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New GTA's and the Pre-Semester Orientation: The Need for Informed Refinement

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New GTA's and the Pre-Semester Orientation: The Need for Informed Refinement

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

In a First Year Composition (FYC) setting, many courses are taught by graduate assistants, regardless of if these instructors are truly qualified to teach. Incoming instructors must balance their roles as students with that of brand-new teachers, with each of them attempting to incorporate their own pedagogical approach. Therefore, it would benefit FYC programs to have a solid training program in place, specifically with the pre-semester orientation, in order to smoothly transition these new instructors.

To clarify, this is not to suggest that many programs are not already strong. It does suggest that programs must adapt to the changing climate within universities in order to avoid becoming stagnant. In this study, I specifically suggest the implementation of a brief introduction to three topics during orientation: pedagogical approaches, classroom management techniques, and defined disciplinary terminology.

To answer this question, I will be completing a qualitative research study based on the questionnaire responses of 33 graduate assistants in the English department at the University of South Florida. The information gathered from instructors within this pilot study includes the degree they are pursuing and, based around personal experiences with the department's beginning of semester orientation, if they found the training to be helpful as they entered their new roles.

While analyzing these materials, I focused on the graduate assistants' personal beliefs that contributed to the way they viewed training, with the goal of incorporating changes that would increase their preparedness and self-efficacy. This can lead to future implications on how

instructors and FYC program directors can use this knowledge to strengthen current programs and individual pedagogical approaches

Introduction

My interest in these broader concerns of graduate teaching assistant (GTA) training stemmed from early in 2016, when I was given materials and instruction in both orientation and practicum for a GTA position. I quickly realized that I had no clue what the concept of rhetoric even was. It was difficult to understand the information presented, mostly because I felt like I lacked a language that everyone else seemed to know. Never mind the pressure of wanting acceptance from both your own students, your peers, and your professors, taking on learning an entirely new way of speaking and researching was also challenging.

Much of existing literature addresses the uncertainty GTA's experience when beginning a graduate program, however because many of these are from the viewpoint of directors and administrators, it does not adequately convey the scope of the concerns raised by GTAs. What my own story shows intersects with the lack of research in this area, specifically the absence of tools that can be used to help transition incoming GTA's so that they succeed. Not only does composition studies need more research on GTA training from the perspective of current graduate teaching assistants, we need a better sense of how to build this training to prepare and support GTAs for the classroom.

I had always been interested in pedagogy and how programs are being revised to include new approaches. I eventually found myself gaining interest in graduate programs and their training programs for their assistants, especially after observing what went on within my own program. Watching as my own cohort struggled with some of these same issues, and then viewing it from the outsider's perspective when new GTA's came into the mix, made me want to find ways to

help strengthen GTA training. This led me to the question of how including foundational instruction early on in orientation training can help to both situate and support incoming GTAs.

Graduate assistant training instruction has been on the minds of composition scholars for many years, and while recently changes have been proposed to improve these programs, the instruction of graduate students themselves dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century. To be clear, this is a look solely at the training of graduate teaching assistants within English departments over the years, in order to gain a well-rounded understanding of how far back the questions surrounding training programs have run.

Within the realm of English studies, in 1849 Timothy Dwight is noted as being one of the first to receive a scholarship at Yale which would allow him to pursue two years of graduate education, similar to that of current master's programs. The noted difference being that he was able to fill in for professors when they were absent, marking this as the beginnings of a graduate teaching type of position (Pytlik and Liggett, 2002). It is important here to note the differences between these beginning programs and the ones we currently experience today. These early programs focused on recitation as its main form of communicating material, with special attention paid to literature and rhetorical studies. The shift to a classroom dynamic akin to those we recognize today, both in content and in style, did not come until much later.

A few years later, with the end of the Civil War, Noah Porter, a professor at Yale, argued for the inclusion and funding for a group of graduate students that would assist in teaching responsibilities. He shared three main concerns for graduate assistant use and training: (1) Graduate assistants (GA's) need special preparation for teaching, (2) the need for GA's is perpetuated by an increasing number of undergraduates who lack basic writing skills, and (3) GA's are a cost-effective choice for the department (Pytlik, 2002). Each one of these concerns

remains relevant today. This is also where we begin to see the emergence of what we now identify as feedback tools and mentorship opportunities, with graduate students writing lectures and presenting them to their peers for comments and working with upper level faculty in an “apprenticeship” position (Pytlik, 2002).

Betty Pytlik stated in her article, “How Graduate Students were prepared to Teach Writing-1850-1970”, that,

For at least 100 years after the Civil War, the preparation of college teachers in general was largely shaped by the belief that a good man will learn to teach by teaching, and the preparation of college English teachers in particular was shaped by the belief that if one could write English, he could teach others to write it” (Pytlik, 2002, p.4).

It is important to consider the impact this had on future programs as well as outside departments; why would you go through the process of creating training programs and funding them if the students you are funding can already speak and write English? This dilemma, along with the overall shift from an emphasis on “methods of investigation” and research methods to one of an “experience” in writing (Pytlik, 2002, p.5), contributed to the impasse that was reached for a majority of the 20th century. While many in higher education at the time called for reform in graduate training programs, there were plenty that did not. The opinions and attitudes of faculty who sought to distinguish English studies as equal to that of “Latin or Greek” (Pytlik, 2002, p.6), greatly hindered the progression forward. The desire to be well-known and situated as a discipline, while important in its own right, far outweighed the development of graduate training programs.

By the mid 20th century, English studies once again experienced a dramatic shift. Over two million veterans (Pytlik, 2002) returned to campuses, and these colleges had to quickly make

room for composition courses. These courses had been removed in order to make room for war-related courses, for example those in technical subject areas such as engineering. (Pytlik, 2002). Staffing issues became a major problem, and graduate students were taken on to fill the gap. During the 1950's there was a pressing need to both staff these new composition courses, as well as find a way to support these new instructors. The types of training we see now is primarily built off of the trial and error of individual college and university programs over the years. Programs became more involved in training their graduate students during the 1970's and have sought to improve them since then.

While the current practice of many universities is to employ graduate teaching assistants, their responsibilities vary depending on what discipline houses them. Within English departments, many of them are instructors. Jessica Restaino suggests that these instructors' needs are specific to their "positioning, their unique moment in time, which is defined largely by their intention to join what they see as the professoriate" (Restaino, 2002, p.107), or where they see themselves in the future.

In 2015, the College Composition and Communication Conference (CCCC) released a position statement that outlines the principles that should be incorporated in and upheld by graduate programs, with regards to graduate teaching assistants. It stated that,

In preparing graduate assistants to teach writing, graduate programs should provide students with varied opportunities to cultivate and apply a theoretically informed writing pedagogy by participating in and completing...coursework in composition theory, research" and "...rhetorical theory and research (CCCC, 2015).

The CCCC also suggested an "intensive and comprehensive TA training" that includes a 1-3-week orientation, a semester long composition theory course, and pedagogy workshops (CCCC,

2015). Currently many universities follow this suggested model, offering anything from a three-day orientation at the beginning of the semester, to a week-long orientation at the beginning paired with a semester-long practicum course, depending on the university (Wilhoit, 2002).

While this project mainly focuses on the orientation section of training, the practicum and theory courses as well as the mentoring opportunities are just as important to this process.

Current graduate teaching assistant training practices in first year composition (FYC) have grown to include “longer and more comprehensive” (Wilhoit, 2002, p.17) orientations, and practicums based primarily in theory, rather than pedagogy. Typically, GTA training includes, but is not limited to, a pre-service orientation, a semester or year-long practicum course highlighting theory and some pedagogy, mentorship opportunities, and classroom observations.

While some programs choose to modify the length of the orientation and practicum, most remain consistent with the stated training.

When approached from the perspective of how far programs have come, the issues that still remain within GTA instruction are difficult to see. These issues range from the expectations placed on the split student teacher roles, what it means to be qualified, and the value that is placed on their positions in general.

Being placed in a program with an array of instructors, all with differing backgrounds, not only makes it difficult to arrange a single way of instruction, it also aggravates the split between the two roles GTA’s must reconcile: student and teacher. Because GTA work begins in a masters or doctoral program, it can be assumed that these instructors are used to being in the student role. Restaino calls attention to this issue by stating,

While they [graduate teaching assistants] function as teachers in classrooms, they are equally functioning as students, learners who need to understand what it means to teach

writing in the context of the larger university and also in terms of the constantly evolving scholarly field(s) of composition and rhetoric (Restaino, 2002, p. 57). New GTAs must balance working on their own research and assignments with teaching, grading, and training (Restaino, 2002).

How can programs be sure that their GTA's are supported and prepared enough to take on these split roles? The very idea of being 'qualified' for a position that is often in flux is interesting, especially with the recent goals to increase professionalization. This professionalization came in the form of assigning extra classes and responsibilities (such as grading, peer mentoring, etc.), to offer a better grasp on the profession they are entering. While this did offer extra experience, it did little to enhance their public qualifications mainly because many GTA's were not labeled as instructors of record. These instructors are often unprepared for their new situation, not due to their own intelligence, but because the amount of material that must be covered in order to mark them as "qualified" instructors does not fit within pre-service GTA training. At the end of the day, they were still considered students themselves. Flanigan offers some insight in what should be taught in training programs stating,

We need to move them from little or no knowledge of what is involved in writing and teaching, from general ignorance of composition as a field, to being knowledgeable about composition studies. We also need to show them how we have structured and conceived the beginning writing course, how to accomplish the goals of that course, and how they can adapt those goals to fit themselves (Flanigan, 2002, p. 243).

Addressing the lack of information these new instructors have, giving them the resources and skill set needed to thrive in the environment they are in, and allowing them to take part in the

adaptation of their own style of teaching composition are all key elements to consider in graduate assistant training and preparation.

Another aspect to examine when looking at the problems within GTA programs is the value that is placed both on the position of the GA's as well as the value of the department or field they plan on moving into. GTA's are considered cost effective labor and as such, often find themselves at the whim of their department or university. As programs look to professionalize their GTA's, these students have "assumed more responsibilities in their departments, necessitating changes in work loads and salaries to compensate them fairly for their work" (Wilhoit, 2002, p.23). Depending on what specific area they plan on going into, the value that is placed on their work is much different as well. Those who want to do research find themselves welcomed and supported, while those who seek professions focused on teaching or outside of academia are left to their own devices (Miller, 2001). This qualitative study uses a pilot study completed at the University of South Florida to address the needs of incoming GTA's. This study used the responses from an online Google poll from 19 graduate teaching assistants currently enrolled and teaching within the FYC program to offer a new perspective on the training they received. I also completed interviews with a member currently working on the FYC team, as well as a GTA who has gone through the most recent orientation process, in order to grasp their perspective regarding the usefulness of the proposed changes to training and address their needs for the program fully. Addressing these needs comes in the form of specific changes, as outlined in the implications section, made to both the pre-semester orientation and semester practicum to best help situate new instructors into their joint role of student/teacher. Acknowledging phenomenological orientation and user-centered design is also important, however the implementation of a theoretical orientation within a pilot study used to understand the basic

issues surrounding GTA training is unnecessary. If the results go on to be further developed into a larger study, then theory would be better applied.

Review of the Literature: What does a GTA have to do with FYC?

This review ultimately seeks to set the stage for a deeper understanding of how first-year composition programs train their graduate students to teach incoming freshman. Having a foundation of how programs have trained graduate students intersects with my research question of how incorporating foundational information early on in training can benefit new GTA's. Understanding the backgrounds behind these graduate students will help to bring to the forefront the need to pay closer attention to the training and preparation required for a composition classroom. I have divided the literature review into three sections:

Past scholarship: This situates the study within the context of the discipline. Bringing to the front the different backgrounds and programs that have contributed to build the programs we currently employ is crucial in laying the foundation for both past and future programs.

GTA training: In order to lay the foundation for these future programs, it is also important to understand the effects had on GTA's due to their unique roles and to keep these concerns at the forefront when creating and refining current and future programs.

Prior case study observations: This section details three case studies and, while all focused on some aspect of graduate assistant training, each is especially useful in contextualizing the experiences which must be considered when creating training programs. They not only offer a small-scale view of the inner workings of training programs, but also provide an overview of the progression of this topic within composition studies

Past Scholarship

Much of the scholarship surrounding graduate teaching assistant training does one of four things. It either (1) focuses on writing program administrators, (2) takes a broad view of GTA training and the aspects that incorporate it, (3) looks into the pedagogical implications for the teachers themselves, or (4) simply states the occurrences as they are seen within a program. The fourth is different from the second in that the second offers some aspect that can be changed or altered to enhance the program overall, while the fourth offers observations. Overall, little is found that provides a direct perspective from GTAs themselves. It is because of this deficit that past scholarship should be examined to determine suggested methods, such as those found in Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir's work, of improving both training and graduate teaching assistant programs overall.

The article by Long, Holberg, and Taylor, "Beyond Apprenticeship," looks towards program administrators and insists that the term used to categorize GTA's needs to change. The authors claim that the view of the "apprentice" (meaning the GTA as both teacher and apprentice), hinders the students' ability to fully take on all of the roles required of them. This article also highlights the benefits of collaboration among peers and those in administrative roles. Similar to the previous article, "Conflict, Collaboration, and Authority: Graduate Students and Writing Program Administration" by Suellynn Duffey, Ben Feigert, Vic Mortimer, Jennifer Phegley and Melinda Turnley, also focuses on collaboration and goes further by suggesting peer teaching as a way for administrators to encourage graduate assistants in their new roles as teachers.

Research in graduate assistant training also has a tendency to take a broad view at programs overall structure. This is evident in Graham and David's article, "What's Up on Monday Morning?"

TA Training and Freshman English,” where the authors view case studies of different teaching approaches to see if there is a pattern for a widespread, successful teaching approach.

Reid, Estrem, and Belcheir make a point in their article, “The Effects of Writing Pedagogy Education on Graduate Teaching Assistants’ Approaches to Teaching Composition”, to focus on a push towards pedagogical instruction for new teachers. Not only this, but the authors also suggest further instruction, with an increased education plan, focusing on a range of pedagogical instruction. While the authors make a point to specify that this type of instruction would be best after the early stages of instructor training, it is interesting, nonetheless how broad the field of GTA training can range.

John Ruszkiewicz studies his own course, teaching graduate students to teach freshman English, at the University of Texas at Austin. He explains how, in his article “Training Teachers Is a Process Too,” that this study came from a question of process; “if I take a process approach to teaching writing, shouldn't I also teach ‘teaching writing’ as a process?” (Ruszkiewicz, 1987). He found that teaching this process, in both the freshman and graduate levels, breaks through the levels and dynamics of the students.

The mentioned articles examine approaches that program administrators should be aware of, and in turn use these to support the training their own graduate assistants receive. Few seek to make the connection to graduate assistants as both students and instructor, each with a unique background of knowledge, and even fewer attempt a solution, limiting the scope of what can then be done to enhance GTA training programs. Each article directly relates to one of the four mentioned categories and their presence is important because, while the perspectives offered have insights that help improve and refine programs, very little of the literature offers a view of GTA

training from the perspective of those currently experiencing it. These perspectives should also be considered when building programs.

GTA Training

Depending on the degree, usually from a literature, creative writing, or rhetoric and composition track, as well as their prospective career, either outside of academia or within it, new GTA's must navigate how to best approach teaching a subject many of them have little interest in, and less interest in pursuing further. It is important to consider some of the main ideas that act as a weight for graduate teaching assistants. These can be about the degree they are pursuing, their own career path, or even the assumptions about teaching held by their field and/or university. It is not always simple to assume that because someone has the job of a teacher, that they fully understand the ramifications which accompany that title. While this dim view of GTA's does not stand for all, it encompasses many.

With regards to degree type, there are factors that must be accounted for when considering graduate teaching assistants such as the specific degree they pursue and the prior knowledge they bring with them. The degree they work towards sets the stage for how they will approach the world. For example, a literature track will focus more on textual analysis as its primary method for research, while rhetoric and composition can bring in textual analysis, ethnographies, or case studies. The second factor, their prior knowledge, focuses on the skills that were brought with them to the current institution. For example, Sally Ebest claims that while students in rhetoric and composition are more likely to gain insight about how to teach from their studies, because of the heavy reliance on pedagogy within the composition side of the discipline, it does not negate the fact that these same students "usually enter the field in graduate school, and when they do, they are suddenly introduced to totally alien methodologies" (Ebest, 1999). She claims that these

methodologies are so foreign because it would have been “highly unlikely” (Ebest, 1999) to see them taught at an undergraduate level.

Another consideration when looking at the assumptions made of GTA’s, is that of a department’s viewpoint. Depending on the trajectory of the university, overall goals for the English department are generally geared in one direction. Graduate assistants are presented with the option of pursuing further education, with the hopes of attaining a research centered tenure track position at a similarly minded facility, as the mark to which they should aim for. A few departments offer work outside of higher education, such as publishing, editing, or writing, as an alternate route. Teaching is available, but research is encouraged. This focus on research, rather than teaching, directly influences these incoming graduate teaching assistants in that they are both unfamiliar with the material they are required to teach as well as the expectations placed on them by their own students, meaning these students have an expectation that they will have classes taught by “qualified” instructors.

Graduate teaching assistants begin their career by entering a world that is largely unfamiliar to many of them. In her book, *First Semester: Graduate Students, Teaching Writing, and the Challenge of Middle Ground*, Jessica Restaino claims that for the first semester of teaching for graduate assistants is “more of a day-to-day keeping afloat than it is a carefully constructed, planned course” (Restaino, 2012). Similar to David Roberts article, “Survival and Prosperity: TA Training Colloquia,” there is an emphasis placed on GTA’s being taught skills they need to survive early on because, as he states, “survival is largely limited - but not totally restricted to - the first weeks of the first semester of teaching” (Roberts, 1982). Regardless of their course outlines, the new terrain these students must traverse leads their teaching methods to be unsteady and unsure. According to Restaino, “they [graduate teaching assistants] would have to learn how to be writing

teachers while they also learned how to be graduate students” (Restaino, 2012). Similar to the mentioned above “alien methodologies” (Ebest, 1999), graduate teaching assistants must learn these new ways of functioning within a university setting. For some, as seen in Restaino’s GTA examples, graduate students were “reluctant, even confused, representatives of a discipline, university, and academic culture to which they didn’t fully subscribe” (Restaino, 2012). They are asked to teach materials that are unfamiliar and to support policy that they may not have had time, or appropriate practice or skills, to reflect on and decide for themselves their own best practices.

While program administrators and departments alike debate on what needs to be included within an orientation for incoming graduate teaching assistants, the bare minimum is that these students must be able to handle the first week of class without disgracing the university or starting a fire. There is a distinct difference between the priorities of a first-year and second-year graduate student, and full-time faculty member and Roberts highlights this gap by stating, “Beginning TA’s are generally not concerned about the road to full-professorship or about publishing their first article in CCC or about becoming stars in pedagogical heavens. They are worried about embarrassing themselves” (Roberts, 1982, para. 6).

FYC programs have moved toward standardized or uniform curricula as a way to ensure common experiences for students across sections. Since FYC is typically a general education requirement, it becomes necessary for students to have a common experience. Ensuring this common experience is difficult under the best of circumstances, but when courses are taught with diverse instructors, including GTAs, who may have little experience teaching and little experience in writing research, common experiences for students are even harder to maintain. Thus, writing program administrators have moved toward standard curricula. Standard or uniform curriculum in this sense means a common syllabus, readings, exercises, and assignments. How far this

standardization reaches depends on university decisions, but can range from departmental to institutional, some even modeling multiple universities after a standardized syllabus or set of principles. Between each university setting there are variances which lead to differences in program outcomes, as well as student and instructor development; “there existed considerable disparity between the course’s numerous sections, as was substantiated through classroom observations, collection of example syllabi, and Core Curriculum assessment” (Dively 2005, para.5). Because of these disparities, and the desire of universities to provide a uniform experience to students in their general education courses, the shift to standardized curricula began.

Rhonda Dively suggests in her article, that “it seems clear that the turn toward standardization stands to more effectively support the numerous GTAs who begin the program with no experience and with undeveloped pedagogical inclinations” (Dively, 2005). Many new GTA’s often feel unprepared to piece together a course with their limited experience, making Dively’s case for uniform curricula one that advocates for an easier transition for these new instructors. In addition to an easier transition for GTA’s, a uniform curricula allows instructors to assist one another in both lesson planning and class coverage. It also provides another area for students to acquire information. Dively states that because composition students “are working on the same assignments, are covering mostly the same readings, and are on the same weekly schedules, there exists ample opportunity for cooperative learning beyond the classroom, even between students who are not assigned to the same section” (Dively, 2005, para. 30). She asserts that “ roommates, other dorm residents, sorority sisters and fraternity brothers, club or athletic team members...those who have taken it...become potential resources of particularly germane information and assistance when instructors or 101 section-mates are not available” (Dively, 2005, para. 30). In this case, students are able to receive help on projects or homework from peers in a

low stakes setting for questions they might not have felt were necessary or important enough to ask of their teacher, thereby freeing the instructor to complete other tasks.

While the use of a uniform curricula does present drawbacks, such as the belief that GTA's should "think their way through the challenges of designing their own courses for the positive impact that doing so would have on their level of engagement and their development as writing instructors" (Dively, 2005, para. 2), the desire for GTAs to "think their way through" something that they have no prior knowledge of, cannot be used as a sustainable model on which to base graduate training programs. There is a need for standardized course materials to both smooth the transition for GTA's, as well as provide a sense of consistency for students.

One such example of a first-year composition program that operates with standardized course materials is the example of the University of South Florida. This standardization comes in the form of a shared syllabus, where instructors may make minor policy changes to personalize their classroom, but the learning outcomes, attendance, grading scale, and project list remain the same. New GTA's are given instruction in the learning management system (LMS) Canvas, which houses their course, roster, assignments, syllabus, and weekly assignments. Because of the firm boundaries set by the standardization, new GTA's are able to effectively transition into their new roles.

Prior Case Study Observations

This section details three case studies which focus on some aspect of graduate assistant training. Each is useful in contextualizing the experiences that must be considered when creating training programs. They not only offer a small-scale view of the inner workings of training programs, but also provide an overview of the progression of this topic within composition studies. Because of the variations in GA and TA instruction, especially in specifics, looking at

similar studies is an effective way to track the broader trends within composition programs. In the case of Amie Wolf, Ryan Thornsberry, and Mandy Meyers, each author's dissertation focuses on distinct aspects of graduate teaching assistant training. I chose to highlight these three studies due to their focus on different aspects of GTA training. Wolf suggests improvements from a pedagogical standpoint, Thornsberry seeks to evaluate the overall effectiveness of each program (focusing more on professional development rather than teaching strategies), and Meyers emphasizes the influence of the graduate teaching assistant lived experience. These aspects shed light on the functions, goals, and operations of current training programs which help to situate my own concerns and study within the larger landscape. My research, as these three examples do, focuses on a specific ways to improve the GTA situation

In her dissertation, "Preparation of Graduate Assistants Teaching First-Year Writing at Ohio," Amie Wolf focuses on TA preparation, and completed this study using fourteen Ohio universities. She asked both how graduate students were being prepared to teach and if this preparation is in line with current scholarship or if it is falling behind. Wolf looks at six major categories to help answer these questions: pre-service orientation, a balance of theory and practice, if students are given (and required to use) standardized material, if there is a pedagogy or theory seminar requirement, mentoring, and reflection. In the end, Wolf makes the suggestion that exposing these new instructors to theory and pedagogical knowledge will help them make the jump from *what* they teach, to *how* and *why* they teach it.

Ryan Thornsberry is another example of a dissertation done within this field with his study, "Composition, Pedagogy, and the Development of Effective Student-Teachers: A Comparative Analysis of Training Programs for Teaching Assistants in English Departments". He completed a comparative analysis of 66 different university TA training programs. He also

makes it clear that this study does not look at specific teaching techniques or strategies, but programs. He does look at the types of training offered by departments, how TA's can expand their training (professional development), and the overall effectiveness of the training program overall. He gathered data from both a demographic questionnaire and a TA training survey, collecting materials such as syllabi, schedules, teaching materials, and personal notes to help identify the effectiveness of each program. Thornsberry claims that the intention of this project was to provide a "snapshot of popular trends and approaches" (Thornsberry, 2014) in current TA training. His results suggested, similar to that of Wolf's, that while both pre-semester training and seminar training are incredibly useful, a greater inclusion of theory (in addition to the basics of teaching) could be beneficial to new instructors. He calls for further research and a more aggressive approach to how TA training continues to be run.

The final study, "The Individual Graduate Teaching Assistant Negotiating Current Preparation Models: A Case Study of Four Composition Graduate Teaching Assistants" by Mandy Meyers, was a qualitative study that "provide[d] a systematic account of the lived experiences and preparation of graduate teachers of composition studies" (Meyers, 2010). In her study, she was interested in both the preparation GTA's received as well as how their lived experiences affected their ability to meet the demands of GTA work. Meyers used a "single cohort [around 8 members] of second-year masters students working in an English department as GTA's and teaching composition for the first time" (Meyers, 2010) at one (unnamed) university as her participant group. This specific department's year-long training program included weekly meetings of a semester-long practicum class, two pedagogy courses (required), and a mentorship with two different instructors. Meyers concentrated her study on explaining current models of training and preparation, as well as using the B/P/S model (used by psychologists) to "emphasize

the significance of the genetic and environment interaction in understanding the lived experiences and preparation of composition GTAs” (Meyers, 2010).

Each study offered a new perspective on graduate teaching assistant training, while providing differing lenses to view graduate training models. While Wolf and Thornsberry highlighted the importance for an introduction into theory and pedagogy in order for GTA’s to have a better understanding of their unique roles, Meyers offered a view of the experiences GTA’s encountered daily with regards to their roles as teachers, students, and even human beings. Through these three studies the benefit of GTA training programs implementation of both practical and personal considerations is clearly seen. Each study is no less important because of the individual focuses however, it does bring to the forefront aspects of this study, though on a smaller scale, that seek to further these ideas and connections.

What is not seen is how programs can actively begin to put into practice their goals of strengthening their GTA training. Wolf comes close with her suggestion of a stronger pedagogical knowledge base within practicum, however much of what these studies communicate, as well as that of past scholarship, is that in order to change programs further research must be done. While research is important, concrete suggestions that actively put into practice ways of supporting and strengthening training programs are essential. The literature thus far, indicates that much more research needs to be done on GTA training, and this study suggests practice has a place as well.

Methods

As a pedagogical study to improve local practice, this study was exempt from IRB.

Before beginning, I based this study around the knowledge that I had gained from my own time as a graduate teaching assistant. Some questions that affected me eventually evolved into what serves as the foundation for my current study:

- In what ways can expanding a beginning of semester orientation to include foundational information, such as pedagogical approaches, classroom management techniques, and defining relevant terminology, benefit new GA's and TA's?
- How can this inform current graduate assistant training programs?

As mentioned previously, this study was based around a majority of the knowledge I had gathered from my time as a graduate teaching assistant. Before beginning this project, I knew I wanted to end with something that could be beneficial to someone. What I mean by this is that I wanted to present a realistic and workable solution to better *something*, because I had seen many studies that presented a problem but offered no solution.

I began researching and looking into past methods of training and ways that it has been improved on since its origins. Using that, I thought back to my own experience and remembered the biggest source of confusion came from the pre-semester orientation. Keeping in mind that while USF has a strong program, my confusion stemmed from the lack of a rhetorical background (I have a primary background of teaching English as a Second Language, or TESOL). This led me to develop questions of expanding on the orientation in order to provide a

space for foundational information and skills to be taught, in addition to classroom skills and policies.

Participants

USF has around 2083 graduate assistants, and as of the Spring 2019 semester, 29 of those teach within the English department. These 29 GTA's are responsible for 54 sections of First Year Composition, which includes both ENC 1101 and 1102. Taking into account that one of these spots must be taken out because of my own position as a graduate assistant within the English department, 28 assistants remain. These 28 graduate assistants from the University of South Florida's English department were sent the online questionnaire.

This group was chosen mainly because of their position as graduate teaching assistants. Although it is recognized that both adjuncts and visiting instructors may attend the same instruction through orientation as the new graduate assistants, focusing solely on the GTA's allows for a firmer look at the experiences of new instructors and their needs, rather than mixing varying years of instruction. From there, 19 people responded to the questionnaire. This is the main group from which the data is based on.

Data Collection

I chose to do a qualitative study by sending out a questionnaire to current graduate students and completing interviews. These are ideal methods for my study because these allow me to study the subjective nature of both the graduate assistant experience and the effectiveness of these instructors within classrooms. Allowing for instructors to give their own opinions as to how training is working, as opposed to studying trends in grade distribution, can provide many opportunities to both reflect on current programs, and build stronger ones. However, it is important to keep in mind that this was a small pilot study. Decisions made regarding the length

of time the questionnaire, the number of questions asked, as well as the size of the participant group were all influenced by timing and participation. Framing the focus around GTAs was essential because it allows for a connection to be made between my own experience and the existing literature which primarily speaks from a WPA, Writing Program Administrator, perspective (Ebest 1999, Miller 2001, Long, M. C., Holberg, J. H., & Taylor, M. M. 1996)

Interviews were also utilized as a way to gain insight into the department. Due to the anonymity of the questionnaire, interviewing every possible graduate teaching assistant would have been difficult. It was decided that a small amount would allow for a more feasible response group. There were two main graduate teaching assistants who participated in the interviews, one who was directly connected to the first-year composition program, and the other who had recently gone through the orientation training. Each interviewee was asked to respond to the question,

Thinking of new GTA orientation, how beneficial do you think it would be to implement explanations and instruction on classroom management, different pedagogical approaches (such as collaborative vs individual teaching), and defining terminology (such as rhetoric, modes of persuasion, pedagogy, scaffolding)?

The interviews themselves were informal, the first just talking through the question while audio was recorded, while the second occurred via text message. The informality was intended due to the fact that a response was required that did not attempt to appease any one person or department. It also allowed the interviewees time to gather their thoughts, separating what they feel they should say about training versus what they actually experienced.

This study took place at the University of South Florida in the English department for a few reasons. USF has a strong First Year Composition program, and through that, a developed

training program. USF was also chosen because of the ease in which I had access to the materials and data source. I chose to work with graduate assistants, rather than adjuncts, visiting instructors, or other faculty, because of graduate teaching assistants required enrollment within coursework. This enrollment has been known to lead to increased stress in some cases and tested whether the instruction in training could actually help someone acclimating to two roles.

To collect this data, I completed a qualitative analysis, using interviews to grasp the intricacies of the department and its FYC program, as well as an online questionnaire distributed to an ending total of 28 graduate assistants. I did not pair this qualitative study with a specific theoretical orientation because of the materials I would be producing. Currently I had primarily worked to observe the experience of GTAs and create curricula and training from there. Anything further, such as looking into if the training proposed works, would be useful for a larger study, but not for an exploratory pilot study.

This online questionnaire, see Appendix B, was hosted through Google forms due to its easy access for assistants, as well as the option for anonymous answers. The questionnaire launched on February 18, 2019 and was closed on March 1, 2019, giving the GTA's twelve days to complete. This online questionnaire included the following questions:

- What degree track are you pursuing?
- As a new instructor, did you find it helpful to teach based on the instruction you were given in orientation?

The question was multiple choice, and the second was on a Likert scale. Both the Likert scale and multiple choice were chosen due to time considerations, as well as response type considerations. By response type I mean that I wanted to allow each respondent to answer the last question as honestly as possible, without feeling pressured to respond a certain way. The

question, “What degree track are you pursuing?” was included to show the range of graduate assistant participants. The second question, “As a new instructor, did you find it helpful to teach based off of the instruction you were given in orientation?”, was included to gain insight on the participants personal views on their orientation experience. These questions were especially important because each year brought a new version of orientation with it, and, because of this, distinct differences in how graduate assistants teach. The questionnaire ranges from (1) not at all helpful, (2) slightly helpful, (3) somewhat helpful, (4) very helpful, and (5) extremely helpful.

Design

Some concerns arose with regards to reliability and validity due to the subjective nature of qualitative research. The questionnaire recorded the responses as anonymous, and I was the only one with access to the list of responses. In order to increase the validity of the study, the questionnaire was sent to each assistant using the verified USF email account.

Because many departments at the University of South Florida hire and train new instructors to work as graduate teaching assistants, these results can be applied to other areas of the university, with just a few minor question changes. As for a wider generalization, this study can be used as a model to help other programs get started. To directly copy the study would ignore the nuances and intricacies that make up every department.

Limitations

This study did have its share of factors which may have contributed to limitations in data. Some factors fell into the category of time or resource constraints. Others included the number of graduate assistants, as well as the number of universities, who participated in taking the questionnaire. These general limitations could be resolved with future research, or a more in-depth study. Another limitation was the allowance or multiple impressions of the questionnaire.

What I mean by this is that through observation of other GTA's, it became clear that a few of them had misunderstood the last question as what they thought about their practicum, rather than beginning of semester orientation. The questionnaire questions did not undergo extensive revision and required additional work that timing did not permit.

Results

The results gathered from this study are preliminary, focusing on a small group of graduate teaching assistants from the University of South Florida's English department. The online questionnaire generated a total of 19 responses out of the 28 GTA's the questionnaire was sent to. A total of two questions were asked, with varying responses from GTA's. It is also important to note that none of these questions could be skipped, meaning that all 19 GTA's answered each question.

This questionnaire allowed me to see where USF falls in GTA intrapersonal training models, specifically what these new instructors personally believe to be effective regarding orientation training. It is important to note that more MFA's completed the questionnaire versus the other categories, it could be loosely suggested that MFA's who entered the program this past year felt that they benefitted at least somewhat from the orientation training. Much of the data from the second question suggests that overall the orientation was viewed positively, with no responses to the "not at all helpful" category. It is important to note that there were gaps of time to consider, specifically the length (typically ranging from a few months to a year) separating each orientation cohort. This made it difficult for the GTA's completing the questionnaire to remember specific details and/or emotions behind their decisions from that time period.

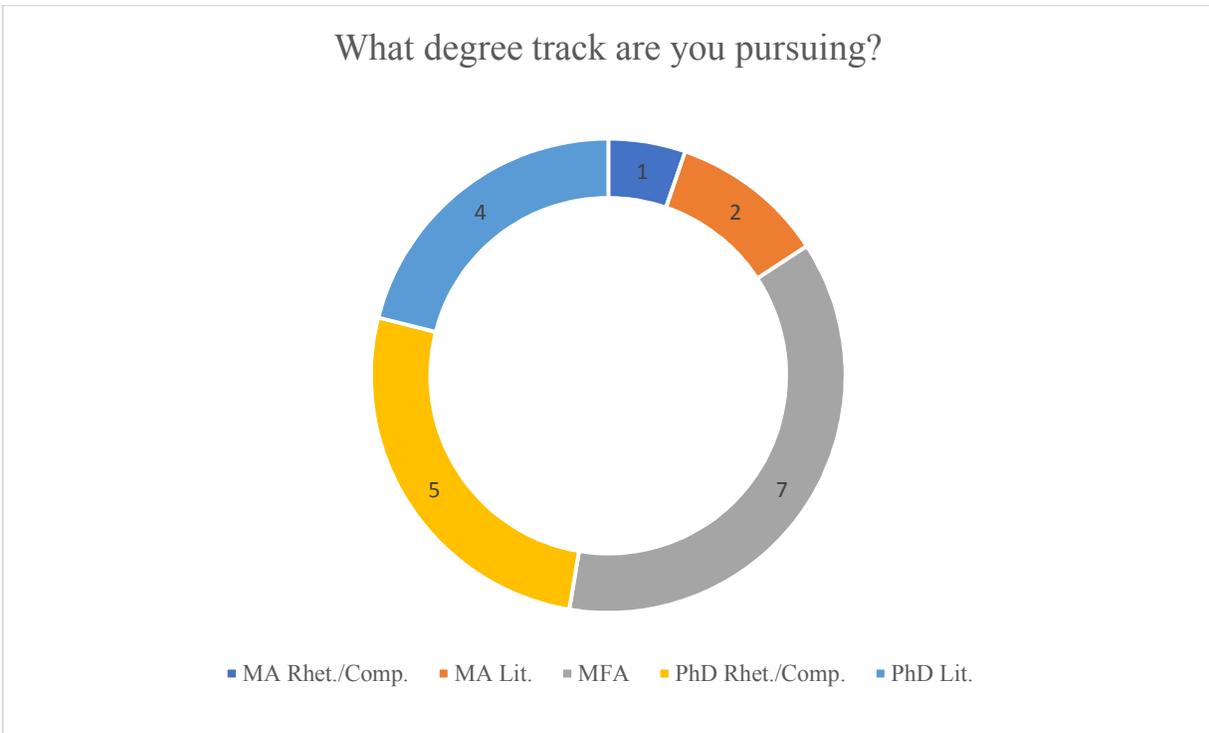


Figure 1. “What degree track are you pursuing?”

The first question, “What degree track are you pursuing?”, allowed for five response options:

- MA Rhet./Comp
- MA Lit.
- MFA
- PhD Rhet./Comp.
- PhD Lit.

Unlike the first question, each option received at least a single response. The MA Rhet./ Comp. option received one response, while the MA Lit. received two. The MFA response type totaled to seven responses. The PhD Lit. and PhD Rhet./Comp. options gained a total of four and five responses respectively. This suggests that the backgrounds of each incoming instructor will be

different, further supporting the need to avoid assuming that a generalized orientation will fit the needs of each instructor.

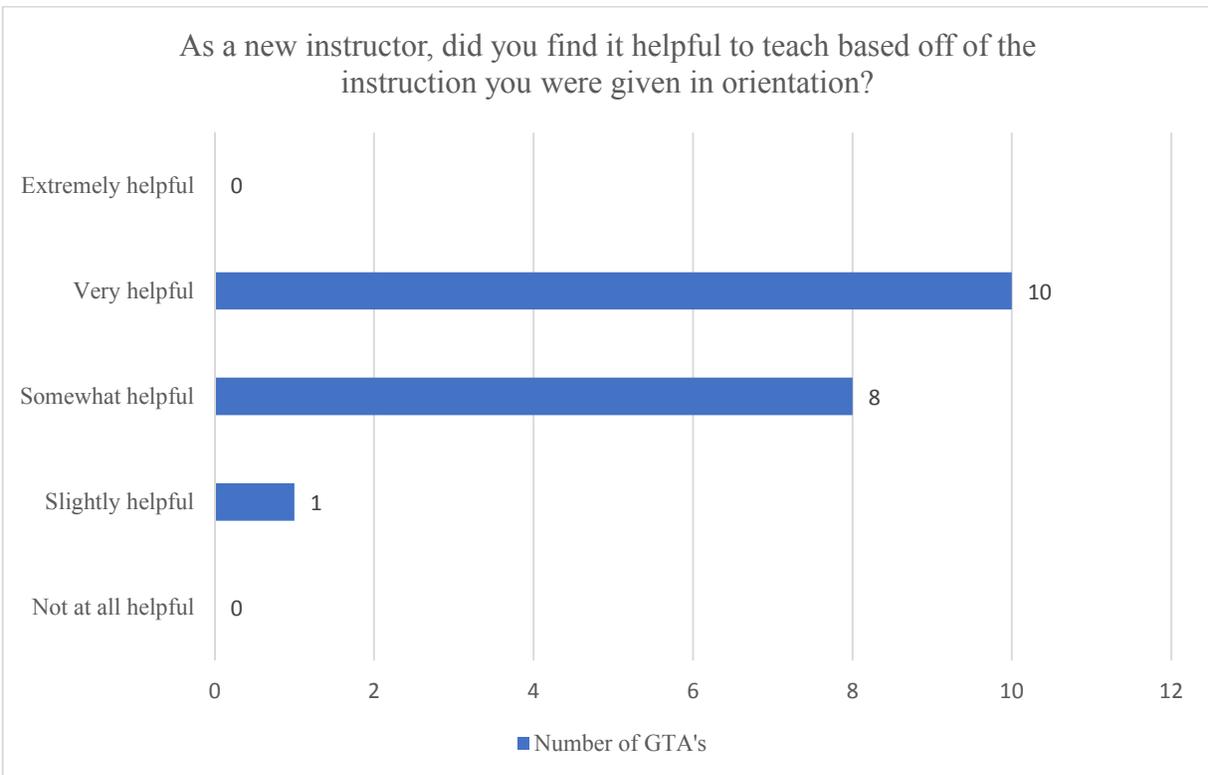


Figure 2. “As a new instructor, did you find it helpful to teach based off of the instruction you were given in orientation?”

The second question was measured on a Likert scale, using degrees of helpfulness as markers. These markers include (1) not at all helpful, (2) slightly helpful, (3) somewhat helpful, (4) very helpful, and (5) extremely helpful. Both the first and fifth levels (not at all helpful and extremely helpful) received zero responses. The second level (slightly helpful) received one response, while the third (somewhat helpful) received eight. The fourth level (very helpful) received the most with a total of 10 responses. Figure 2 displays interesting results, while the graph shows a number of GTA’s found it helpful to teach based off the instruction given in orientation, directly speaking to students highlighted the lack of matching responses and demonstrated an uncertainty that is not seen in the graph. A participant in this study speaks to the experience that was had as a

GTA by stating , “I think I learned more about the projects from practicum, in the job, and from other members of the program than I did from orientation” (M. Hutton, personal communication, March 29, 2019). The results from the questionnaire and those from personal communication present an engaging perspective into the effectiveness of orientation.

Putting the Findings into Practice

The USF’s English department’s First Year Composition program (FYC) organizes its graduate training program using three modes of instruction: orientation, practicum, and mentorship. There is a mandatory two-week orientation for new instructors, with those who are returning only required to attend a few days. The practicum course, which new GTA’s enroll in during their first semester, covers the theory and pedagogy aspect of instructor training, while the mentorship program allows students to be paired with another member of the department (typically a returning instructor who was chosen to be a part of the FYC team). In this program, students are paired with a mentor for a year before they are permitted to be an instructor of record, giving them enough time to find the balance between their roles as a teacher and student.

Prior scholarship regarding this topic places its focus on a broad view of programs (Graham & David, 1996), and few focus on the connection between graduate teaching assistants as students and instructors (Ebest 1999, Restiano 2012, Roberts 1982). While this study focused on the effectiveness of the program based off of GTA’s personal opinions, it is key to see how this ties into ways of redirecting programs to best prepare future GTA’s to take on this role. Understanding the personal belief of effectiveness can contribute to determining how much instruction in other areas is needed. Before stepping into a graduate program, new graduate teaching assistants (GTA’s) undergo a week and a half long orientation. This introduction to

teaching covers topics such as planning for the first day of class, grading, lesson planning, curricula overview, and how to access and work the technology that is expected of them.

The next section details the modified orientation training that has been proposed because of this study. Each section goes on to explain the change being made to orientation, as well as the reasoning behind it. This training is a possible way for programs to begin implementing expanded materials into their orientations.

Modified GTA Orientation Training

There is an absolute need to include basic class planning tips and instruction for new teachers. What is lacking, however, is a deeper understanding of the material these new instructors are expected to cover. When considering incoming GTA's, "an orientation is particularly crucial because the program sometimes hires instructors with little to no experience in teaching composition and preparing these instructors to teach...is challenging" (Bender, 2002, p. 235) This material would include brief introductions into classroom management strategies and definitions of key terminology. Ideas that, when explained are simple, but are all too often misunderstood by new instructors. Also, the orientation, while supported through a First Year Composition program director, was primarily created and run by upper level graduate assistants. This led the orientations to be informed through these GTA's prior experiences in their own orientation, as well as what they have come to understand as things that work/ thing that do not. Within an orientation, it would be important to include a brief introduction into pedagogical approaches and theory to provide background into why we teach the way we do. As discussed previously in the article by David Roberts, instructors are being given tools to survive their first weeks, but few that allow them to prosper with the time they have left in their program.

This pilot study done at USF has led to three suggested alterations to be made to the orientation agenda (see Appendix A), with the idea that many of these additions will be included in practicum or seminar courses as well: classroom management strategies, defined terminology, and a brief introduction into pedagogical approaches (because pedagogy and theory are covered

in depth in the practicum, I only suggest a small introduction to help place them at a point where they feel comfortable with themselves in this instructor role).

Welcome

This should be the first impression of the program. Day one, new GTA's will have the opportunity to meet peers and faculty, as well as to be assigned a mentor for the year. This is also the opportunity for mentors and programs directors to go through the expectations of these new instructors. These mentor groups are included to allow for collaboration and peer feedback for example, in orientation, this is seen through discussing possible classroom assignments and offers support for the new instructor that is lower stakes than that of a program director. New GTA's view "the directors as 'elders'" and see their mentors as both "experienced teachers but also as individuals who passionately share their knowledge about and insight into writing instruction" (Bender, 2002, p. 241). Explaining the role of the graduate teaching assistant (GTA), as well as the practicum course they would be enrolled in, is also an important addition to place here.

Pedagogical Approaches

The next section should detail differing pedagogical approaches and how these can offer new GTA's a system to allow them to fall back on, as well as push them to try new methods of teaching. Rather than attempt to over-explain the different viewpoints of pedagogical theory, focusing on teacher centered and learner centered is a much easier leap. Explaining the differences and implications behind individual and collaborative work, the benefits of meshing them together, and ways of making these approaches work within a classroom scenario would be important aspects to include in training. This can be demonstrated through the explanation of the workshop, flipped, and direct instruction. Another factor to consider is how a new instructor

approaches teaching directly affects his/her overall self-efficacy. While the need for knowledge and instruction in the material GTA's are expected to teach, making sure they are able to continue to succeed is also key. Young and Bippous suggest that self-efficacy is the key to strong graduate assistants, and through this, successful programs. Encouraging teacher's self-efficacy, with specific attention to the knowledge they acquire in training, will only help them believe that they will succeed as teachers (Young, Bippous, 2008). Studies have also shown that over time, and with strong graduate training, GTA's gain a stronger sense of self-efficacy in both teaching and research (AVCI, 2018).

Comprehension of Terminology

This section's goal is to make something that many graduate teaching assistants struggle with, but many articles pass over, visible. Prior to this study, there has been an absence of research on the implementation of clarified terminology used to benefit graduate teaching assistants training programs. There are aspects which are not clearly translated or understood within training, with one participant stating, "at orientation the advanced graduate assistants would start the training and use all of these words without stopping to define them, leaving some people to be very lost" (K. Larson, personal communication, March 27, 2019). However, it is one of the goals of this study to deliberately highlight the idea that some of the most widely seen issues can be solved with minor changes.

While situated to the goal of expanding on terminology new instructors might be unfamiliar with, I also seek to model techniques that could possibly be used to teach these terms. New GTA's will be provided with a handout sheet of defined terms (see Appendix C), including Practicum, GTA, Pedagogy, Scaffolding, Rhetoric, Audience Analysis, and the Modes of Persuasion (Ethos, Pathos, Logos, and Kairos). Keeping in mind that each of these terms is for

the benefit of the incoming instructor, it is the hope that clear definition and explanation would help to provide an easier transition into their new role. It was important to me that the new instructors understood their new role as a GTA, which includes what the abbreviated term means as well as their responsibilities as a graduate teaching assistant, including attending practicum. Other words, such as pedagogy and scaffolding, were included because they would be used repeatedly. Understanding the use of pedagogy, especially as an instructor, as well as a method used for communicating difficult information, is key to someone who may have never heard or experienced these terms in action before. The common term of “rhetoric” needed to be defined, especially since it is one that is heard often, as well as the fact that it is a building block within many first-year composition classrooms. The modes of persuasion and audience analysis also fit into the category of being a foundational block within the first-year composition curricula and having a solid understanding of these terms is crucial in order to fully explain them to your students. Audience analysis, however, can also be applicable to providing students with real life situations to help them make connections between the FYC classroom and their professional lives.

Thinking back to before this project began, I recall a conversation I had with another GTA about how the current training was going. This instructor claimed that, after an intense session of practicum, they left feeling like it was more confusing. It was brought up that since the interviewee is not from the background of rhetoric and composition, the minute the words “rhetoric” and “pedagogy” were mentioned they were lost, especially because these terms were never clearly explained or defined. In the interview, a participant stated,

When I started, I knew what some of the terms were like the rhetorical appeals, but I didn't know how to teach it or that it would be helpful to teach in Comp 1. As for

terminology, I do think I could have used more of that. For myself, and many of my cohorts, this is our first time in the classroom or at least the first time teaching this course...the majority were MFAs, a few were MAs in Lit and even less were MAs in Rhet/Comp.” (M. Hutton, personal communication, March 29, 2019).

Comprehension of terminology is necessary to both the field, as well as to the level of work expected as a graduate student. Students should be exposed to these terms if they ever hope to use them to communicate more intricate ideas. In the beginning of their teaching careers, however, I would say that brand new instructors who come from varying backgrounds and degrees need to have these terms explicitly defined for them. A participant conveyed her concern regarding the assumption of knowledge stating, “There is an assumption that GTA’s understand more rhetorical knowledge” however, “Those people might have had little to no exposure to rhetoric” (K. Larson, personal communication, March 27, 2019). Coming into an environment where they are overloaded with information in a short period of time, it is crucial that they are able to quickly and competently grasp the information.

It could also be suggested that this study would serve to benefit students whose first language is not English. These students, thinking of their project terminology specifically, often already have a difficult time understanding the material therefore utilizing this clearly defined (and simplified) version of the terminology might be a way for them to understand the material better.

Project Overviews

In this section it is expected that instructors will be presented with an overview of the projects they will need to complete throughout the semester. Directors can outline the course outcomes and goals and review major sections of each project. It would be important to have the

handout of definitions available, because this will allow instructors to be able to quickly grasp the material.

Classroom Management

As new teachers enter their classrooms, the goals they had for their classes are shaken with the new reality they find themselves in (Dicke et. al., 2015). This new reality includes interacting with their students and experiencing them responding in ways these new instructors may not have expected or prepared for. Techniques of classroom management offer a few options that new instructors can implement when management is needed such as, proximity, talking one on one with the student, and avoiding publicly embarrassing the student. Making strong eye contact and walking around the room or speaking with a student privately about behavior can be a productive solution. Instructors also can consider varying their teaching methods, which are heavily covered in orientation and practicum, in order to engage students who could present a disciplinary issue. New training for GTA's should include an overview of these easy techniques, or at the very least, a resource that connects them to these skills.

Practicum

After the orientation, new instructors are enrolled into a practicum course. This course would last for one semester and would be mandatory. The practicum course would focus on aspects of theory, pedagogy, and rhetoric in more detail than would have been discussed in orientation. I chose to model this after USF's current structure of practicum because it works well, however I would propose two alterations: (1) focusing a designated amount of time spent on personal stories from class and (2) teaching material a week ahead of schedule. Practicum courses include all GTA's which makes for a rich environment for instructors to share experiences from their own classes that succeeded or failed. While these are important, it is just

as necessary to get through the material for each class. I would propose to offer a discussion board for the instructors to participate in before each class where they are able to respond with their own stories, and during class to choose two or three to dig deeper into. This way, class remains on track while valuing each experience.

Another alteration I would propose would be to plan for each week to be ahead of the teaching schedule. Again, because it is based off of the USF practicum course, the standardization of the curricula allows GTA's to teach the material on track with one another. It would be beneficial to prepare instructors and answer any lingering questions the week before the material is set to be taught. This also gives instructors time to develop their own activities and approach to the lesson, putting into practice the pedagogy instruction they receive in practicum as well.

Implications for Composition Studies

Existing literature addresses the uncertainty GTA's experience when beginning a graduate program however, because many of these are from the viewpoint of directors and administrators, it does not adequately convey the scope of the concerns raised by GTA's. The lack of clear terminological definitions and connecting those definitions to the practice of teaching composition lays a shaky foundation for new GTA's that take them much time to overcome. GTA's within this shaky foundation, encouraged by the lack in understanding, find themselves "representatives of a discipline, university, and academic culture to which they didn't fully subscribe" (Restiano, 2012, p. 70).

There seems to be a disciplinary assumption that simply providing a cursory overview with a handful of rhetorical terms is enough for students to "figure it out" on their own. The same practices new GTAs need in their classroom would be modeled through the explicit focus

on rhetorical terminology and exercises that scaffold this terminology early on within the program. Further, as more composition programs ground their curriculum in rhetorical principles and practices, more attention needs to be paid to assisting new GTAs, who come from other areas within English, in understanding the content and knowledge that is part of composition and more importantly, drives the pedagogical practices of teaching composition.

The field of composition should also take into account the perspectives of GTA's themselves and the opportunity their experiences presents, similar to that of responses of graduate teaching assistants in Restiano's study (Restiano, 2012). Using these accounts will allow for detailed feedback of individual programs and how effective their training is. While it may be subjective to specific programs, this will help administrators to consider the diverse backgrounds of their students when creating and refining programs.

Composition studies has made progress with regards to GTA training programs yet including the diverse experiences as well as a foundational understanding of rhetorical terminology for new instructors can help this progress to continue. While orientations and practicums have come a long way, it is important to continue to refine them.

Conclusion

The interest for this project originally stemmed from the year and half I have spent as a GTA, and it is through this study that I have concluded that graduate training programs would benefit from changes made to the orientation stage of their training. My research questions from the study are, again, as follows:

- In what ways can expanding a beginning of semester orientation to include foundational information, such as the core points mentioned above, benefit new GA's and TA's?
- How can this inform current graduate assistant training programs?

I argue that it is through the (1) implementation of the instruction of classroom management strategies, (2) defined key terminology, and (3) brief introductions to varying pedagogical approaches will all contribute to the success of both the GTA's as well as the programs themselves. As seen in the implications, and also in Appendix A, my proposed changes to the GTA training offset many of the concerns raised by GTA's in my pilot study and also concerns raised in the existing literature.

Looking to the future, The next step for this research would be a larger study, using usability testing as a basis. This study would focus on the application of the suggested curricula and training changes and the responses gathered from those who experienced the training themselves and, possibly, those who distributed it. I would not only like to implement the defining of rhetorical terminology and the addition of classroom management and pedagogical approaches to GTA orientation, I would also look to expand practicum as well. Practicum would offer a broader scope as to the pedagogical approaches and rhetorical training; however, I would

look to provide clear definitions and explanations of the information. This will not only support effective instructors, but, because the instructors are confident in the material they teach, it will result in stronger students as well. I would also like to complete a larger study to see if GTA's outside of USF have the same outlook on training programs, as well as find a way to implement the integration of rhetorical training within graduate teaching assistant training programs.

It will take more than observations and questionnaires to begin to see changes within training programs. Implementation and action are what needs to be occurring in order for the GTA training programs to send out both successful students as well as instructors.

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Appendix A

(Possible) Orientation Schedule

9:45 AM **Arrive, meet your mentor, additional paperwork**

10-10:30 AM **Welcome**

- Explain their new title (GTA) and job expectations, “What does it mean to be a GTA?”
- Practicum overview (what it is, why it’s required, and what the setup will be)
- Outlook for the remainder of orientation

10:30-11:15 AM **First week of class**

- Pedagogical approaches: Explanation of teaching styles, workshop designs, flipped/ collaborative/direct classroom approaches
- Emphasis on different styles of teaching/ how scaffolding can help
- Scaffolded training to best support GTA’s in one semester

11:15-12:00 AM **Defining Terms**

Done in small groups with mentors

- Utilize handout on the modes of persuasion definitions
- Activity: Modes of Persuasion
 - Have each instructor listen to a speech (up to director, both MLK’s “I Have A Dream” and Emma Watson’s “HeForShe” are good examples to use); have students explain each mode of persuasion used; ask them to consider other ways that they would be able to teach this in their own classes
- Activity: Audience
 - Explain the concept of audience (and how it changes depending on the purpose of the document), and have each instructor write to a different audience on their first day of teaching (peer, family, mentor, supervisor)

12:00-1:00 PM **Lunch**

1:00-2:00 PM **Project Overviews**

- Explain brief overview Projects 1-3
- Have handout/definitions sheet in case

2:00-2:30 PM **Classroom Management Techniques**

- Discuss things they remember previous teachers doing

- Explain techniques such as eye contact, proximity, varying activities and teaching methods or having one on one talks with the students to curb discipline issues

2:30-3:00 PM **Syllabus Overview**

3:00-3:30 PM **Questions w/Mentor**

Appendix B

Questionnaire

The reason for conducting this research is to examine the effectiveness of past First Year Composition (FYC) orientations, as it relates to information graduate assistants should know in order to be successful communicators to their own students.

What degree track are you pursuing? *

- MA Rhet./ Comp.
- MA Lit.
- MFA
- Phd Rhet./ Comp.
- Phd Lit.

As a new instructor, did you find it helpful to teach based off of the instruction you were given in orientation? *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not very helpful	<input type="radio"/>	Extremely helpful				

Appendix C

Handout of Terminology	
GTA	Shortened term for Graduate Teaching Assistant; students from varying backgrounds working towards a masters or doctoral degree while teaching at an institution, tuition is usually waived.
Practicum	(Typically) mandatory course on theory and pedagogy that supports the GTA training program; anywhere from a semester to a year-long course.
Pedagogy	What you teach, how you teach it, and why you taught it that way; also understood as the practice or method of teaching.
Scaffolding	Smaller assignments that move students towards deeper understanding of the material, as learning goes on, responsibility is slowly handed over to the student (Partnership, 2015).
Rhetoric	The development of your own communication skills and the adaptation of it to fit specific purposes and audiences; otherwise known as the art of persuasion
Audience Analysis	Taking in all aspects of a possible audience (including their culture, occupation, age, and gender) and using these as a way to contextualize your communication for the specific audience you are speaking to.
Modes of Persuasion	(Ethos, Pathos, Logos, Kairos): Used to persuade someone to take action.
Ethos	Appeal of credibility; a way to convince the audience of the credibility, or character, of the person persuading.
Pathos	Appeal of emotion; persuading people through an emotional response

Logos	Appeal of logic; uses logic, or reason, to persuade someone
Kairos	Appeal of timeliness; “saying the right thing at the right time” (Pantelides, McIntyre, & McKee, 2012), often marked by a call to action, threats future crisis, or using deadlines or goals