they enjoy the classes. Usually, if they enjoy them, they're more likely to do better.

To me, a good student is not necessarily smart. It is somebody who comes to class, works on the assignment, makes an attempt. If they get stumped, they come in. A good student is one who works hard at it.

In most of my classes, if you come to class and do the work, you can get a good grade, unless you're way below average. I have had some students like that. The biggest factor, I would have to say is, if you're willing to spend time, you can do okay. If you're not willing to commit to the time, then they probably, regardless of what their IQ is, are not going to do very well. If they think they can do the work, they really will try, if you make it at a level they feel comfortable with, that they can do it. Because a lot of our students, I think, aren't used to succeeding in school, or weren't very good students, I always say that good students learn in spite of the teacher, poor students learn because of the teacher.

I suppose the personality of the students [will influence what I do when I teach]. For example, last term I had a group of students in one of my classes that had a ball the whole class. They were in a good mood, they chatted with each other; they talked the

whole class. They were a fairly intense group. It was a group that was fairly unsure of their [skills], so we started off with a bunch of fun stuff. They were learning, but they were involved. Because of that, I had a tendency to let them go. I just let them talk, because I knew there was learning.

If I have a class of older students, I really try hard to make jokes or say silly things, because they usually feel kind of tense. I guess as far as what I do, its going to be influenced by the group dynamics of the class. I think bigger classes are more responsive.

I think most students are here because they think it'll help them get a better job. Why do most people go to college? I don't think we have a lot of students who are here because they're here to learn. They're here to get a job. I don't think that that's uncommon to [Pine Lake] College. The concept of learning for learning's sake is becoming few and far between. "I'll learn if it gets me something; if it gets me a job." At least that's what I see. I think they're less likely to be interested in events or current affairs, or issues that don't have anything to do with them directly getting a job—you know—the concept of doing something because it's problem-solving. I think most of the students come here because they think that they're on a two-year track, and when the two years are over, they're going to get a job as a PT [physical therapist] assistant or an administrative assistant, or something. That's their focus.

I think fall term we have more of a homogeneous group of students, at least starting age-wise, and in the day classes. Fall term we're most likely to have students right out of high school, a younger group. They're more tuned into study mode. In the night classes, we have more older students, particularly if I have a [subject] class or a [subject] class. [They] sometimes forget how much time it takes to be a student. They can't get into the study mode.

We have an older student body overall, and probably, the great majority of our students are not what we would call typical college prep, even out of high school. I think we have students that are somewhat wounded in life and maybe haven't had a lot of successes; therefore, maybe they don't have a lot of self-esteem, particularly in the developmental classes. I would say that a lot of our students have troubles that maybe I didn't have growing up. Or, we have a lot of students that have had babies already, even though they're 18.

I would say that probably a lot of our students maybe came from backgrounds where education was not a high priority, therefore, didn't go through school always knowing that they would go to college. A lot of our students are not what we think of as, you start Kindergarten, and everybody asks, "Where are you going to go to college?" I think a lot of our students maybe got financial aid, maybe got job training or retraining, therefore, had some opportunity.

As far as the make-up of the class, I think that a lot of our students are from small towns. They're not very sophisticated or worldly—haven't particularly traveled. I continue to be surprised at how little they know about politics; what I would consider just normal stuff. A lot of students are not readers, therefore, in my opinion, that means that they have limited knowledge of the world outside of them. Someone was talking of recycling and somebody said, "How many give newspapers?" Three people in the class raised their hands. That just shocked me. Only three people get newspapers?

I think a lot of our students are from families that maybe are not what I would call like my family. I think we have a lot of women who are used to being subservient to males. [In] a [class] last spring, a lot of the students were married or lived out, not on campus.

I don't know what the statistics are for the number of students [who are not typical college students in the beginning classes]. I know they have to take the [subject] before they can come into [subject]. I'd still have to say a fairly high percentage of the students. I would be surprised if very many of our students have ever taken SATs or ACTs. That's what I mean about not thinking about being on the college track. Students maybe don't have the same capabilities as the students who would think about going to U of M [University of Michigan]. Just plain mental ability would be part of it; not having the same IQ, probably not having the same background. We have some students who have a way above average IQ, but I would say that probably most of our students have pretty average IQs.

One thing you have to remember is that the classes that I teach are nobody's major. There isn't any body here that takes [subject] because they want to be a [profession]. They take them because they're required. I think that this is something that's always difficult. When you get them into the [subject], a lot of them are really worried that they can do it. An awful lot of students have this idea about [subject]. They have bad feelings to start out with, and that doesn't stop just because they go to college. "I was never good at [subject]; I got bad grades. I can't [work a subject] very well. I have [disability]." Remember, most of the students that I see are beginning students—they're first or second term students.

In the [subject] and the [subject] classes, a lot of students are there because they scored low on their assessment test or had poor grades in high school, or, it's been a long time. I have very few students say, "I couldn't wait to take this class," especially in the [subject] and [subject] classes. A lot of students, no matter what you say, don't see any value in taking [subject] classes. A lot of them resent taking the class because they have to use part of their tuition dollars, their financial aid, to take these classes, but it doesn't count toward a degree at all. Most students aren't belligerent about it, but they'll come right out and say, "I didn't want to take this class." I've had students say, "I had to take [subject] in high school; I don't see why I have to take it in college." They don't hide their feelings very much. They don't *want* to be there. They don't see any value in some of the things that we talk about in the [subject] and [subject] classes. They've never found any pleasure in the kind of things we're going to do, in [subject] or [subject]. I think, to some degree, they come in with that attitude—"I'd much rather be taking a computer class because that's my favorite class." I think sometimes you've got to try and combat that before you can ever get them into anything else.

They're pretty scared to begin with that they're going to succeed—that's pretty obvious from the beginning. Whether they're here to get a job or not, all of the sudden they come here. I see this a lot in the [subject] students, and we have a lot of students that are not very good [in subject]. They come here and they're supposed to enjoy class? Why would that change that attitude?

One of the things that it seems like I see, and more in the [subject] classes, a lot of students we have don't understand that they can have control of their life. It's like things happen to them and they don't see any responsibility; like they can't have any impact on

the world. They're just there, and they're part of it, particularly in the [subject] and [subject] classes. That's what I mean when I think of some of the students don't have a track that they're thinking about going on, and coming to the end of that track.

A fourth of the students probably really work hard and will do anything it takes to get an "A" [grade]. A fourth of them really try hard, but if something better comes up, they'll take it. A fourth of them are kind of there and participate when it's convenient. I'd say probably in any class at least 10%, maybe 15%, of the students either don't participate, don't show up, or don't do anything.

One of the things that I found as I walk through and monitor [a class], most of the time students are very "on track" in groups. They really are trying. You know they're comfortable when they're free to volunteer, or if they ask a question and they're not afraid to say, "I don't know how to do this," or, "I didn't understand." I don't mean that they want to be the star or blurt out a lot, but even if in their groups, if they're volunteering and sharing, then they feel comfortable.

I have very few students that really just try to goof off—reading a newspaper or putting their head on the desk or looking out the window, [or] doing math homework. Those students stop coming. It's more likely in the [subject] classes [that students don't participate or show up]. If the students come to class, they're going to get involved. I have students that don't do their work, but they still talk. In most of my classes, the way I run [them], it's pretty difficult for you to come and not be involved, because it's so much group activity, and the group won't allow it. That's the way they deal with it. The ones that don't get involved are the ones that just don't come, so I can't describe them.

We don't have discipline problems. I don't know that we have problem students. Every once in a while I have somebody who's got an attitude, or who's a little snippy or snotty, or somebody who talks too loud, but that happens in the real world, too. I think there's [acting out] particularly in the beginning level classes. Some kids posture because they're afraid that they can't do it; they're afraid they can't succeed.

Seldom do I have disruptions in the class. Every once in a while somebody puts their head on their desk. Every once in awhile you have a student who wants to answer questions all the time. Compared to public schools, we had nothing. Nobody is disrupting to get the attention of everybody else. You have some that are belligerent, and some are maybe under the influence of drugs or liquor, or [those] who don't want to do any of the work. That's not what I really consider disruptive. One of the things that's interesting is that, even with one student [who appeared to be chemically impaired], the other students didn't like it. To me, disruptive is somebody who would yell or swear or put pencils up their nose. That happens when they're younger. In college, it's not funny, and the other students don't like it. Usually, there's nobody egging a student on. I guess, to me, one of the things that is extremely bothersome—and I don't know if it's problem students—are those students that obviously are using the financial system. They know what it takes to [attend enough classes and] not be dropped, and they're using the system.

You know, we always have a certain percentage that we just don't see. I do not understand students that don't come to class. I don't mean once or twice, but consistently. Last night, I had this girl that just got up at 9:00 [p.m.] and walked out [of class early]. Why didn't she say something? I have a hard time keeping my mouth shut about stuff like that. It would be like getting up and leaving a movie before it was over. Why don't you want to get your money's worth? I don't understand it! I don't know if judgmental is

the right word, but it's hard for me to not say, "Why are you going? I'll have students say to me, "Are we going to do anything important? I want to go home." I usually say, "No, if you go home, we won't do anything important!"

Usually when I get [to campus], I don't have very much to do. I'm prepared for the day. Because I'm so fanatically organized, I usually don't leave until I'm organized for the next day. If I'm doing work at home, I usually don't go to bed until I have everything organized in my stuff. I'm not good on last minute stuff. I seldom do any thing in between breaks. Pretty much when I'm here, I'm doing school stuff. When I'm done with school stuff, I go home.

I personally am fairly structured, and I think that's the way my classes are. I also tell students day one that if they want to read the paper, go somewhere else and read it. I also tell them that I don't want any heads on their desks; if they're sleepy, go home and sleep. I establish that on day one that I do not like that kind of behavior. I usually tell them day one, "If you're not going to be here, you're an adult, you're making the decisions. It's not my choice if you come or not. However, please do not come to me after you haven't been here and say, 'I wasn't here yesterday; did we do anything important?' because I'll probably say something snotty to you like, "of course not." I tell them that right up front I think everything we do is important, or "Why else would you be here? Why else would I waste my time?"

The first day of every term I have [students] fill out a card with their name, address, and phone number on it, just to keep track of them. One of the things I always say is, "On the back of your card, if there's anything special about you you think I should know that would help me or would make me understand better, put it down." I have a lot of students say, "I was never good at [subject]."

I try very hard, starting out at the very beginning, to make things very light-hearted. I might even tell a joke or say silly things the first day so it kind of helps put them at ease. The first day of [subject] and the [subject], I always tell the students, "I have a lot of students tell me that they don't want to be here, but somebody made them sign up for it." I tell the students, "When the class is over, I have never had anybody tell me they're sorry they took the class." I try to tell them at the very beginning that I understand that they don't want to be here.

What I try to do particularly in the night class, but even with a two-hour class, anything that involves thinking, or if it's a test, I would start that at the beginning. I know they're most alert at the beginning. At the end of class, I do things that may take more activity on my part, and less on their part, because they really wear down. I lecture some, but not much. I try to change something every 15-20 minutes, and that keeps them awake and alive a little more. They're less likely to put their heads on their desks.

Mostly what I do is I may teach a little technique and then put them in groups and let them practice whatever this technique or process is. I do a lot of group work. One of the things that I do in the groups—everybody gets a number. Then, whenever we do a new group activity, I call a number. I always tell them, "Whatever number I call, you get to be the boss of the group. You get to tell [the group] what to do. You get to make sure they stay on task." Part of what that does is that even the shy students get to at least sometimes lead the group. They begin to know each other in the group; then they feel more comfortable, too.

I joke around a lot and say silly things to students. I say some outrageous thing to them to try to always make them feel freer and more comfortable within the classes, because I think we have a lot of students [that aren't used to succeeding in school]. It's kind of hard to have somebody want to learn when their whole experience for school has not been a pleasure. I have students say to me all the time, "I never got these kinds of grades in high school." I always say, "But you're not the same person you were in high school. You're a different person now, so why wouldn't you expect that your grades might be different, too?" They're worried that they are not going to succeed. Hopefully, we can help them by some of the things we do; try to make them enjoy it. They can get over the school attitude.

What I try to do is give them things immediately that they'll succeed in. You take small steps, and you see that they succeed in every small step that they get. If they can succeed, then usually they'll keep on trying; that's human nature. Nobody's going to try anything they think they're going to fail in.

I say, "Here's the deal. You think it's really hard, but you're going to work like a dog because you know you have to. When all is said and done, you're going to feel so proud of yourself because you figured out how to do it."

I guess I like to think I'm always effective. I can't name any one particular time. Most of the classes I have taught enough that I've kind of perfected what I do. I don't think there's any one time [that I thought I was ineffective], or it only happens once in a while. I guess if I thought I was ineffective very much, I wouldn't be here. If there's any piece of class that I feel ineffective in, I'll work to try to find something that makes it work. If I didn't think I was doing okay here, I wouldn't stay. I couldn't do that—that's not me.

I think I'm pretty effective all the time. I think that over the years, I have learned stories to tell to point out examples. Sometimes I even make up stories, and they think it's true. I have stories that I tell to point out a specific example about something I want to tell them, or to do; I think students learn much better. Maybe I'm good at that. I think I'm fairly effective at making the class feel at ease about taking the class; not feel intimidated by offering an answer for the class. I don't know, you should probably be asking the students, not me.

It's nice when you feel like, "I'll do this," and then I know, "this is going to happen and we can work on this." Some classes I feel good when the day's over; I know things went well. [In one very responsive class], I thought it was me, and then I had a sub. She wrote a note saying, "What a fun class! We did this, we played that, and they thought it was great!" Then I had another class that it didn't matter what I did, they just sat there like a bump. What I say by bumps is that I usually have students that want to blurt out the answers, but not this class; they didn't want to say anything, even if they knew [the answer]. I'd try to tell jokes to lighten them up; it didn't work. They weren't disruptive, but it was difficult to get them involved in any kind of conversation. It wasn't as if they were daydreaming or sleeping, either. They just listened and sat there. I would have thought it was me, except that the class just before wasn't like that. [One sub I had for this class] said, "What a class! It didn't matter what I said, they just sat there!" It's more likely they expected me to teach them rather than for them to be involved in the learning. It was a small class, and they just never seemed to click with each other. They didn't particularly seem to enjoy the groups. It may have been that the class was at 2:00

in the afternoon, and they may just have been pooped by the time they came to class. I had several students who were working full time, and who were getting ready to graduate.

One class I teach I've taught 3 or 4 times, [and] I don't ever feel like I click. The other classes you sort of know when things are going right and you've got a routine. I've got this one class that I can't ever seem to find, "This is the way to do it; this is the way to teach this class." I don't know if I'm ineffective, but I can't think of any other word besides "click." Every once in a while you have a day that didn't go right; but this one class, I'm not sure I'm effective. If you don't feel that the students are getting excited about the class, then you kind of wonder, "What is it that I can do?" If students don't do well, "What did I do wrong? What did I say to him that made him not turn in his paper?" I think that as teachers we all have a tendency to take all the responsibility. I feel that if the students aren't putting forth their best effort, I feel it's my responsibility.

[Some of the biggest challenges I face as a teacher] are [teaching skills], and getting students to realize that you don't just copy [skill]. To explain to them that a [skill] is 90% thinking and 10% [skill], that's probably one of the hardest things that I work on over and over. It's supposed to be how to think about something, how you feel about something and your ideas, not copying down somebody else's ideas. I always tell them, "If I want to [know] what they say, I'll go to the library and read it. I want to know what you think." That's probably one of the hardest things. [Another problem is] trying to get students involved. I think except for a few problem students you have, that it just doesn't matter what you do. It's not you, it's them.

APPENDIX C-5

INDIVIDUAL TEXTURAL DESCRIPTION #5: "GARY"

I was always interested in teaching since high school. I originally went to college to become a secondary education [subject] teacher. I became disillusioned with a teacher's time being taken up with paperwork, "housekeeping" activities, and little time actually teaching and working with students. It was kind of depressing. I changed my major to business administration. Then I went into the service and came out.

I became a [profession]. I applied [to attend college] and my [degree] was equivalent to a Master's degree; then I applied to Pine Lake College. I started part-time, then full-time on the [other] campus. I was very interested in [subject], which was why I took a position available in [major subject]. I went back to get my Master's degree in [major], which was related [to skill] and was interesting. I am currently taking some classes my self to learn more about [skills] so I can teach some [subject] classes.

I teach a lot of the advanced classes. Occasionally I teach some introductory-level classes. I also do various workshops. I created the [class] for people sponsored by our Corporate Services. We do it 2-3 times a year.

What I like about my job is that I have control over what I do; short- and long-range course planning and design. When there's something that comes up that I want to do that's real important, some of that stuff I can postpone. I have a lot of flexibility in how and what I do.

I like helping students, especially to understand complicated things they may not even have thought they could understand. I like bringing material down to the students' level and helping them to understand at their level. I still like helping them individually, too, but it's the presenting that I really enjoy. I want to make it clear to them.

At the introductory level, it's much more satisfying, because you see there is sort of a gestalt. You see them making major changes in what they're learning. At the more advanced level, it's more general. They're doing it on their own; it's more gradual, and you don't see the impact that you're having as clearly.

Sometimes it gets overwhelming, and it seems like there's too much to do between class periods. I always go into a class feeling, "If I just had another couple of hours. If I put in another hour or two, I could have spent some time being better prepared; doing something more to set this class up in advance." You can never get it all done.

[Subject] has this whole mystique, this image of being complicated and confusing, and [subject] falls right into this category.

I remind myself that we have to keep remembering that in working with [subject], the most important thing is understanding what's going on, not which [function] to do to get something to happen. Next year, it's a whole new version or another program they're going to have to work with, and it will be a different [function]. If [students] understand what's going on, then they'll have no problem changing and converting. It's the ideas, the generalizations, the principles, the concepts; that's what's real important. With [function], because there's such immediate feedback, we sometimes forget that and get narrowed in on, "How do I get this assignment? How do I get it to do what I want it to do?" I mentioned that we teachers will talk about that. Though [students] want to focus on

getting the job done, I want to focus on explanations. That's why it's not just the skill in making it work, but attitudes, understanding how the [function] works.

There's the old teaching controversy that the "A" students probably would almost learn no matter how bad the teacher was, no matter what the teacher does. Hopefully, we get our students to that point. But, you can't see the effect you're having; you don't feel like you're necessarily doing that much. But, every little body language becomes "you" in some ways.

Occasionally, we have beginning instructors here who've not taught much, they may, especially in my field, know a lot of [subject] stuff, but haven't had much teaching experience. I've known a couple of situations where they came in, started teaching, and the students didn't get it. I've heard about this from students. The students didn't realize what was going on, but the teacher nearly fell apart. The teacher would get frustrated, angry, and upset with the students, and would stop being communicative. They would [assume that], "I'm here, I'm going to tell you what you need to know, and it's your job to figure it out." This is not a very successful teaching environment.

There's more than just intellectual ability in doing well in school. There are attitudes and work behaviors that all come into this—emotional stability and stuff. By the time students come to us, they're pretty set in their ways; they have set up habits. [Beginning] students can get a good grade, they just need to do what I tell them to do and work through it.

If students are sitting here shaking their head "yes," and you aren't careful, you start thinking they all understand. They could just be sitting there staring at you, not even taking notes. That's a bad sign. It can either mean, "I already know this and I don't need to take notes," or, "I'm so lost, I don't know what to write down." You start having to look at facial expressions and try to get something out of it. Is the look in their eyes more like panic, or boredom? [If they looked panicked], then I'm starting to figure they're getting confused. They may be getting frustrated, which is extremely common in a [subject] class.

There's stuff before and in class [that may influence my teaching]. Stuff before class would be everything from what the college expects me to cover, what material I'm supposed to cover, to what I think is important of the material, to what I think is important that they learn. My preparation for a class depends on the specifics. It's general kinds of skills, and attitudes, too.

I'll remind myself as I start the class, getting the job done or showing them how to do it is not the most important thing, it's helping them to understand. Trying to take the subject matter and figure out how to teach those. There's other stuff behind it that's really more important. That's what goes on quite often in my preparing for my classes, and what goes on in the classroom. There are thing like my personal attitudes, feelings, and confidence, the type of day I'm having, and how well I feel I can explain this or not.

Within the class, there are things that go on that change what you do. I've had times when we're ready to start an assignment, and they're supposed to have looked at it in advance. I told them what I required and what to watch out for, and I ask them if there are any questions. I have one or two people say, "I don't understand this at all; this makes no sense." Then I'll have to stop and refocus my instructions.

The influence, what goes on in the classroom, is kind of like magic. I perceive the students, and I have my own perceptions of what they're doing. There are also their

perceptions of what's going on, of me, and attitudes and feelings—feelings about everything from the College, to what happened last night, to the subject matter. [They may be thinking], "I don't know this class," or, "I can learn something." It is this mix, and it all comes together, and it is interrelated. As a teacher, you're in it, but you're kind of up front of it, too, and you're trying to direct things.

[Students] in my classes are similar in that they're all there. Sometimes some of them have a fair amount of absences, but they made the effort, the decision to come here. They're here, and they at least want to get through the course and pass it. Most of them want to learn something—probably half to two-thirds of them. They're not just there because they have to be. In order to get the degree, they have to take this class. They're coming in with an open mind, and that maybe this class will be useful, helpful. The students who are coming in to register for classes now—this far in advance—these are the ones who want to be here. They know what they want to learn. At the end of summer, you get the students who have been told by their parents, since they graduated from high school, either get a job or go back to school. They'd rather go to school. [They may think] that they don't have any thing else to do. They're the ones that couldn't make it into the big universities. They were turned down, and they want to go to school, so they'll go here. I feel lucky if they come in open-minded, if they don't come in with the attitude that they have to be here and don't want to be.

The students who are here because they have to are the cynical ones, the skeptics. They are here because their parents told them to be, or because they think they have to take this class. It may be because they want a degree, and part of it is that they have to take this class. They don't like the class; don't think they're learning anything. They don't want to be there.

I have to admit actually that percentage [of those not wanting to be here] is a lot lower for my students, because I'm teaching [skills], and they know [skills] are important on the job. They're interested in their job. If it was more of a general education-type class, I would suspect it would be more like a third of them, and actually much less for most of my specific classes. They're in a field of major, and they've already gotten to the point where they know this is what they want to know. They want to learn as much as they can about it.

The ones who are just not getting it are more likely to be trying. They may be distracted because of other things in their lives—time limitations—but they want to be there. That's the best excuse I can think of for whatever limited abilities.

In the introductory level classes, you sometimes have a much greater disparity range of student levels, especially in [subject] classes, because their experience with [subject] is anywhere from 4-6 years of public school, or in the home, to those who have never touched [function] before. The latter are becoming rarer, but they still exist; that's why we have a waiver test for our beginning-level classes.

Sometimes, the students who know a lot about [skills] don't know enough to waive. Of a particular course that students are trying to waive, some know half of the material; the other half may know nothing, or not enough to waive the class, either. I have students that feel that they shouldn't be here because they know so much of the stuff already, to students who make it clear that they know nothing. They usually know more than they think they know.

I had some students in a low-level introductory class who were absent a fair amount of time and didn't seem to want to do the work. They wanted to be more passive, quiet; any communication was almost on a hostile basis. They were challenging me by ignoring me, by talking while I'm lecturing.

The more advanced students are much more homogeneous. Usually at the advanced level, the classes are prerequisites, and they are taken in a general order, so you kind of know what they have or haven't had. They're much closer together academically, although there are some situations where there is great disparity. For example, as an extra assignment in the advanced classes, I had these students create [a project] on the [subject]. Half of these students already had a [skill], were extremely experienced; the other half had never really worked with [function]. This was an extra assignment I sneaked into the course.

I just finished a senior level class, and I knew coming in that unless everybody screwed up, they were all going to get As, or else they wouldn't have made it this far. This was the class where I knew they had enough ability and understanding, because of the actual subject matter. Half or two-thirds of them have that attitude, such as, "I'm here to learn whatever I can, whatever you tell me." They were going to learn partly because they had that attitude. My feeling about these students is that the good ones figure it out. I don't know how else to say it. The advanced ones usually figure it out.

I have personal prejudices and preferences, but students [who are getting it] are paying attention. The ultimate is when they're sitting there nodding their head—"I know exactly what you're talking about." They're agreeing with you, which is not just understanding. Even if they're not reacting that way, they look like they're comfortable; they're casual. In a [subject] class, they look like they want you to shut up so they can do it; you're holding them back.

You will find some of your better students will adopt that attitude, too; especially the ones who've been around and have done well. It's not as often as I would like, though. However, unless there is going to be credit [for extra work], these students don't want to be bothered. There's no real incentive for them to get more than an A [grade]. They just do what they need to get an A, that's it.

It appears that some of them have mental blocks. They've had bad educational experiences; they've not done well in school. It isn't necessarily just previous teachers or the situation they were in, sometimes it's them. They've gotten in to the behavior where they don't believe they can do well, so they don't try. They have gotten into a bad behavioral cycle; that's how they deal with things. It's their way of withdrawing when they're in a difficult situation. It's hard, too because they don't communicate very well. I had some [students] in a low-level introductory class—they didn't seem to want to do the work; they wanted to be more passive.

Less than 10% can't get it. One or two out of every 60 [will not pass the class]. They're in the wrong field or area. Those that have a hard time or just have difficulty—10-15%. Out of 60 [students], that's like three classes worth or something, that'd be 6 or 9. That would be 2 or 3 a class. A good judge of that is how many, how often you fail students. Actually my failure rate is probably a lot less than that because half the time they withdraw before the class is ever over and drop out. We're talking probably a third of the class or more.

I don't think this very often, [but] there are times when I tend to question the intelligence level of some of my students. The simplest things they don't seem to get; and there are times when probably there's some truth to that. They're definitely out of their range. They just don't have the basic skills and abilities to get this, at least not without a lot of individualized tutoring and hand-holding. [A generalization would be] that they're dumb, that this student has some overall major problems, deficiencies; whether it's emotional, personality, mental, behavioral, social, and they're just not going to make it. Who am I to say this person isn't going to make it? Maybe it's just a personality conflict. It's a weakness of mine—I'm not able to convey it to them in the way that they need. Who am I to say they should change their major, drop out, or go some place else? Sometimes there's a point where you feel we, I, the institution, is doing them a disservice by not telling them that they are working in an area where they have a big deficiency, or that they're wasting their time and money. There's everything from recommending that, to the ultimate, when a students is on probation, or, kick him out because he's failed too many times.

Then there are the other students who you feel are not trying; they don't care, and they're not paying attention. Some students are off [engaged in other activities] or in [another activity] while I'm presenting. They've gotten behind, and they're working on homework while I'm explaining how to do the next assignment. Those are the ones whom it is hard not to get impatient with, when you tell the whole class how to do it, then you have to repeat it to one student. Because of the type of person I am, that's when I have trouble understanding, sometimes perceiving people who don't want to do their best. I try to become objective and say, "I don't know everything about them." It's that I don't think that they're doing well in that area, either, and they don't seem to value that, either. It's like they're getting by, and that's all they care about.

Some also dare you to try and teach them something, because it is my responsibility, from their viewpoint, and all they have to do is sit there. They don't want to expend any extra effort because they have things that are of importance to them—their social lives.

My suspicion is that they have a lot of other things, like jobs, and they've gotten behind. They're trying to do the current homework while I'm trying to explain the next homework assignment. That means they get done with it, they don't know how to do the next homework, and they will have troubles with it—problems will get harder. They get into that cycle. What can I do to change that attitude? That's really tough, but it's hard for me to be as sympathetic, and to identify and try to be as patient with those students who don't seem to be trying, or to care. It's my own frustration in that I don't know why they don't understand. What so you do as a teacher when [students] don't understand, when you feel frustrated?

Most of the time I feel that [performing poorly] is normal. That doesn't mean anything about their personality, about what type of person they are, or about how smart they are or are not. I try to feel that this is just a weakness in what they know. They could be brain surgeons; they just can't get [subject]. As I've gotten older I've tended to perceive it more often [as] mental, emotional blocks, rather than mental ability. They don't have good learning strategies; they lack confidence.

The [students] who are just not getting it are more likely to be trying. They may be distracted because of other things in their lives, time limitations, but they want to be

there. We do have a lot of students who are working, are single parents, and may not be doing well financially. They don't have the time to put into studying. I feel sorry for them. That's the best excuse I can think of for limited abilities. I try to take the attitude that we all have to make decisions; we all have priorities. I think that sometimes it's mental ability. I let them know we'll try to get as much as we can with the time and the effort they can put out. There's nothing wrong with getting a B or C in a class.

I project I think more [about what students perceive]. I think it's because I'm aware of my own natural tendency to be extremely specific and lay everything out. [Students] I've had for quite a few years and for several classes, I sometimes suspect that they think I'm not paying as much attention to them as I am. I'm sure that they sometimes are more frustrated, because I'm not more specific with the advanced students with my assignments and my direction.

There's no typical day [in my life as a teacher]. The time frame in the class, and the stuff that comes between those class sessions, that's what provides the structure in my work life. Before that is kind of like preparation stuff, from the start of each quarter—organizing the class in my mind, figuring out what material, what chapters we're going to cover. My way of dealing with this is that I lay out the whole quarter. I do almost a daily schedule of this chapter, or assignments, and a whole schedule for the whole class. I give it to the students the first day of class. Then on a daily or weekly basis, looking ahead, trying to see if there are any handouts I've got to get ready to be copied. I'm also figuring out if there's anything I need to get done before the class period; anything on the computers—make sure their working right, too. If there's anything I need to review, any homework to grade and turn back. I'm looking farther ahead, because we're involved in developing curriculum. I have to design layout, maybe for an existing course, but with new textbooks, so we have new syllabus guides to lay out suggestions as to what to teach. I have 3-6 of those a year. That's kind of long-range stuff.

What goes on in class itself sometimes varies so much, depending on what the class is. The first day of class I always try to introduce myself a little bit and tell them my background, so they know I've been at this for a while—I know what I'm talking about.

I always make it very clear that I run a very casual class, and I adopt that attitude right away. I realized that I try to communicate that [they can do this]; plus taking the time when they do have problems. When I've had students a couple of times before in intermediate and advanced classes, I'll say, "You guys have had me before, you know I'll get you through this." They always laugh at this. I try to share with students that I get scared and frustrated sometimes, too. It's a part of the learning process. You're doing something new and different. Occasionally you'll make mistakes.

[In a typical class period], usually the first thing I do is write an agenda on the board. I always write the name of the class on the board—it's to remind me, too. Then I write down 3-5 items, the major things we're doing in class today. I hand back papers often at the beginning of class, or just review the schedule. I take attendance, too. I do any presenting at the beginning—what we're doing in class, what we're going to come back to. I ask if they have any questions on the assignments, or on what I'm going to present.

I tend to fit the Behavioral Science kind of teaching. I'm extremely specific and tell them exactly what you want; the course objectives. You walk them through the process, demonstrate it, and have them practice it.

If there's any presenting I'm doing, I go through and bring [the topic] down to more detail, giving them examples. I just put a pause there to kind of keep everybody comfortable. If there's a brand new assignment, I'll usually give them some sort of introduction, pointing out any possible problems that they need to look out for. I try to make it real clear exactly what it is I expect them to turn in. Sometimes it's going into great detail putting together what it is they have to do. I give them handouts and go through it with them. If there are two or three things I'm talking about, I don't do any presenting, and they get right to work.

In a majority of my classes, there's part of working on [subject], and we allot time in the classroom working on assignments so I can help individuals who are having problems. They need some time in class to work on stuff. I tell them to see me if they have any questions.

At the beginning level, there is much more demystifying the whole field and area. I do more hand-holding, trying to make things *really* simple. At the advanced level, I try to wean them of hand-holding. I point them in a direction and try to get them to go off a bit on their own—not direct them quite as specifically. I intentionally don't do that, which is fighting my natural tendencies. I like to think of my self as strong on presentation/lecture-type stuff. It's harder sometimes to step back and let them work on their own. I want to explain it to them, to show them. Here I am worried that I am holding the ones who are able back—especially in the introductory classes. To a certain degree, by the time they go out the door, we want them to the point where they would almost learn it on their own, anyway.

[Because of the disparity level in student ability], instruction is sometimes difficult. I try to pick a point somewhere in the middle or even two-thirds down from the top [of ability], with the idea that I'm striking down the middle of the bottom two-thirds. The top third, they're going to get it anyway. They may get bored. It's a challenge to occasionally slip things in. They need a little challenging. It was interesting because I was able to pair them up to work together in teams. It seemed to work out quite well. Some of the classes and books are so well laid out now, step by step, it's better off just to not even try to do much of a class presentation.

When I'm teaching, I'm trying to pay attention to the students. I'm simultaneously thinking about what I'm trying to teach them, or help them with. I write on the board a lot; hopefully it signals them that it's something important. If you're talking too fast, it just kind of slips on by. At the same time, I'm thinking about the material—how I'm going to present it. I'm also trying to pay attention to the students, how they are reacting to you, and if they're paying attention to you; make sure they understand. [If they become frustrated], maybe it's time to talk about it, and to make sure they understand that it's "okay." If a lot of students are feeling that way, or if you missed something, then maybe you've got to take the whole class and slow down, step back.

[The intention is to] help students have a positive attitude on my part; making it clear that the implied assumption is that they can learn this and I'll help them. They can trust me and I'll get them through this.

I need grades as some kind of external motivating factor for some of the beginning students—to get them to make the effort to do what it is they need to do. I tend more toward the extreme where I'm probably too lenient with grades, because I'm more concerned with encouraging them and showing them they can do this.

Sometimes you're successful; sometimes you're not. I worry about things other than ability in order to do well in class, because I'm not really sure how to teach that. I can figure out how to teach [subject], but how to teach good work habits? Having students do the assignments, turn them in on time, even attend class—I'm not 100% sure always how we can do that.

For students [who know the material], it's hard to challenge them, because there is no real incentive. [For students who don't have the basic skills and abilities], there's a limit to what you can do in the classroom. That's when you start mentioning, "Maybe you should talk to the Learning Support Center [on campus], see a tutor, see my in my lab tutoring hours." Sometimes there's not much you can do to help them. Sometimes I suspect [there are times] when you should tell students, "I'm sorry, but you're not going to get this." The old promise they're never going to do [function] again. I have to be honest that I tend to personally err toward the encouragement of them; not taking the responsibility of telling them that they're not going to get it. Now a bit of this is because I tend to be passive and non-confrontational—that's part of my personality right away. I don't know how much is a rationalization and how much is just the way I deal with things.

Sometimes you can perceive that they're not getting it. You have to do some thinking about that afterward. When it starts getting bad for quite a few students, [and] the frustration level is high, sometimes I start feeling bad. I realize I'm not doing a good job. I feel it's okay for me to feel frustrated sometimes, too. That's a little harder for me to accept, to be honest, but it happens.

My greatest challenge is trying to balance everything. We all have limited time and could use more. The problem is, how do we spend the time we have? How do we determine priorities for allotting time, making decisions on a day-to-day, hour-to-hour basis?

Trying to balance the individual versus the group. Twenty percent of your students take up 80% of your time; they probably need the most help. Trying to balance classroom-related responsibilities with non-classroom-related responsibilities. There's time in the classroom, that's pretty fixed; and there's time preparing for being in the classroom. There are odd little duties that obviously are a lower priority, but usually can't be ignored or removed completely. I often tend to postpone things, especially if they aren't high on my priority list or list of things I like to do. I find I get in trouble if something *must* be eventually done.

Trying to balance what the student wants what I want, and what the curriculum/system/administration wants. [The latter] all have certain expectations of what should be occurring in the classroom. The student comes to the classroom with wants, needs, and expectations. These must be satisfied to at least some extent or the students won't be motivated to learn. I have to balance the student's personal needs versus their academic needs, too. If students are worried, anxious, or upset about something, they're not going to learn very well. To a certain extent, you have to deal

with these things. They often result in important "life lessons," but it "eats up" limited classroom time.

I'm trying to balance personal time versus professional time. Any outside time I spend on classroom-related tasks is coming from my personal time. Every instructor I know who is any good at all spends more time on classroom-related tasks than he or she is contractually obligated to do. To me, this is a sign of a professional. He or she accepts the responsibility, not just putting in the minimum required time. Where do you draw the line?

Trying to balance the amount of material versus the depth of understanding desired versus the amount of classroom time available. Do you go for an overview, covering a lot of material, but not very deeply? There's also trying to balance my role as teacher—dispenser of information, facilitator of learning—with my role as judge (grader, certifier). I've long been amazed at the conflicting tasks society has given me. I'm supposed to help my students learn, yet it's also my job to tell the world when they haven't. I'm supposed to encourage them and support them, but I also have to tell them when they've failed.

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