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Expectations and experiences: case studies of four first-year teachers

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EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES: CASE STUDIES OF FOUR
FIRST-YEAR TEACHERS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Curriculum and Instruction

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family:

To my husband who was always there for me,
Alcide;

To our two wonderful children,
Holly and Corey; and

To my first grandchild and the light of my eyes when I needed a vision of the future,
Abby.

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ABSTRACT

The current severe teacher shortage in the United States is exacerbated by the numbers of new teachers leaving the profession after only a year in the classroom. What do new teachers expect? How does the reality of their experience match up to their expectations? The purpose of this nine-month qualitative study was to look closely into the expectations and experiences of a small number of beginning teachers. The study focused on four young women's relations with their administrators, other teachers, and their students. The first-year teachers participating in the study included three elementary and one junior high teacher, all of whom taught in a southern Louisiana parish, where the Acadian culture persists and where their families had roots. Data came from observations and written documents as well as from interviews with the teachers; their administrators; other teachers at their schools, including their district-assigned mentors; their students; and members of the communities in which they taught.

All four wanted to be "good" teachers and defined "good" in terms of relations with other people—students, colleagues, and administrators. However, they had different ideas about what represented quality in these relationships: degree of reliance on administrators, the nature of the connections they established with their peers, and rapport with their students. The actual social relations that the teachers experienced in the school contexts differed from what they saw as ideal, particularly with respect to the students and other teachers. This conflict was compounded by a required assessment each had to pass in order to become a state-certified teacher as well as by a high-stakes assessment of

their students' achievement, both of which provided additional definitions of what it meant to be a "good" teacher. Also, the study showed that, in some cases, being a good teacher seemed to conflict with being a good wife or good family member or good friend because of the numbers of hours devoted to preparing lessons each day.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Fully responsible for the instruction of his students from his first working day, the beginning teacher performs the same tasks as the twenty-five-year veteran. Tasks are not added sequentially to allow for gradual increase in skill and knowledge; the beginner learns while performing the full complement of teaching duties.

D. C. Lortie (1975)

Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study

In the United States today there is a major teacher shortage, exacerbated by the attrition of large numbers of teachers – approximately 50 percent – leaving the classroom each year (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). Many of those teachers leave for retirement, but almost as many leave for other reasons, which include dissatisfaction with teaching (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1996; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic, & Maislin, 1998). With the growing enrollment of students, caused by increased birth rates and immigration from other countries, coupled with a large wave of retirements and turnover of younger teachers, the demand for new entrants to teaching was estimated at 2 million to 2 and one half million between 1998 and 2008. These estimates come from Darling-Hammond (1999), the director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, who also reported that the most serious levels of teacher shortages are in inner cities and in the rapidly growing South and West. Darling-Hammond said that student enrollment was expected to increase by more than 10 percent over the next few years in many states in the West and South, and new teachers will be in great demand.

The teacher preparation programs in the United States have not kept up with the demand for new teachers, and, consequently, there are large numbers of under-prepared and uncertified teachers hired each year. Louisiana is one of several states that has

suffered most in the teacher shortage. Darling-Hammond explained that 31 percent of Louisiana's new teachers in 1994 were unlicensed and another 15 percent had substandard licenses (e.g., emergency licenses, temporary certificates). This contrasted drastically with states like Wisconsin and Minnesota, where all of their new teachers had met certification requirements in 1994. States like Louisiana that issue emergency licenses have tended to renew those emergency licenses for several years while the candidates have made little progress towards gaining certification to teach.

According to Gomez and Grobe (1990), because of the shortage of certified teachers, many states and districts have begun hiring teachers through short-term programs where the beginning teachers have only a few weeks of preparation before entering a classroom of students. Not only does this hurt the students but also it tends to be only a short-term solution. Gomez and Grobe said that 60 percent of people hired through these programs leave the profession by their third year as compared to traditionally trained teachers who leave at 10 to 15 percent during the same time period.

Teacher attrition in Louisiana was one of the issues considered by the Blue Ribbon Commission on Teacher Quality, which was recently created by the Louisiana's Governor's office. According to the Executive Summary for the Blue Ribbon Commission on Teacher Quality (Burns, 2000), out of 54,782 teachers in Louisiana, 7,162 (13 percent) teachers were not certified in the area (s) they taught. Louisiana's data indicated that the universities have not graduated enough certified teachers to teach in the Louisiana public school systems. Of the teachers who did receive certification to teach in Louisiana, only 33 percent have gone on to teach in Louisiana public schools. Most disconcerting was that out of the 33 percent of these new certified teachers, 11 to 15

percent left during their first year in Louisiana's public schools and approximately 27 percent left by their fifth year of teaching. No doubt, there were many factors contributing to Louisiana teachers' decisions to leave teaching. One of them was probably the low salaries, which was below the Southern Regional average (Southern Regional Education Board, 2002). In Terrebonne Parish, where my study took place, there were problems with keeping certified teachers in the classrooms. Between August 24, 2000, and May, 2001, 10 percent of the first-year teachers hired left the parish.

The need for certified teachers in the classrooms has raised the question: What factors go into beginning teachers' decisions to stay or leave the teaching profession? This central question guided the dissertation study that I have completed. I conducted a qualitative study which focused mainly on (1) the perceptions and expectations of first-year teachers, (2) their relations with their students, (3) their relations with other teachers, and (4) their relations with administrators.

I chose these foci because prior studies suggested that new teachers' difficulties are associated with unrealistic expectations, feelings of isolation, discipline problems with their students, and lack of support by administration and other teachers. As the literature review in the next chapter shows, prior research suggests that beginning teachers tend to enter the field with high expectations for what they are going to accomplish socially, for instance, to keep students engaged, to be student-centered (Marso & Pigge, 1987). These high expectations of beginning teachers may cause emotional exhaustion, according to Schwab, Jackson, and Schuler (1986).

With respect to the relations of first-year teachers with their students, the research (e.g., Odell, 1986) has pointed to major challenges that teachers experience, which

include what has been known sometimes as “discipline” and other times as “classroom management.” Surprisingly, many first-year teachers in these studies said they were prepared for discipline with different techniques and ideas, but by the third month of school, they had no clue at what to do next. In the area of relationships with other teachers, studies found isolation and lack of support as major problems for new teachers. In many ways, they were on their own – to set learning objectives, to present units and lessons, to handle problems that might arise (e.g., Bullough, 1989; Marlow, Inman, & Betancourt-Smith, 1997). As for relations with administrators, studies (e.g., Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1997) indicated that new teachers needed support from administrators also. Often, it seemed, they did not get it.

The Purpose of the Study

In a set of case studies, I examined one year in the teaching lives of four first-year teachers: three elementary teachers and one junior high school teacher, who might or might not stay in the profession. I was able to explore the experiences that these beginning teachers had during their first initial year of teaching and the decisions that they made regarding their positions as teachers. My data came from in-depth interviews, continuous descriptive observations, and analysis of documents and other artifacts.

I was interested in using the case study form of qualitative research so that I could investigate the complexity of individual’s experiences. According to Hamel with Dufour and Fortin (1993), case study provides the opportunity to establish close ties with the field through a detailed, descriptive story of the actors. By observing each case one on one, I was able to observe how each teacher focused on her particular situation in the classroom and school environment – how she fitted in the social network of the school.

The use of case study provided me the opportunity to examine each individual's particular situation and compare and contrast the four individuals' lives. As Stake (1978) explains, "particularization does deserve praise" because it allows the researcher to understand the "full and thorough knowledge of the particular" case which can aid in the recognition of similarities and differences that "exist in and out of context" (p. 6).

Merriam (1998) defines case study as the focus of a "particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon" (p. 29). The case reveals important attributes about the phenomenon and what it might represent. According to Merriam, case studies have special features: 'Particularistic – focusing on a particular subject, descriptive – rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon being studied, and heuristic – the illumination of the understanding of the subject being studied by the reader" (p. 29). Merriam also explains that case study is used to understand one unique particular subject, but with the use of several case studies that are compared, generalities can be considered in the final analysis. She also said that in some cases it may be easier to understand and answer a question on an individual basis than to try to generalize on a much larger scale.

I also conducted cross-case comparisons (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Stenhouse, 1985; Yin, 1994), looking for recurring themes and patterns across the four first-year teachers as well as for contrasts. According to Yin (1994), it is important to do both the comparisons when one has multiple cases – to see the case study as individual also see how the different cases can actually parallel or contrast with one another. Yin also explains that the used of predetermined questions and specific procedures of coding and analysis enhances the generalizability of findings.

The Setting

The Community

According to the last US Census (2000), Terrebonne Parish has a total population of approximately 104,500 with an ethnic composition of 74 percent Caucasian, 18 percent African American, five percent Native American, less than one percent Asian, and less than one half percent other races. Terrebonne Parish, whose name means “good land,” covers an area of 1,255 square miles, and has one major city, Houma, and several smaller communities, many of which are bayou communities.

The largest racial group in Bayou Land Parish is the Caucasian with a mixture of people descended mainly from French and English ancestors. Common surnames are Hebert, Guidry, Boudreaux, Breaux, Dugas, Broussard, Comeaux, Matherne, which are all well-known French names of southern Louisiana. The descendants come from a mostly French Acadian background (Brasseaux, 1992).

As to the Native Americans, the largest identifiable group is the Houma Indians, who reside mainly in the areas between the city of Houma and the small community of Dulac on the west side of Bayou Grand Calliou (Fry & Posner, 1999). When this area was first settled, the Houma Indians trapped in the swamps of Dulac and sold their furs in the city of Houma. Today, they, like most of the people in this community, survive on the oil and seafood industry. The Houma Indians have preserved many of their customs and speak with a French dialect.

Many of the African Americans in Terrebonne Parish are descendants of the slaves on the few plantations that were located in the Houma area of Terrebonne Parish. The African Americans who lived in Louisiana after the Civil War tended to get along

well with the French colonists as well as with the Houma Indians. Hall (1992) explained that the French culture, which tended to accept people of other races and cultures, made the African Americans feel wanted and accepted. Many of the African Americans in southern Louisiana also have ancestry that dates back to the French settlers and Houma Indian tribe.

The population of Asians immigrating to Terrebonne Parish has been significant. Beginning in 1975, Asians began their migration to southern Louisiana with the help of the Catholic Dioceses of Louisiana (Bankston, 1996). By 1980, Louisiana had the third largest Vietnamese population in the United States. These people came for freedom, and many chose southern Louisiana because of its rich French influence.

The parish economy is predominantly oil- and gas-related but is supported by seafood and agriculture industries. Most residents living in the area around Houma make their living from the marshes in the form of oil or seafood. There are many seafood plants and oil companies up and down the bayous. During the 1980's, oil prices collapsed, leaving the city of Houma devastated, since the oil and gas industry provided employment for most of the city and its outlying communities. By the late 1990's, the oil prices began to re-surge causing an increase in oil production and expansion in health-care and tourism industries. According to the US Census, the average income of a Bayou Land Parish household was only \$32,000 in the year 2000.

The Educational System

At the time of the study, during the 2000-2001 school year, the Terrebonne Parish School System had 37 regular education schools: two grade K-2 schools, five grade K-3 schools, seven grade K-4 schools, five grade K-6 schools, one grade K-7 school, two

grade 3-6 schools, one grade 4-6 school, three grade 4-7 schools, one grade 4-8 school, one grade 5-7 school, two grade 5-8 schools, one grade 7-8 school, two grade 7-9 schools, and four grade 9-12 schools. There were also three alternative schools, one vocational school, and one special education school. At that time, there were 1,348 teachers (1,193 certified teachers and 155 non-certified teachers) in the school system. The figures of 1,310 included 110 first-year teachers who were employed for the 2000-2001 school year.

The Terrebonne Parish School System had assigned 160 mentors to assist first-year teachers in a mentor program that the parish designed to fit the guidelines established by state of Louisiana – Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program (1998-1999) These mentors, who were experienced teachers, were expected to work with their new teachers for an entire school year. As mandated by the state of Louisiana, a mentor's job was to guide the first-year teacher mainly through the first semester and to provide support the second semester. The mentor, a teacher at the same grade level as the first-year teacher, was to aid the beginning teacher in dealing with such matters as school policy, classroom discipline/management, and lesson plans. If the first-year teacher had any problems in these areas, the mentor was supposed to be available for assistance. The mentor also completed a practice assessment of the mentee in order to give pointers and suggestions to the beginning teacher on what changes may have been needed in the lessons and presentations. These suggestions were to be used by the beginning teacher to prepare for the final assessment which occurred during the second semester of teaching.

There were an estimated 19,177 students in the public school system of Terrebonne Parish at the time of the study. The racial composition was 63 percent Caucasian, 27 percent African American, less than 1 percent Native American, less than 1 percent Asian, and less than 1 percent Hispanic.

Starting in 1999, Louisiana implemented a new School and District Accountability System, which results in annual School Report Cards. Each parish had to submit information for each of their schools and the parish cumulatively. The statistical information gathered from each parish was based on two sources: (1) standardized scores on the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) tests and Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and (2) student attendance. This information was calculated and used to compare different parishes and their individual schools with other parishes and schools across the state of Louisiana.

Students in Terrebonne Parish performed about average for Louisiana on the high-stakes tests. When all the data were compiled for Terrebonne Parish, the parish was considered by the state to be “academically sound” at the 66th percentile. The parish during the 2000-2001 school session was at the 54th percentile nationally on the Iowa Tests for third-, fifth-, and sixth-grades and 48th percentile for grades seven and nine, whereas the average score in the state of Louisiana was at the 50th percentile for third-, fifth-, and sixth-grades and 49th percent for the seventh and ninth grades. On the LEAP test, Terrebonne Parish had approximately 83 percent of its students pass the test compared to the state average of 81 percent. Terrebonne Parish had a 93 percent attendance rate, which was at the state average. This meant that an average of 93 percent

of the students in Terrebonne Parish were in attendance at school on a given day in 2000-2001.

Another matter that was considered in the parish report card was teacher-pupil ratio. In Terrebonne Parish, 55 percent of all classrooms had no more than 20 students per teacher, 38 percent of the classrooms had 21 to 26 students per teacher, and 6 percent had 27 plus students per teacher. These figures compared to the rest of the state which had 47 percent with 1 to 20 students per teacher, 43 percent with 21 to 26 students per teacher, and 10 percent with 27 plus students per teacher.

The Significance of the Study

As a teacher, student-teacher supervisor, state assessor and mentor, I have seen the struggles that most beginning teachers encounter. Many are insecure and unaware of how to deal with the complex situations they face. First-year teachers must be prepared to enter the classroom with the self-confidence needed to succeed and stay in the teaching profession.

The case studies that I have completed will help educators understand individual first-year teachers' accomplishments and struggles, as they complete their first year in the classroom, and it will contribute to the literature on teachers' lives and experiences. Through my study of four first-year teachers, I understood the struggles and triumphs of being a beginning teacher and communicated what I learned to others. From my study, people will not be able to make the kinds of generalities that come from large-scale studies. Instead generalities can be made on a smaller scale with the use of the comparisons and detailed descriptions of each case. As Stake (1995) explains, case study

seems a poor basis for generalization, but certain generalizations can be drawn. Stake states:

Generalizations about a case or a few cases in a particular situation might not be thought of as generalizations and may need some label such as petite generalizations, but there are generalizations that regularly occur all along the way in case study. (p. 7)

Stake (1978) also explains that “truth” – “to speak not of underlying attributes, objective observables, and universal forces, but of perceptions and understanding that come from immersion in and holistic regard for the phenomena” (p. 6) – is important in case study. With that, I also attempted to catch the complexity of single cases and of patterns that might be revealed through cross-case comparisons.

Finally, the insights I gained into the reactions of first-year teachers might help in transforming teacher education programs so that they can prepare beginning teachers more adequately for the classrooms. There have been changes made in the teacher education programs throughout the years, but still many beginning teachers are leaving the profession. With continuing studies, more data can be collected that may help in changing or adding course work that might better prepare beginning teachers for their first school and first classrooms.

According to Stake (1978), it is difficult, if not impossible, to reduce a qualitative study to an isolated variable or to a particular hypothesis. Because of this, a specific hypothesis was not suggested but instead a set of questions was prepared to begin the study. As the study progressed, more questions emerged during the process of the study.

Research Questions

As mentioned earlier, I focused initially on four major aspects of the first-year teachers’ teaching experience: their perceptions and expectations, their relations with

their students, their relations with other teachers, and their relations with administrators. In prior studies of beginning teachers, which are reviewed in the next chapter, these seem to be the major factors that contributed to attrition, and thus I used them as an initial frame for organizing my study. These four aspects provided an initial frame for organizing my study. I touched on them in my interviews, noted them in my observations, and saw what I could learn about them in the documents that I collected.

The following four questions guided the study:

1. What are the expectations and perceptions of the four beginning teachers participating in the study? How do their perceptions change over the course of the year?
2. How do these beginning teachers relate to their students? How do they “manage” their classrooms?
3. How do they relate to other teachers in their schools?
4. What kinds of relations do they have with the administrators?

Also, there was a fifth question focused on the new teachers’ decisions about their careers:

5. What goes into their decisions to stay in or leave the teaching profession?

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature in this chapter covers four main areas: the expectations of new teachers, the relations first-year teachers have with their students, the relations that first-year teachers have with other teachers, and the relations that first-year teachers have with administrators. As the literature shows, new teachers tend to articulate their expectations and perceptions in terms of relations with others, and those relationships tend to be major considerations in their decisions to stay with teaching or leave the profession.

Met and Unmet Expectations of New Teachers

In this section of the literature review, I focus on the social realities of teaching. In 1975 Lortie published a classic study titled Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study. This important study about first-year teachers has been cited over and over again by other researchers. In his sociological study of 94 teachers in the Boston Metropolitan Area, Lortie found what he called “Five Attractors to Teaching”: (1) the interpersonal theme – a desire to work with people; (2) the service theme – performance of a special mission in our society; (3) the continuation theme – work in an environment that they enjoyed in their youth; (4) the material benefits theme – attractions such as money, prestige, and security; (5) the theme of time compatibility – the work schedules of teachers.

For this study, which began in the early 1960’s and continued through the beginning of the 1970’s, Lortie completed an historical review, reviewed national surveys, and conducted numerous interviews. The places where he interviewed teachers became known as “Five Towns” because of the design he used for sampling: a five-cell sample – with each cell having equal numbers of teachers. The samples were equally divided in elementary and senior high school teachers who were from upper-income

communities, junior high school teachers from the middle range, and some elementary and high school teachers from the lower-income settings. Once Lortie divided the teachers into groups, with the advice of several consultants, he chose 13 schools which ranged across the income strata with teachers who worked in six elementary schools, five junior high schools, and two senior high schools.

From his interviews, Lortie learned that many people go into the field of education because they want to work with other people – want to serve others and to work with others. The idea that teaching is a valued service is important to teachers. Lortie pointed out that if teaching is to be defined as reputable and honored as a service, then the cultural context – the community – must also uphold that service as a special ideal. Lortie said it is “service (the aura of its mission) that sets [teaching] apart from many other ways to earn a living” (p. 32). Other researchers have continued to find this theme of service. For instance, Joseph and Green (1986) also found that the desire to work with and serve others is a basic motive for people’s decisions to go into teaching. In their survey of more than 200 students at Northeastern Illinois University, they noted that more than 90 percent of the students expressed a desire to be of service to others.

Although research has shown that teachers go into teaching for altruistic reasons, studies also have shown teacher dissatisfaction is due to the social world which they enter. In fact, the very thing that has attracted people to teaching – relations with others – can become most stressful for them. Fuller and Bown (1975) found in their work, published the same year as Lortie’s, the social “reality” is not what teachers expect. Fuller and Bown noted that teaching can be “simply incredibly, unexpectedly, demanding” (p. 48).

In a study of 211 beginning teachers, with four subgroups (elementary, secondary, specialized, and special education teachers), Marso and Pigge (1987) wanted to find out if first-year teachers experienced any difference between their prior-to-employment expectations compared to their on-the-job reality. With the use of a survey instrument, they had all of the 1982-84 teacher education graduates of Bowling Green State University, who completed their first or second year of full-time teaching, rate 24 working conditions. According to responses from 211 of these graduates, these conditions were the factors that had been linked in other studies to reality shock – the feeling that teaching is not all what they expected. Reality shock seemed to be evident for the elementary as well as secondary teachers when it came to work load, lack of equipment for teaching, help from inservice, class scheduling problems, and behavior of students. Elementary teachers reported the least amount of reality shock, and the secondary teachers in the urban school settings had the most problems with it. Marso and Pigge noted that even though the teachers received extensive, mandated 300 clock hours of preservice clinical and field experience, they still had a problem with reality shock.

In a more recent study, Goddard and Foster (2001) also found that beginning teachers tend to go through a kind of “shock” during their first year. After the nine neophyte teachers in their study began their initial year as teachers, they became concerned about such matters as classroom management and student discipline. The “gloss” seem to wear off for them, as they perceived the complexity of their new social worlds – meeting the needs of all their students, dealing with parents, meeting the expectations of administrators. They became concerned as to how they should handle everything they were supposed to deal with – lesson plans, management procedures,

relationships with students, parents, other teachers, administrators, and staff. Some became disillusioned and blamed their pre-service programs for not preparing them for the “real world” of the classroom and school environment. After they made it through the year, they began reevaluating and reflecting on their year and how they might have done things differently – “alternative routes across the Rubicon” – and they began to think about their futures as teachers.

What sorts of relations do beginning teachers have with the students they seek to help? What sorts of relations do they have with other teachers? What type of relations do they have with their principals and other administrators? The following three sections of this literature review focused on these three areas.

Teachers’ Relations with Students

Relations with students can come in many forms, and for first-year teachers those relations with students can be difficult. For this part of the review, I begin with quantitative studies, which were based on surveys for the most part, and then I review qualitative studies.

Quantitative Studies

Veenman (1984), often cited in studies on beginning teachers, accomplished the enormous task of reviewing 83 international studies on the relations between beginning teachers and their students. Of these studies reviewed by Veenman – all of which were based on teachers in first or second year of teaching – there were 55 from the United States, seven from West Germany, six from the United Kingdom, five from the Netherlands, four from Australia, two from Canada, two from Austria, one from Switzerland, and one from Finland. Almost all of the studies were completed by

questionnaires, most of which were based on a scale method of rating with points to the degree of which a problem was encountered (i.e., the biggest problem to the least).

However, a few of the studies used the interview method of collecting data. Veenman explained that, since in a number of cases, the interview results had not been published, his review was mainly based on questionnaire studies.

Veenman found that relations with students were the most seriously perceived problem for beginning teachers and those relations were often defined in terms of “discipline.” According to Veenman, the reasons for the problems with discipline could not be determined from the data – whether they were due to the difference in educational systems or the social structure and contexts of the schools. Other aspects of relations with students included motivating students, dealing with their individual differences, and assessing their work.

In her study that used a means other than surveys, Odell (1986) found data that supported the prior studies that used questionnaires. In her study, 86 first-year and new elementary teachers worked collaboratively with their assigned clinical support teachers, who recorded the nature of assistance they provided. At the end of the year, Odell categorized and tabulated these data according to the frequency of different types of assistance. Odell pointed out in her study that, even though the new teachers needed help with “management” of students, the administrators and clinical support did not feel the need to provide this type of support. She also said that first-year teachers had a difficult time articulating their problems in dealing with their students, since that would seem to imply a lack of personal competence.

Other researchers continued to study the relations first-year teachers had with their students. I have already mentioned the study by Marso and Pigge (1987), who discussed reality shock. These researchers found that relations with students, particularly with respect to discipline, caused difficulties at all levels of instruction. This researcher also found that behavior of students was a problem agreed upon by teachers of various grade levels and in all settings studied (rural, suburban, urban).

Another study concerning relations with students was conducted by Brock and Grady (1998), who studied not only the responses of beginning teachers but also the perceptions of principals towards their beginning teachers. The focus was on the role expectations of the first-year teachers. In analyzing surveys from 49 teachers and 56 principals, the researchers found that principals as well as the first-year teachers felt that “discipline” was the number-one-ranked problem for the beginning teachers. One teacher commented, “I was left on my own to develop a style of teaching and classroom management” (p. 180).

In a more recent quantitative study of 304 beginning teachers in Hiroshima, Japan, San (1999) found, with the use of a questionnaire designed to measure the perceptions of the preparations that the beginning teachers received during their pre-service programs, that new primary teachers are more concerned with the development of skills of classroom management than are secondary teachers. This researcher found that beginning teachers learn through time and experience about students, their homes, and the communities which they live.

Qualitative Studies

Qualitative studies provided additional insights into the nature of teachers' relations with students. For many first-year teachers, the problem with student relations was of utmost importance. An early case study, involving multiple cases, was conducted by Applegate, Flora, Johnston, Lasley, Mager, and Ryan (1977). The purpose of the study was to capture, map out, and describe the life-spaces of first-year teachers – the experience of living a particular life during a particular year. In this case study of 18 teachers – six elementary, six middle, and six high school teachers – the researchers found that first-year teachers expressed that, given their college training and natural abilities, they should not have had any problems in their relations with students. With the use of interviews, classroom observations, and telephone conversations, Applegate et al. explored various dimensions of first-year teachers' perception of teaching, one of which was relations with students. Several of the teachers reported a concern with students' attitudes that they had not expected, particularly in regard to the students' lack of respect for authority. The first-year teachers especially felt that they should not have had so many problems with their students due to behavior, and some of them were unhappy with their inability to “control” their classes. One teacher said that she “never thought that she would find herself wishing she had some other type of job” (p. 15).

In 1980, Ryan, Newman, Mager, Applegate, Lasley, Flora, and Johnston wrote a book, Biting the Apple: Accounts of First-Year Teachers, based on the Applegate et al. (1977) study of the lives of first-year teachers. This study reviewed the teaching experiences of 12 of the 18 first-year teachers, elementary and secondary, from Applegate et al.'s study. The data collected were based on two primary sources:

classroom observations and interviews that focused on the first-year teachers' own perspectives on what was going on in their professional lives. For many of the first-year teachers in this study, just getting through the entire year was a struggle. The school year had seemed to start smoothly, but by the middle of the academic year (December), the question of what to do next arose. Many of the teachers were tired and frustrated and felt that they took it out on the students. For one teacher, the sense of frustration came much earlier – as early as the first two weeks of instruction. She felt she had no influence on her students and the authority and power that she thought she had seemed to slide from her grasp. One of the first-year teachers said, “But control – I feel like I’ve completely lost control. I’ve lost my classes” (p. 66). Another teacher felt that the problems he had with his students – their not listening and not bringing supplies for the lab – were due to the frustration they had with him. They seemed not to like him, and one student said, “We’re not learning anything here” (p. 190). Because of what the student said, the teacher worried that the students were not learning, and this made the teacher become frustrated with himself.

Robert V. Bullough, Jr., completed a series of studies along with other researchers concerning the perceptions and realities of beginning teachers. The first, published in 1989, of a single teacher, was a particularly rich portrait of a teacher's struggles. Kerrie, a first-year teacher in the case study, First-Year Teachers: A Case Study, realized early in the year that she did not have a “game plan.” Ironically almost, Bullough had chosen Kerrie from a cohort group of 22 university students at the University of Utah in part because of her apparent capacity to work well with students. He also noted her enthusiasm, her sense of humor, and her ability to communicate clearly

and to vary instructional methods. Bullough interviewed Kerrie before school began in order to gain information about her expectations and concerns related to her role as a teacher. About a week after she began teaching, he began observing her in her classroom. After each observation, Bullough interviewed her about the observation of the day, asking her questions about the various things he observed during the day and questions that arose from his analysis of the interview transcripts. By mid-year, he also interviewed four students from Kerrie's classroom and the principal from the school. Bullough continued observations and interviews throughout Kerrie's second year of teaching to determine if certain patterns from the first year of teaching continued.

In his study, Bullough found that Kerrie had a difficult time with classroom management. She had expressed concern, saying that she knew very little about her students and that this exacerbated the problem with management. She worried about "a boy who should have been in a resource room" (a separate program within the school designed for students with severe learning problems). She was most concerned that this student was not getting the attention that he needed for his learning disability and that he could not do the work he needed to do in her class. Kerrie said, "I don't know what to do" (p. 26).

Most interestingly, Kerrie was disturbed by the silence of some students – the silence that was almost worst than outbursts because she did not know what to do about a student who was uninterested. According to Bullough, Kerrie was going through a form of culture shock – not understanding the student world she had entered. Because of this problem, Kerrie began to "give into" her students and lowered her standards, which only increased her frustrations. She had difficulty keeping students on task, and dealing with

unpredictable and contrary behavior. Kerrie said, “I have desperate moments.... Like this is not going to work, what will I do?” (p. 27). Eventually, Kerrie came up with a “game plan.” First, she set up classroom rules. Then she routinized her classroom activities in a purposeful and orderly manner. Finally, she identified appropriate activities and content to increase student attentiveness. Bullough explained that Kerrie’s management plan – how she planned her lessons and behavior management program – did not suddenly appear. It took long hard work that emerged over the time period of the study.

Next, Bullough, Knowles, and Crow (1989) completed a teacher self-concept and student culture study that lasted a year and included seven first-year teachers as participants. The teachers had twice-monthly seminars, interviews every three weeks, and classroom observations that resulted in extensive field notes. Three of the beginning teachers – Lyle, a junior high school science teacher; Bonnie, a junior high school English teacher; and Helena, a senior high school English, debate, and Spanish teacher – were part of the final paper. They shared their teaching experiences and reflections about how those experiences affected their first-year of teaching. Each beginning teacher’s experience was unique, as was the manner in which his or her individual situation was handled. For Lyle teaching was never his first choice as a career, and the problems he had with relation to discipline problems made his situation difficult. He said that he had a fear of losing control. He dwelled on classroom management and discipline rather than focusing on the quality of his planning. Bonnie felt that if her lessons were interesting she would not have problems with classroom management. She also felt, as a mother of five, that she would treat her students as her own children.

Bonnie was a “teacher-nurturer” or a “teacher-parent” and that was how she began the school year. As the year drew on, she realized that it was difficult being the “teacher-parent” because these students were not her own children. She adjusted as the year progressed and worked through her problems by concentrating on the lessons and not as much on the personal lives of the students. Finally, Helena, the subject-matter expert, who came from a long line of teachers, had sworn at one time that she would never become a teacher. She felt that she had little time to plan. She taught three subjects – sophomore English, debate, and Spanish – and had a variety of expertise in the three areas. Her strength was in Spanish, she had a solid academic background in English, but she had little understanding of the subject of debate. She tried, as did Bonnie, to focus her lessons on her students’ interests and felt that, if she could teach something that her students liked, then they would behave in the classroom. She found that, when she had not planned adequately ahead of time, she had more difficulties with her students, than when she was prepared.

Bullough and Knowles (1991) completed a case study of another first-year teacher, Barbara. Barbara was chosen from a group of seven, newly hired first-year teachers who had volunteered to participate in a year-long semi-monthly seminar in which they discussed their individual teaching experiences. From the larger group Bullough and Knowles chose Barbara to complete their case study because she had, in their observations, the strongest and clearest concept of “self” as a teacher. As Bullough (1989) felt about Kerrie, Bullough and Knowles felt that Barbara had the best chance of becoming a “superior first-year public school teacher.” Data were collected with the use of a journal and curriculum “log” – to examine the thinking that the first-year teacher had

about content matter change, as well as periodic classroom observations and individual interviews. Barbara, a high school English teacher, thought much like Bonnie in Bullough, Knowles, and Crow's (1989) study that teaching was just an extension of parenting. She worried about connecting with her students on a personal level, and discipline was also a concern. She found that planning was time consuming but an exhilarating experience. Barbara, like Bonnie, was concerned with the ideal of "nurturing" as a "teacher-parent." She found that the sacrifice of her family and her own health was becoming a problem. As the year went by, she decided that the sacrifice was too great and she could no longer jeopardize her family and her health in order to succeed as teacher.

A study by Bullough and Baughman (1997), a continuation of Bullough's study (1989) of Kerrie, revealed some surprises. After eight years of teaching, Kerrie finally called it "quits." Bullough had continued to interview Kerrie every few months and decided to renew their study three years after the original study began, resuming the observations and videotaping of Kerrie's classes. After analyzing weekly observations, more than a year's worth of interviews, and two dozen videotaped classes, Bullough still felt that Kerrie was doing a good job teaching the students the subject matter, but Kerrie felt differently. She continued to think, since the first study, that her classroom management skills were not what they should be, and she left teaching after ten years. She did not abandon her need to serve; rather she rerouted her need of service to another line of work – counseling adults who had serious weight and health problems. According to Bullough, Kerrie felt "older," "less tolerant," and "increasingly frustrated" with her job in teaching. Kerrie said, "I found my ability to cope with daily occurrences in an

accepting, loving manner was dwindling rapidly. I was losing not only my composure but my inner peace” (p. 177).

For many first-year teachers like Kerrie, the first few months are critical in establishing relations with students. In Voices of Beginning Teachers, Dollase (1992) reported a case study of four first-year teachers and their mentors. One of these first-year teachers said that classroom management during her second month of teaching was virtually “impossible.” The method of data collection for this case study was observations, interviews, and questionnaires of the four first-year teachers and their mentors. Also interviewed were the experienced teachers, department chairs, and school principals who worked with the four teachers during their initial year of teaching. There were follow-up interviews held with each first-year teacher during the spring and summer of 1990 of their second year of teaching. Based on the findings, when it came to classroom management strategies, these new teachers were lost by October and seemed helpless and overwhelmed before December. They did not realize they needed to adjust their management strategies periodically, especially during peak periods of the year – holidays and breaks during the year. According to Dollase, the students had discerned whether or not their teachers would follow through on their classroom discipline policies. First-year teachers who did not have alternatives to their classroom management problems seemed to be lost by mid-year.

Another study that I reviewed concerning relations with students was a recent case study that was conducted by Bondy and McKenzie (1999). These researchers provided a very complex portrayal of the relations that a first-year teacher named Jim had with his students. In this eight-month-long case study, the researchers used

tape-recorded interviews of Jim and interviews with 15 students from his classes. Five of Jim's colleagues at his school were also interviewed, along with the principal at his school. While completing the study, Bondy and McKenzie collected written artifacts, which included lesson plans and unit plans, and teacher-prepared materials. Jim also kept his own logs during the first few months of his teaching assignment, and he turned them over to Bondy and McKenzie for data collection. The interviews, which were conducted like conversations, lasted about an hour each for Jim and about 15 to 30 minutes with the other participants.

Bondy and McKenzie found that Jim, like the first-year teachers in the other studies, had a classroom management problem with his students. He complained that discipline took most of his time, and he struggled daily with trying to understand how he could cope with the teaching situation that he had chosen. Jim wanted to be able to relate to his students but felt that the students were disrupting his mission, which was teaching them. He described his struggle: "I am constantly, constantly having to discipline the entire class.... It's a constant battle to maintain order, and it's exhausting." Jim added: "The energy I use in management takes away from the energy I have for the curriculum" (p. 139). He was also frustrated with their lack of respect – not just to him but to each other as well as their disruptiveness and lack of interest. What makes this study particularly interesting is that much of his curriculum was directed to his students' social relations with others. Jim spent much time and energy planning experiences and attempting to teach his students – through such means of community service, scouts, and social skills development – new ways of communicating, working together, and solving problems.

Jim never expected to have the problems he had faced for his first year of teaching: student discipline problems and lack of interest from the students. Bondy and McKenzie found through their study of Jim that even a bright, energetic young man could experience periods of doubt and even regrets of going into the teaching profession. Nothing had prepared Jim and the students for the challenges that were presented to them that school year.

For some first-year teachers, teaching is a “two-way street” between the teachers and their students. Dooley (1998) completed a study of a first year teacher, Scott. After analyzing the data collected – field notes, transcripts from four audio tapes, and unstructured interviews – certain recurring themes and key concepts emerged. Scott had an image of what a “good teacher” should be: creative, flexible, enthusiastic, and intuitive to teaching. He saw teaching as a “two-way street” and did not want to be a “master-authority” by directing and controlling his students’ acquisition of knowledge. For him teaching was a challenge that should be met head on by the teacher and the students, and he also felt that teaching did not require much effort or knowledge of teaching strategies. Scott did seem concerned about disconnection from his students and lack of interest on the part of his students, and he felt some frustration in his approach to teaching.

There was another study that focused on the traits of a “good teacher.” Norton (1997), after interviewing 42 first-year elementary teachers, found that beginning teachers feel that for a novice teacher to be effective, that teacher must be “caring, committed, creative, reflective in thinking, and have a strong internal locus of control”

(p. 7). According to the first-year teachers interviewed, beginning teachers who did not have those traits would have a difficult time surviving in the classroom and working with administrators, other teachers, students, or parents.

Finally, Goddard and Foster (2001), mentioned earlier in their qualitative study of beginning teachers, found the persistence of some of the same problems identified in prior studies, including difficult relationships with students. The nine neophyte teachers in their study found themselves struggling with the same problems beginning teachers had almost 20 years earlier. They found that these beginning teachers experienced ambiguity about dealing with classroom management and student discipline. They had their perceptions of classroom management, but once they stepped into the classroom they became confused about how to handle the students.

Teachers' Relations with Other Teachers

Many researchers found that first-year teachers' relations with other teachers were extremely important. There were several studies that explored the many facets of the relationships of these two groups of teachers: self-efficacy beliefs, mentor support, and support from other teachers. The studies reviewed here are divided in the same manner as those in the previous section: quantitative studies followed by qualitative studies.

Quantitative Studies

It seems that younger inexperienced teachers need high levels of collaboration with their peers in order to feel good about themselves in their new career. In a study dealing with teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, Chester and Beaudin (1996) asked 173 newly hired and novice teachers (in Connecticut public schools) to complete a multiple-item survey about school practices and cultures. When these responses were analyzed, the

researchers concluded that, if new teachers had received support from experienced teachers in their school, their self-efficacy beliefs were enhanced. In contrast, if little attention was given to novice teachers, self-efficacy beliefs declined.

Other studies support this need that beginning teachers have for support from their colleagues. Marlow, Inman, and Betancourt-Smith (1997) found in their study of over 600 teachers that support from colleagues, particularly people who fill a mentor role, was important for beginning teachers. Marlow et al. took a sample of beginning teachers who were randomly selected from the mid-southern and southeastern United States, including Louisiana, and contrasted them with more experienced teachers with five to ten years of experience. They had given the teachers the Marlow-Hierlmeier Teacher Profile, a 31 – item survey instrument, which deals with information about characteristics that related to teacher career stability. This report was part of an ongoing study of teachers in various areas of the United States. When the study commenced, the inexperienced teachers had levels of confidence about teaching that were similar to those reported by their more experienced colleagues. At the conclusion of the study, though, groups differed in terms of their confidence about teaching. However, this difference between groups was less if the new teachers had had mentoring from colleagues. It seemed that beginning teachers need colleagues to mentor them by working cooperatively, sharing teaching strategies, and helping them solve their problems. When the beginning teachers in the study were helped in this manner, they felt less isolated, and they developed a greater sense of self-esteem and self efficacy.

In other studies, some researchers found that support from mentors and other teachers could alleviate stress in beginning teachers. Punch and Tuetteman (1996)

conducted a study on the psychological distress that was associated with misbehavior of students and excessive societal expectations and found that teachers' stress could be alleviated by praise and recognition from fellow colleagues. Punch and Tuetteman used a questionnaire, to assess stress levels of over 500 Western Australian secondary education teachers – with more than 50 percent of the sample being first-year teachers. According to the findings, when teachers reporting a high level of distress had support from their colleagues, their levels of distress decreased. Those first-year teachers who had many opportunities to exchange ideas with their colleagues and socialize with their colleagues tended to have less stress in their work environment. One of them explained: “The teachers at the school have much school spirit. There is plenty of opportunity to exchange useful ideas, to meet socially, and unwind with other teachers” (p. 56).

In many states, mentoring programs are provided to help beginning teachers cope with the many stresses of teaching: lesson planning, classroom management, and instructional feedback. In a study by Huffman and Leak (1986), 108 first-year teachers endorsed the role of mentor as being important for their induction program. At a forum on a new beginning teacher program, Huffman and Leak provided a questionnaire asking the teachers to identify the most beneficial functions of a mentor. The beginning teachers indicated that they were helped most by mentors who were able to provide assistance and support by addressing their needs for encouragement and collegiality and by giving specific helpful suggestions. Many first-year teachers simply wanted someone to be there for them. Several beginning teachers said that they just wanted someone “being available” or “having someone to go to with questions big and small”; they wanted the “help of a teacher who was genuinely interested” (p. 23). Some first-year teachers

considered the relationships with their mentors as “having a buddy” or “someone to turn to for help” (p. 23). The study pointed out that mentors who provided help with the many facets of teaching – providing practical assistance, explaining procedures and expectations – aided in the success of first-year teachers. Another important function for mentors, found in this study, was that of providing feedback and evaluation for the first-year teachers. Some first-year teachers explained that their mentors were “friendly critics” and that they considered their assessment as “beneficial feedback” (p. 23).

In order to foster a collaborative relationship among teachers, many districts following state mandates have implemented mentoring programs. A mentoring program, as explained by Little (1990) in her review, can be a confusing and volatile issue. With the use of policy studies and program evaluations, she evaluated the mentor phenomenon. For some states, the selection of a mentor has been based on formal applications, peer and supervisor recommendations, interviews, observations, and portfolios. For others, the mentors have been selected based on their accomplishments with students and their relationships with fellow teachers and administrators. Little found that in several states, like California and Connecticut, the use of mentors was being mandated without much work on the procedures for choosing mentors. For many mentors, there was rarely any training or requirements of experience in mentor-like roles, such as serving as a student-teacher supervisor. Some studies suggested that the role of mentor can itself be stressful because mentors are put in the position of “leaders” and are then resented by other teachers working in the same schools. According to Little, the aim of formal mentor programs was to reward and inspire experienced teachers, while tapping into their wisdom and expertise, to be of service to first-year teachers.

Qualitative Studies

Qualitative studies also have shown that for some first-year teachers, mentors have helped novices make the transition to being regular classroom teachers. Hoffman, Edwards, O'Neal, Barnes, and Paulissen (1986) found in their rich descriptive case study of four first-year teachers (two elementary and two junior high school) that “support or peer teachers” were highly influential early in the year to the first-year teachers, and their influence increased as the year progressed. The beginning teachers regarded the support teachers as their mentors, counselors, friends, and colleagues. The support teachers were considered as a source of psychological support during a transition period that was described by Hoffman et al. as extremely stressful for the beginning teachers.

In a more recent case study, Appleton and Kindt (1999) found that beginning teachers needed the presence of experienced teachers or a network of colleagues to help or advise them in their teaching programs. This study focused on nine first-year science teachers and their experiences with their mentors. Through extended open-ended interviews and observations, Appleton and Kindt learned that experienced mentors could provide a confidence boost for first-year teachers, particularly with respect to their instruction. Without the support of mentors, the first-year teachers would have been more apprehensive about teaching the subject due to the possibility of teaching incorrectly. One teacher said that she found it particularly helpful to step out of her “comfort zone” and ask an experienced teacher for help by listening to her ideas about teaching activities and teaching strategies. Appleton and Kindt concluded that, without the support from colleagues, some of the teachers studied would hardly have been able to teach their subject area.

A number of qualitative researchers studied the expectations that first-year teachers have with their mentors. In a year-long ethnographic study of 10 beginning teachers, Gratch (1996) interviewed each beginning teacher who had been assigned a mentor teacher from the same grade-level range (K-2, 3-5, 6-8). The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed. At different times during the ongoing, interactive, and emergent process of collecting data, Gratch had the beginning teachers read their interpretations and give feedback about the interpretations given. According to the findings, each beginning teacher experienced a process of socialization into teaching that included several challenges and concerns: operational concerns, instructional concerns, and social/personal concerns. Gratch suggested that beginning teachers can work through challenges if there is a strong support system by their mentors.

Two years later, Gratch (1998), while focusing on the socialization associated with the role of mentor relationships, reported the struggles of one of the first-year teachers, Gina, who was in the 1996 study. Gratch found that the tension that Gina experienced during her first year of teaching was due to the lack of emotional support, thoughtful feedback, and discussion that she had expected to receive from her mentor. Gina considered her mentor as a resource, and she expected her mentor to help her learn how to reason with the various situations of teaching. At the beginning of the school year, she received help with teaching from her mentor, but as the year went by, her mentor became busy with her own class, and gave Gina less feedback and guidance. Gina explained that she wanted more scheduled meetings with her mentor. She said that a mentor working with a beginning teacher “ should recognize that she should make time for the mentor relationship so the new teacher knows when they’re getting together, and

doesn't have to go running down the hall whenever she's got a question" (p. 224). Also, Gratch found conflicting opinions on how much help a mentor should give to her mentee. Later during the year of 1996, Gratch had a small group of preservice education students and teacher educators read and discuss her findings in the case study of Gina. She asked both groups to explain their feelings about Gina's reactions about her mentor. The preservice teachers felt that Gina expected too much help from her mentor, whereas the teacher educators thought that the mentor had not given Gina enough attention and feedback.

Another case study that was devoted to the relationships of beginning teachers to their mentors was completed by French (1997). She wanted to learn how first-year teachers perceived their mentoring relationships or lack of mentoring relationships. She found that mentoring was an elusive concept from the mentee's perspective of the 17 first-year teachers in the study. At the beginning of the year, each first-year teacher thought that he or she knew what a mentor should do, such as taking the lead in establishing the relationship. Even though most of the first-year teachers had a positive mentor- protégée relationship, there were some difficulties between a few of the mentors and their mentees. These included insecurity, fear of rejection, and too low or too high expectations of what the mentors would do for them. Finally, many of the first-year teachers in the study also expressed the fear of asking for help, and this was noted as a huge problem in relationships between mentors and mentees.

Mentoring has become an important part of the process of guiding new teachers through their first year of teaching. In a qualitative study of 46 experienced teachers – 23 trained mentors and 23 non-trained mentors – Evertson and Smithey (2000) found that

trained mentors, even though they were only trained for four days, had more influence on their mentees than did the non-trained mentors. After the data were analyzed – from videotapes of mentor-protégé conferences, weekly summaries of mentor-protégé meetings, and monthly goal-setting summaries—they found that even though there was no real difference between the two groups in their perceptions of protégé needs, the trained mentors were able to do better in meeting the needs of the new teachers. The prepared mentors were able to apply their conference skills, learned at their workshops, to help aid in their protégés’ needs. When the trained mentors said that they were going to observe and team teach with their protégés, they did as they had said. The trained mentors also gave more specific advice to their protégés than did the untrained mentors. The protégés of the trained mentors experienced interactions with their mentors that were more relaxed and more pleasant but also more task-oriented.

Mentioned earlier, Dolley’s (1998) study of Scott, who saw teaching as a “two-way street,” brought out important points about a first-year teacher and his mentor. Scott’s mentor, Mr. Simmons, felt that his job was to give ideas and not provide lessons and specific instructions on how to teach. It seemed, however, that he did need some guidance in planning and implementing instruction. Scott did not have specific goals or a clear idea of what he was teaching and thus he had problems in his lessons. He felt that all he needed from his mentor was support and encouragement. Since the mentor and the mentee did not use their time together to prepare and plan lessons, Scott had much trouble during that first-year of teaching.

Even though most of the literature suggests that new teachers benefit from relations with trusted colleagues, some first-year teachers, it seems, have not really

wanted close relationships with peers. Ryan et al. (1980), whose study was mentioned earlier in this review, found that some beginning teachers in the study felt that many teachers tended to be “cliquish” – staying together in the lounge for lunch and socializing after school hours. With the use of narrative accounts, Ryan et al. found that these beginning teachers felt that they would rather isolate themselves than get caught up into a clique. One teacher went as far as saying that she “viewed the school as a rumor mill – teachers always talking about kids or other teachers” (p. 29). Another beginning teacher said that the other teachers were friendly but that she did not want them to become her friends. The same first-year teacher said that she wanted her school life to be separate from her private life. She also said that “she did not want to be a teacher all the time. She wanted to feel that when she left the building she was not bringing the school home with her” (p. 29).

For some mentors, descriptions of their relationships with their mentees sound like descriptions of relationships with family members. In a recent study of 124 K-12 teachers – 46 elementary, 18 middle school, 30 high school, 16 special education, and 14 other types of teachers – who served as mentors for beginning teachers in Wisconsin, Ganser (1999) found that interpersonal relationships between the mentor and the protégé were often compared to as a “parent-child” relationship. The 124 mentors were asked to respond to an open-ended item included in a survey. They were asked to provide comparisons of their experiences as mentors. One teacher said that working with a mentee was like “teaching a child to ride a two-wheeler.” Other kinship relationships were found in this study – siblings, uncles, and aunts. On the other hand, some of the mentors felt it was important to keep “enough distance so as to promote individuality”

among the first-year teachers and not develop such close ties with their mentees in order to encourage them to become more independent.

Teachers' Relations with Administrators

For many first-year teachers, the relations with other teachers – through some type of mentorship, whether formal or informal – seems to be an important factor, but as I review further, relations with administrators can be as important or more important than the relations with other teachers. Here again I used the same divisions: quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative Studies

In the study by Chester and Beaudin (1996), discussed earlier, relations with administrators and supervisors were also an important factor in new teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about themselves as teachers, particularly at the beginning of the year. Some young novices in the study experienced declines in their self-efficacy beliefs that were related to excessive attention and attention at the wrong time by administrators and supervisors. For the novices, too much attention could be upsetting and cause great distress due to the comings and goings of the administrators. They feared that if they were being observed often, then they must be doing something wrong. Chester and Beaudin's findings also suggested that putting off the observations until late in the year could lead to negative self-efficacy beliefs for that teacher, because the teacher might feel that the administrator did not value his or her competence. The researchers found that timing and feedback were essential in validating a beginning teacher's competence.

In trying to understand the relations first-year teachers have with their administrators, Brock and Grady (1998) compared principals' perceptions with

perceptions held by first-year teachers. With the use of surveys and questionnaires, Brock and Grady asked 49 first-year teachers and 56 principals what their perceptions were for each other. They found that principals expected first-year teachers to have a professional attitude when teaching and to have adequate knowledge of subject areas. Principals, as well as teachers, expressed the need for good classroom management and the belief that every child could learn and should be successful in their learning. First-year teachers also had certain expectations of their principals — to communicate criteria for good teaching. They felt that principals had not always stated those expectations clearly to them. One teacher said, “The principal should express the expectations he has for students in the school. I need to know expectations for lesson plans. I want to know what my principal considers as good teaching and how my performance measures up” (p. 180). The beginning teachers also expressed the need for communication with their principals and the need to have scheduled meeting times. Some first-year teachers stressed the importance of classroom visits, feedback, and affirmation by their principals. Finally, first-year teachers said they needed a year-long program of assistance. One teacher said, “Don’t forget that at the end of the school year, we’re still beginning teachers. We never ended a school year before” (p. 182). At a time when many studies have shown the need for mentors to help first-year teachers succeed in the classroom (cf. Huffman & Leak, 1986), Brock and Grady found that principals could be the key to the successful socialization and induction process of first-year teachers.

Some research (Chapman, 1984; Covert, 1986; Marlow et al., 1997; Punch & Tuetteman, 1996) has shown that administrative support can help reduce the attrition rate of many first-year teachers. According to Chapman (1984), the more the administrators

are involved with their teachers, especially the first-year teachers, the better the chance that the teachers would not leave teaching. By surveying 2,933 graduates of the University of Michigan, Chapman classified teachers into three groups: (1) career teachers, (those who started and stayed in teaching), (2) those that started in and left teaching, and (3) those that prepared for teaching, but never started to teach. Chapman found in his study that, even though there was not a direct link between administrators' treatment of teachers and the teachers' attrition rate, career teachers had rated their experiences with their administrators as important to their staying in the teaching profession. The teachers who left teaching said that their experiences with their administrators were more important factors in their decision to leave than were their own academic performance or adequacy of their educational program. According to those findings, Chapman suggested that an administrator could shape the tone and quality of a new teacher's first teaching experience. Chapman also felt that, if administrators worked closely through observations and interactions with their first-year teachers, they could contribute to teacher retention in their schools.

It seemed that administrators can have a great impact on how first-year teachers perceive their first-year of teaching. Covert (1986) asked 94 first-year teachers from Memorial University in Newfoundland, Canada, to complete a questionnaire that was designed to measure teacher self-concept, motivation to teach, two personal qualities (ambition and rapport), and several other factors, including classroom management procedure. He found that, if administrators gave positive feedback and had a productive working relationship with their first-year teacher through observations and discussions about teaching methods, the first-year teacher would more likely look back on that first

year of teaching in a “positive light.” If administrators showed no interest in the first-year teachers and had only words of criticism, first-year teachers would remember their first year as a negative experience. These negative findings would, in turn, break down the first-year teachers’ self-confidence.

Punch and Tuetteman (1997), mentioned earlier in the review, also found in their study that school administrators could counter the increasing stress on first-year teachers by developing a more supportive climate. The findings showed that moral support, praise, and recognition for a job well done could alleviate much of the stress for beginning teachers. Also, in another study, Marlow et al. (1997) found that the support system provided by administrators to their first-year teachers could also help these teachers feel less isolated and needed. They suggested that administrators should strongly support a professional environment that would encourage beginning teachers to want to remain in teaching.

Qualitative Studies

Qualitative studies have provided detailed information about the relations first-year teachers have with administrators. One of the studies suggested that first-year teachers can have a difficult time decoding “mixed” messages sent by their administrators. Zepeda and Ponticell (1997) completed, with the use of focus groups and open-ending questioning, a very large qualitative study of 62 first-year teachers from three suburban high schools and examined the struggles they faced with learning how to deal with the organization, climate, and culture of the schools. Also in this study, they examined the politics involved in the relationships between the first-year teachers and their administrators, faculty, students, and the parents of their students. Zepeda and

Ponticell found that beginning teachers felt that they had valuable insights and that their administrators were not listening to their “voices.” Beginning teachers also explained that they needed “positive words” from their administrators. They wanted more classroom pop-in visits with constructive criticism. As one first-year teacher said, “I need acknowledgment, guidance, and evaluation of my current progress – both positive and negative” (p. 19).

For many beginning teachers, there is too little assistance from administrators. Lortie (1975), in his sociological study discussed at the beginning of this review, found, at times, that some first-year teachers needed their administrators to protect them from some parents. First-year teachers also wanted their principals to be available and accessible, and they wanted their principals to specify what they expected from them. Bullough (1989) in his case study of Kerrie, also discussed earlier, revealed that Kerrie did not get the feedback she wanted from her principal, nor was she observed as often as she would have liked. This was extremely frustrating for her. French (1997), in her narrative study of 17 teachers, found those beginning teachers who did not receive assistance from administrators tended not to set realistic goals. The lack of involvement by the administrators made the beginning teachers in French’s study feel that no one wanted to help them, which in turn made them suffer from insecurity.

Finally, in a review of professional literature, similar to Veenman (1984), and the testimony of individuals who are new at teaching, Johnson (2001) found that first-year teachers should not be left alone in isolation and be expected to be successful. She also quoted Zepeda and Ponticell (1997) in saying that administrators who do not show enthusiasm for their beginning teachers can affect the first-year teacher’s chances of

success. Johnson also reinforced Brock and Grady's (1998) findings that principals play a key role in inducting beginning teachers: New teachers need to hear their administrators say that they value their presence and that they are not expendable.

Summary and Questions

The research reviewed in this chapter has shown that new teachers enter their first year of teaching with high expectations – expectations that are sometimes unrealistic. Many people go into teaching, as Lortie (1995) showed, because they want to serve others; but, as other studies have shown, they also want to relate to others and interact with their peers and students (Fuller & Bown, 1975). Once “reality” (Fuller & Bown, 1975; Marso & Pigge, 1987) enters the picture, many beginning teachers begin to struggle, sometimes changing perceptions of the role of a teacher, and because of this struggle the first research question is important: What are the expectations and perceptions of the four beginning teachers participating in the study? How do their perceptions change over the course of the year?

As beginning teachers start that initial year, some are prepared for the challenges of working with students in the classroom and some are not. A number of qualitative studies have focused on teachers' relationships with students, showing that frequently new teachers have problems in this area. Veenman (1984) found that the idea of “classroom management” was an issue in classrooms twenty-somewhat years ago. Even today, Goddard and Foster (2001) find that beginning teachers still struggle with the notion of “classroom management.” Because of the concern for relations between beginning teachers and their students, the next question is as follows: How do these beginning teachers relate to their students? How do they “manage” their classrooms?

As I reviewed the research, much was found on the relationships that beginning teachers had with other teachers (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Marlow et al., 1997), particularly the relationships first-year teachers had with their mentors (French, 1997; Evertson & Smithey, 2000). It is difficult to make generalities about which kinds of relations are best for which new teachers, but, suffice it to say, these relationships were often important to the self-efficacy beliefs of beginning teachers, and without those relationships, many new teachers might not have lasted the entire year. The third research question dealt with those relationships: How do they relate to other teachers in their schools?

The literature also points to the importance of the new teachers' relations with their administrators. It seems that many beginning teachers want and expect their administrators to visit their classrooms, give constructive criticism, and say how much they value their presence (Chapman, 1984; Cover, 1986; Punch & Tutetteman, 1997; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1997). Many of the beginning teachers wanted access to their principals, to know that they could talk to their administrators about their students and any problems that they might have (Chapman, 1984; Covert, 1986; Punch & Tuetteman, 1996; Marlow et al., 1997). Because of the importance put forth by the research, the next question about the new teachers' experiences dealt with administrators: What kinds of relations do they have with their administrators?

Finally, for many beginning teachers, the relationships that they have with their students, other teachers, and administrators can affect their decisions to stay teaching the next year. Other factors may affect those decisions as well, as pointed out poignantly in several case studies (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Bullough & Baughman, 1997; Bondy &

McKenzie, 1999; Evertson & Smithey, 2000). Thus, for my final question I sought to see how the expectations impacted the decision of the new teachers to stay in teaching for at least the initial year: What goes into their decisions to stay in or leave the teaching profession?

CHAPTER 3: METHOD OF THE STUDY

My study was an inquiry that focused on multiple cases and employed several methods of data collection: making field observations, video taping, collecting of documents, keeping a journal, and conducting formal and informal interviews. In this chapter, I present the general design for the study, including changes that I made after I began the initial study. There were many emerging complications and developments that occurred during the research. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) stated that investigators initiate a qualitative study research with some idea about what they will do, but a detailed set of procedures may not always be formed prior to data collection.

My main attention in the qualitative study was on four new teachers' experiences over a nine month period. I focused on the first-year teachers' perceptions and expectations, particularly with respect to their relations with their students, their relations with other teachers, and their relations with their administrators. With these foci in mind, I was able to explore the possibilities that existed in first-year teacher attrition. Through the observation and interview process, I explored other factors that emerged during the process.

As mentioned previously, this study employed a qualitative approach, specifically case study. The remainder of this chapter (1) explains the rationale for my case-study approach, (2) provides the major features of my study, (3) summarizes what I learned from my pilot studies, (4) provides a brief description of the participants and their schools, (5) describes my data collection procedures, (6) explains my procedures for data

analysis, and (7) considers the matter of my credibility as a researcher and the issue of ethics.

Rationale for My Case Study Approach

Since I focused my study on four first-year teachers' expectations and experiences, I felt that the case-study approach was best suited for my research. With this approach, I provided data in great detail for individual cases and made comparisons across cases. I completed 66 interviews with the four first-year teachers, and I observed 110 classes, where I took notes. In addition, I completed six interviews with principals, eight interviews with the mentors assigned to the new teachers, and four interviews with veteran teachers at the schools, two interviews with custodians, five interviews with parents, and informal interviews with students. I also interviewed the superintendent of the school system, a minister who lived in the community of Bayou Elementary School, and the student teacher who worked under the first-year teacher from East Junior High School.

According to Stake (1994), a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case which holds special interest for the researcher. I observed the first-year teachers' experiences inside of their classrooms and schools in which they taught and attempted to describe and analyze those experiences as I found themes relevant to generalities as well as the uniqueness of each teacher. As Stake (1978) explained, with a case study, the researcher and readers should be left with more to think about than less. The case study provides theory to build upon – causing more exploration of the phenomenon instead of a single answer to the question of “why.”

In this qualitative study of first-year teachers, I provided triangulation with the use of a variety of methods of investigation: field documentation, observations, journal information, interviews, and the collection of physical artifacts. This study was completed in nine months – the full academic year for these teachers. In qualitative case study research, the researcher is expected to spend substantial time on site with the participants being studied, while observing, comparing, and contrasting activities and operations of the school setting.

Major Features of the Study

My study on the socialization of four first-year teachers lasted through the entire nine month academic year 2000 – 2001 and was situated in two elementary schools and one junior high school in Houma, Louisiana. The following were major features of the study.

- I completed an analysis of each case individually as well as completed a cross-case analysis (Feagin et al., 1991; Stenhouse, 1985; Yin, 1990). Since the teachers were teaching in three different schools, I was able to compare and contrast the different situations that the teachers were apart. Also, I was able to observe any differences that existed among the teachers within their schools, and examined individually the cases as they progressed during the year.
- I involved several key informants – the first-year teachers' students, one teacher from each school, the principals, the mentors, a parent from each school, the superintendent, a minister from Bayou Elementary School, a custodian from Bayou Elementary School and In-Town Elementary School,

and a student teacher at East Junior High School. The interviews from these informants were used to complement the interviews and observations of the four first-year teachers. The information provided helped me understand the relations that the beginning teachers had with their students, with other teachers in their schools, with their principals, and their mentors.

- I employed multiple means of data collection: field documentation, observations, journal writings, and video-tapes.
- Participants had the opportunity to examine the data, as it pertained to them. They had the opportunity to add to or to clarify any part of the data as the study progressed.

Pilot Studies

A pilot study helps the investigator refine the data collection and questioning processes (Yin, 1994). I performed two pilot case studies of first-year teachers. The first pilot case study focused on three first-year teachers – one who was a second-grade teacher in East Baton Rouge Public School System and two third-grade teachers from Terrebonne Parish Public School System. The three-month pilot case study revealed many difficult times that first-year teachers have in their classrooms. Based on the data collected, I found that the struggles reviewed in the literature review of first-year teachers were evident: classroom management problems, isolation problems, and problems with the administration. I also found that the teachers, depending on the school they taught in, handled students differently. One teacher said that her students were not capable of learning unless she raised her voice. It did not bother this particular first-year teacher to yell or ridicule her students while being observed. The other two teachers were both

older, more mature, married with children, and seemed to see teaching as a “service” (cf. Lortie, 1975), helping their students no matter what their nationality or financial status. They never raised their voices in order to get their students’ attention.

The first pilot case study helped me to understand the enormity of the data collection process. I collected over 30 pages of transcribed interview information from each teacher during a three-month period, and I also had the chance to pilot my interview questions. I spent at least 15 to 20 hours transcribing the data that I collected. It was difficult for me, at first, not to repeat the same questions at different times during the interview process. As I continued the interviews, I learned that I needed to stay on the subject of the questions and not deviate. I realized that with qualitative research, I needed to adjust the interview questions based on the outcome of the observations.

The second pilot case study, which lasted about four months, was a single case study of the first-year teacher, mentioned in the first case study, from East Baton Rouge Public School System. Again, as in the first pilot study, I was able to refine my questioning techniques and work on data collection procedures. After reviewing my data, I found that the isolation this first-year teacher experienced was her largest problem. Her classroom was down a long hall far away from any other classroom, and because of this isolation she had no one to talk with if she had a problem. She said that if a child got hurt in the classroom and she needed help, she had to send one of her other second-grade students for help because she could not leave her classroom.

Again, the data collection process was the most difficult part of this study. The transcription of an interview took as much as 10 hours to do. I did get better at the process, but I decided for my dissertation study to hire someone to transcribe my audio

tapes as long as I could afford to pay a typist. Finally, I found that the longer I continued the study, the more the principal saw me as a mentor for the first-year teacher. I worried that the principal thought that I was there to give the teacher advice, and it bothered me that she inquired about the teacher's progress from time to time. I feared that I would say something that might cause a conflict between the teacher and me, and I was careful when having conversations with the principal.

Participants in the Study

The major participants in my dissertation study were four first-year teachers: two third-grade general education teachers from Bayou Elementary School, one first-grade inclusion teacher from In-Town Elementary School, and one seventh-, eighth- and ninth-grade special education teacher from East Junior High School located in Houma, Louisiana. These teachers were selected from a list of beginning teachers that was provided by the Head of Personnel in Terrebonne Parish. This list also included the names of the schools where the teachers taught, the grade level that the teachers taught, and the subjects that they taught. With the use of the list, I identified the first-year teachers who I felt were best suited for my study, based on the following criteria: (1) they were first-year teachers – having never taught as a full time teacher before – and (2) they taught elementary or middle grades. Also, I tried to choose the teachers in paired schools, to make my traveling about the parish much easier for myself, since I was going to be completing observations twice a week. However, this was not possible. I chose Mary Boudreaux and Jane Gautreaux, both long-time residents of Houma who teach at Bayou Elementary School, which is approximately 10 miles from the city limits of Houma; Beth Anderson, who also grew up in Houma and who teaches at In-Town

Elementary School in the town of Houma; and Susan Guidry, another young woman with roots in Houma who teaches at East Junior High School, which is located on the east side of Houma, about four miles from Beth Anderson's school. The names I use here for these teachers and also their schools are all pseudonyms.

Mary and Jane taught third-grade in the same school. The school where they taught – the oldest schoolhouse in Terrebonne Parish that is still open – was first opened in September of 1913. The main building, an old white wooden-framed structure, where Jane's classroom was housed, stands on cement blocks, which are covered, forming a basement that has eight classrooms, the girls and boys' restroom, the cafeteria, and the teachers' lounge. On the main floor there is the principal's office, the secretary's office, ten classrooms, the teachers' restroom, and the auditorium. Also found on the grounds are five portable classrooms, one of which was Mary's classroom. The old wooden school building with two huge magnolia trees standing on its front lawn overlooks Bayou Lecompte. The school is located at the end of a long stretch of highway which follows the bayou from the city of Houma and leads to the marsh lands that separate the land areas to the gulf. At one time the building was a high school, then it became a middle school, but at the time of the study it was an elementary school, with approximately 298 pre-kindergarten (Pre-K) through fourth-grade students and a staff of 45, which included the principal, the secretary, teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, the librarian, the school counselor, assessment team, and food service personnel.

Beth's school, In-Town Elementary, was located in downtown Houma. Before the school became an elementary school, it was one of only two public schools for African American children, located at the intersection of two major roads. The red brick

school, built in 1953, was originally a high school before it was integrated in 1968 and became a middle school. Over the years it had been transformed into an elementary school housing Pre-K through the sixth-grade. The building is also used as a home for the curriculum specialists for the parish. The school is extremely large and has five wings. Since the school is large, the principal has made certain that each wing holds individual grade levels (e.g., first-grade on one wing and second-grade on another wing) so that these related classes can be closer together and not scattered about the various buildings. There are very few trees, and the buildings are squared in together to make a courtyard in the center of the school grounds. There is a football stadium attached to the backside of the school, and the cafeteria is a totally separate building. At the time of the study, there were 84 staff members, including the principal, a vice principal, secretaries, teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselors, a student evaluator, food service personnel, and custodians.

Susan's school, East Junior High, can be found on the outskirts in the eastern side of Houma, located near a major highway leading into the city of Houma. The same bayou, Bayou Lecompte, which could be seen from Susan's classroom window at East Junior High School, could be seen ten miles away by Jane when she looked out of her classroom window at Bayou Elementary. The two-story, orange-colored brick building, built in 1963, has always been a junior high school, housing seventh- and eighth-graders who come from a larger area of the parish. It has two wings of classrooms, an office, rest rooms, a band room, a choir room, and a library. Also, there are a gymnasium and cafeteria, which are separate buildings. Some of the students come from the bayou country that surrounds the school, and the rest of the student body live in the suburbs or

in the western city limits of Houma. At the time of the study, the staff consisted of a principal, two vice principals, guidance counselors, library staff, paraprofessionals, food service personnel, custodians, and 57 teachers.

I gave the teachers and all other participants consent forms that explained the study and the attempts that I made to protect them and provide their privacy. (See the Appendix for sample letters.) The beginning teachers were informed that pseudonyms were used for their names, the names of their schools, and the names of all participants including any students involved in the study.

Also participating in the study were the students from the first-year teachers' classes (to provide research for the relations with students), other teachers from each school participating in the study (to gain information concerning the relations with other teachers), administrators of the schools (to gain their perspectives and relations with new teachers), the four mentors (to get an idea of the relationship between the first-year teachers and their mentors), the superintendent of the school system (to get a better picture of the school system in which these four teachers taught), and members of each community in which the schools were located (to get an idea of the surroundings that these students came from and how those surroundings related to the first-year teachers).

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection method included four processes: field observations, journals, interviews, and collection of documents and other artifacts. After describing each of these, I considered my role in the study.

Observations. The observations of the Bayou Elementary School teachers began on August 24, 2000, and the observations for the In-Town Elementary School teacher and

the East Junior High School teacher began on October 17, 2000. I collected a large set of data taking notes during formal observations and keeping a journal – based on informal observations and informal interviews.

Twice a week I conducted hour-long formal observations and was able to collect over 400 pages of notes on each teacher. Following Briggs (1986), I divided my field note pages for my observations into two sections. One side of the notebook pages was used to sketch the setting of the classroom and to record any type of interpretations or questions that came to mind during the observations. The other side of the page was used to write detailed descriptive field notes. I also video-taped each of the four first-year teachers as they taught their classes. I video-taped the Bayou Elementary School teachers twice: once in October 2000 and once in April, 2001, for 45 minutes each taping session, and I video-taped the In-Town Elementary teacher and the East Junior High School teacher once each in April, 2001, for 45-minute sessions.

The observations were conducted while the teachers were teaching their classes (their morning lessons as well as their afternoon lessons), having recess breaks, and eating lunch. I also observed the teachers during Parent Teacher Club (PTC) meetings, staff meetings and grade-level meetings, and also during field trips. There were opportunities for observations during the Teacher Appreciation Lunch and holiday meals: Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. These observations focused on how the first-year teachers adjusted to their students and their classrooms as well as the design of the classroom, teaching techniques, relations with other teachers, relations with the administrators, other personnel in the schools, and any other categories or themes that

began to emerge during the study. I wrote detailed, extensive field notes during the observations.

For their classroom teaching, I sketched seating charts of the teachers' classrooms as they changed throughout the year and provided a coding system that I used to identify the students as they sat in the classrooms. I also made sketches of the locations of each classroom compared to other classrooms, the principals' offices, the libraries, the gymnasiums, the cafeterias, and other important rooms in each school.

In addition to the field notebooks, I used journals, where I recorded reflective notes, anecdotal notes, feelings I had, any information that I felt should not be recorded in the field notebooks that was observed during the observations, comments made by the individual first-year teachers during observation time that were not observable data, or any thoughts that came to my mind during the observations that may have needed further research before the next observation. I wrote in these journals immediately after leaving the observation site. I also read over my field notes each evening filling in gaps and clarifying anything that might have seemed confusing. I had 1,500 pages of hand written field notes and 240 pages of handwritten notes in my journals.

Interviews. There were three phases of interview process used with the four first-year teachers: (1) one initial interview with each participant based on the perceptions and expectations of the first-year teacher for her students and herself; (2) 16 interviews with each of the two Bayou Elementary teachers, based on observations over the course of the study; 14 interviews with the In-Town Elementary teacher, based on observations over the course of the study; 14 interviews with the East Junior High School teacher based on observations over the course of the study; and (3) one final interview with each of the

first-year teachers at the end of their first year of teaching. I was able to complete approximately 72 hours of interview time with the four first-year teachers.

Although most interview questions were developed at some point before the interviews, all interviews were conducted in a conversational format (Patton, 1990) in which the first-year teachers were encouraged to elaborate on information. (See sample interview questions included in the Appendix.) The majority of the questions were open-ended. The goal of the interview process was to get detailed accounts of classroom activities and other occurrences in the school which dealt with students, other teachers, administrators, and mentors, and also the participants' interpretations and reactions. Sometimes interview questions were asked about the personal and family lives of the teachers in order to see how those areas related to the teachers' school experiences. As Briggs (1986) has pointed out, interview discourse is highly indexical – dependent on some features of the context. I needed to be certain that the interviewees were comfortable with the surroundings of the interviews and that there was no intimidation on my part or the setting in which the teachers were interviewed. Most interviews were held in the classrooms of the teachers except for the East Junior High School teacher. Since her classroom was occupied by another teacher during our interview times, we had to use the teachers' lounge and two other vacant classrooms for our interviews. All interviews were audio taped, and were transcribed completely. The interviews resulted in 840 pages of typed protocols.

During the Phase 1 interview, beginning the third week of August, 2000, for the Bayou Elementary School teachers and beginning the second week of October, 2000, for the In-Town teacher and East Junior High School teacher, the first-year teachers were

questioned about their perceptions and expectations upon entering their classrooms for the first time. I was also able to get insight into how the teachers thought their school year would progress. They explained their goals for the coming year and their expectations for the relationships with their administrators, colleagues, and students.

Phase 2 interviews began after the first classroom observation and continued through the last week of May, 2001. Phase 2 consisted of interviews held every other week, and most of the questions were developed according to outcome of the observations. I interviewed the Bayou Elementary School teachers at least two times each month, from August, 2000, through May, 2001, with each interview lasting approximately one hour. The In-Town Elementary teacher and the East Junior High School teacher were interviewed twice each month, beginning October, 2000 and ending in May, 2001.

During Phase 2, I also interviewed students; principals; other teachers, including mentors; parents; and people of the communities where the schools were located. My interviews with students were held throughout the school year. Each principal was interviewed twice during the school year, once during the fall and once during the spring. One teacher from each school was chosen for a 45 minute interview and was questioned about her relationship with the beginning teachers in their school. A student teacher who worked in the first-year teacher's classroom at East Junior High School was also interviewed. The superintendent for the Terrebonne Parish School System completed a one hour interview. Also, the mentors of each teacher completed two 45-minute interviews – one at the beginning of the school year and one closer to the end of the year. One parent from Bayou Elementary School and one from In-Town Elementary School

were interviewed and two parents from East Junior High were questioned about their relationships with the first-year teacher. A minister from the community of Bayou Elementary School was asked questions about the community and the relationship that the community had with the staff of the school. Finally, a custodian from Bayou Elementary School and In-Town Elementary School were interviewed.

The Phase 3 interviews were conducted during the first week of June, 2001. These interviews, held with the four new teachers, were used to answer any questions that I had before ending the study. This time was used to investigate the future of these beginning teachers. The questions were planned during the last few months of the study. The main question was: Do you plan to stay in the teaching profession or change careers? There were other particular questions, relating to themes I saw emerging during the study.

Documents and other artifacts: I collected data from certain documents from the schools and from the community that have provided pertinent information for the study. These items included copies of the teachers' classroom management plans and lesson plans, copies of the Parent Teacher Club (PTC) bulletins, a copy of the sign-in sheet, central office memos, web page information on each school, the individual school report cards, the assessment information on the first-year teachers, and the assessment information on the students of the schools used in this study. I also collected newspaper articles that dealt with the school year and the parish where the schools were located. My collection also included copies of the grading system, rubrics, copies of tests that were used by the first-year teachers, and any personal notes written to the first-year teachers that they shared with me.

My Role

I became a participant observer in the study. I felt that by some direct involvement, as a fellow teacher to the new teachers, I gained rapport with the people who were my case studies. This rapport helped me construct a descriptive picture of the new teachers and their settings. Goetz and Lecompt (1984) said that assumption of the position of participant observer allows one to acquire data in a culturally authentic manner. Because of this role, I was considered “being-in-the-world.” In that role I observed and interpreted the nonverbal communication as well as the oral and written discourse that accompanied classroom activities. Since I wanted to understand the nonverbal as well as verbal communication, I needed to be extremely accurate in my note taking, writing every descriptive detail that I could. I sought to be aware of everything about the first-year teachers – from the position in which the teachers stood or sat to the manner in which the teachers moved toward their students. I tried to observe everything from their individual appearance to their attitudes towards their students and towards the faculty at the school. When observing the teachers, I considered it important to observe tone and manner in which the act was done.

Data Analysis Procedures

I used three main techniques of qualitative analysis – constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984), domain and componential analysis (Spradley, 1980), and pattern matching (Yin, 1994).

First, I analyzed the data with the constant comparative method of analysis which was concerned with “generating and plausibly suggesting (but not provisionally testing) many categories, properties, and hypotheses about general problems” (Glaser & Strauss,

1967, p. 104). Through the use of this method, I searched for categories. Glaser and Strauss explained that with the constant comparative method of analysis, the researcher may begin with his or her own categories, but during the process of the study, different categories will begin to emerge.

Even though the qualitative approach of study did not encourage rigidly predetermined categories, it was helpful to plan a coding system that aided in the preparation of separating the enormous amount of data that was collected during the lengthy nine month study. I began with the areas of my study: (1) expectations of the first-year teachers, (2) their relations with the students, (3) their relations with other teachers, and (4) their relations with the administrators. There were sub-categories that developed during the study. For instance, for the expectations of administrators the sub-categories were “support” and “non-support.” In accordance with the constant comparative method, the categories were flexible and subject to redesign. Categories with which I began the study were not necessarily the ones that I used to finish the study, since I created other categories as the study progressed. For example, at the beginning of the study I began the categories with “students liked” and “students disliked.”

I also used domain analysis and componential analysis (Spradley, 1980). With the domain analysis, I created cultural categories using cover terms, included terms, and semantic relationships. By doing so, I divided the categories, from the constant comparative method, into more specific categories based on specific terms and relationships which were considered as included terms (e.g., kinds of first-year teachers). I found links between the cover terms (e.g., first-year teacher) and the included terms (e.g., is a kind of), that finally matched the domain that best defined the category (e.g.,

good teachers, bad teachers). These terms all gave meaning to objects, events, and activities that existed in everyday life, so by sorting out the categories, I was able to find attributes or components of meaning – meaning that the first-year teachers had applied to their teaching lives (cultural categories). After I formed the domains, I then proceeded with componential analysis by applying attributes (components of meaning) associated with the cultural categories. I found the relations, different or similar, between the categories, and by sorting the categories out, I was able to make more specific matching patterns – for example, “supportive” and “not supportive.”

The final method of analysis that I used was pattern-matching. With this method of analysis, I compared factors (patterns) already found in the literature review with factors that emerged during the study (cf. Yin, 1994). Prior to the study, I created some categories, based on the literature review, which could be compared to new emerging factors of the study.

I coded teachers’ expectations and perceptions regarding the following matters: (1) self as teacher, (2) self in other roles, (3) teaching in general, (4) other people, (5) material things, and (6) policy and procedures. Each of these categories included (1) negative aspects and (2) positive aspects. The expectations were expressed, for the most part, at the onset of the study, and the perceptions were expressed as the school year progressed.

For relations with students, I had two sets of subcategories: relations with students and relations with their parents. For relations with students, I coded (1) students’ participation or non participation in classroom activities, (2) students’ positive or negative attitude toward teacher or school, (3) teacher’s positive or negative attitude

toward students, (4) teacher's interest in, or concern about, a particular student, (5) "crisis" situation with student, (6) teacher's attempt to "manage classroom," (7) students' response to teacher's "management" approach, and (8) attention to student assessment. For relations with parents, I coded (1) parental support or non support, (2) parent in role of volunteer, (3) attention from parent who had been teachers, (4) attendance or nonattendance of parents when invited to school function, (5) attendance or nonattendance of parents at school function when not invited, (6) phone call to or from parent, (6) attitude of parent when child in serious situation, and (7) attention to student assessment.

Relations with teachers also had two components: relations with mentor and relations with other teachers. For relations with mentor, I coded (1) support or nonsupport, (2) assigned or unassigned mentor, (3) interaction at school, (4) interact out of school, (5) attention on teaching assessment, (6) attention on student assessment, (7) attention on teaching approaches, and (8) attention on other matters. For relations with other teachers, I coded (1) support, (2) mentor role, (3) member of team, (4) interaction at school, (5) interaction out of school, (6) attention on teaching assessment, (7) attention on student assessment, (8) attention on teaching approaches, and (9) attention on other matters.

Relations with administrators included the following: (1) support or nonsupport, (2) accessibility or nonaccessibility, (3) observation in classroom, (4) advice, (5) indication of caring, (6) positive or negative opinion of teacher, (7) attention on teaching assessment, and (8) attention on student assessment.

I saw a need for a category for relations with family members and other people besides those associated with the school. The subcategories included (1) parental involvement or lack of involvement, (2) family member as teacher, (3) spouse's support or nonsupport, (3) balance between school and family, (4) attention to child, (5) siblings' support or nonsupport, (6) support or nonsupport from friends, (7) understanding or lack of understanding about demands on teacher.

In examining the individual teacher's decision to stay in or to leave teaching, I considered the importance of the following factors. These became my subcategories, which were in some cases negative and some cases positive: (1) relations with students, (2) relations with parents, (3) relations with mentor and other teachers, (4) relations with administrators, (5) assessment (teacher assessment or student assessment), (6) salary and benefits, (9) paperwork, (10) materials and equipment.

Through the use of a variety of methods of data collection – taking notes from observations, keeping a journal, holding structured and unstructured interviews, and collecting written documents – I developed the triangulation which involved inductive analysis of domains, categories, themes, and patterns that emerged from the data. The ability to cross-check through triangulation to support the final findings was crucial in completing qualitative analysis.

Interpretation was based on themes related to individual cases and to the total set of cases. Some themes overlapped across individuals. By examining closely the similarities and differences across the cases, I reached some conclusions. It was extremely important to address each participant case-by-case, but still to expect some

intertwining of the cases so as to understand how each case fitted in the final results of the study.

Matters of Credibility and Ethics

My years of experience as an elementary education teacher helped define my role as a participant-observer in my study. With 15 years teaching experience, I have served in a variety of roles: third-grade teacher, student teacher supervisor, college coordinator, and first-year teacher mentor. I have also been trained to assess first-year teachers and have presented seminars to student teachers in their last semester of college before getting their first teaching jobs. First-hand knowledge of the problems teachers deal with daily has helped me in the process of observing the first-year teachers, and I was careful to search for important data when observing classroom activities and different types of meetings. I was not part of the class, but given the length of this study, I did become a familiar person in the room. The first-year teachers asked me questions during our interview time, and I shared notes with them concerning their part in the study. I was not their mentor, but I did let them read my notes and make decisions according to what they read. I did not critique their teaching jobs, but I was available if I were asked about recent research in areas of concern.

Individual rights to privacy and confidentiality were extremely important in this study. Yin (1994) has emphasized these aspects of case studies. As noted above, I gave consent forms to each participant in the study, informing them of the procedures of the study and possible benefits and risks. (See Appendix.) I used pseudonyms for individuals and for schools to protect the privacy of the first-year teachers and other participants. Since I was employed by this school district, I was well known in the parish and had

several friends who worked in the schools where I conducted my study. I realize the importance of confidentiality, and I honored the promises that I made to the participants in this study. I was concerned with the “political forces” within the district and schools where I was working, but I was prepared to handle any problems that did arise, such as questions directed to me about the first-year teachers’ abilities to teach and how they “handled” their classes.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS: THE NEW TEACHERS' EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCES

I began my in-depth investigation with four first-year teachers, beginning late August, 2000, and completed the study in early June, 2001. With the use of interviews, observations, and artifacts collection, I had a rich source of data for this study. To analyze the data, I used three methods of qualitative analysis: constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984), domain and componential analysis (Spradley, 1980), and pattern matching (Yin, 1994). As I progressed through the study, I kept in mind findings of prior studies with first-year teachers, which had shown the importance of social relations, and also focused on the social relationships of the four first-year teachers throughout the school year. I was able to form themes based on the domain and componential analysis method of study that were basic to each of the four new teachers.

I kept the initial research questions in mind:

1. What are the expectations and perceptions of the four beginning teachers participating in the study? How do their perceptions change over the course of the year?
2. How do these beginning teachers relate to their students? How do they “manage” their classrooms?
3. How do they relate to other teachers in their schools?
4. What kinds of relations do they have with the administrators?
5. What goes into their decisions to stay in or leave the teaching profession?

I found some parallels with other studies, such as expectations of the first-year teachers with respect to their administrators and mentors, concern for their students’

social as well as academic well-being, the necessity of all four first-year teachers' relationships to other teachers for survival of their first year. I also learned much about the new teachers' process of deciding whether or not they were going to stay teaching. Finally, I found new emerging themes during the year: (1) the importance of family to the beginning teachers and (2) the importance on the first-year teachers' assessment and student assessment.

In reporting my case studies, I use the following as my major sections: Relationships with Students and Their Parents, Professional Relationships, and Personal and Family Relationships. Professional Relationships include three subsections: Relationships with Administrators, Relationships with Mentors, and Relationships with Other Teachers. The Personal and Family Relationship subsections vary according to individual, including as many as four but as few as two and covering such matters as Relationship with Parents, Relationship with her Husband, and Relationships with Other Family Members and Friends.

The teachers were Mary Boudreaux and Jane Gautreaux (third-grade) from Bayou Elementary School, Beth Anderson (first-grade) from In-Town Elementary School, and Susan Guidry (seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade special education) from East Junior High School. The names I used here for the individuals and for the schools are all pseudonyms. Each case begins with a brief description of the teacher and her school and classroom.

Case Study: Mary Boudreaux

Mary Boudreaux's first year was at Bayou Elementary School, where she taught a third-grade class. A single 22-year-old woman, she was born and reared in the suburbs of

Houma, Louisiana, about ten miles from the school. Her family is of Cajun descent with a long history in the bayou country of southern Louisiana. Her first year was a demanding one—planning and conducting lessons for her students, preparing them for the Iowa Test, and completing the assessment process for her own certification. Along with her teaching, she continued her studies, pursuing a master’s degree in counseling at Nicholls State University, where she had received her bachelor’s degree in education. She wanted to be a competent, effective teacher, respected by her students and needing little help from the administration. Sometimes getting through the first year was difficult, but Mary decided to remain in teaching. She would be teaching at the same school the next year.

School and Classroom Setting

Mary taught at Bayou Elementary School, located across from LeCompte Bayou, approximately 10 miles from the city limits of Houma. The school, which serves only about 180 students each year, first opened its doors in September, 1913. The old white frame building (and its addition) holds a principal’s office, a secretary’s office, ten classrooms, the teachers’ lounge, and the auditorium. In addition, on the school grounds at that time were five portable classrooms.

Behind the main building, her classroom was located in one of the portable buildings, and it had chairs and tables instead of desks for the students. There were four sets of tables and chairs – four students at each table – Mary’s desk, and another table set to the back of the classroom. In the back of the classroom, she had two working computers and bookshelves. She also had a filing cabinet, bookcases, and bookshelves on the side of the room where her desk was located. To the front of the classroom, next

to the only entrance and exit, was a dry-erase board. On the side of the room next to the door was a wall filled with bulletin boards which were covered with brightly colored poster paper of blue, green, yellow, and white. Her desk was on the same side of the room, where she sat in the morning to take roll. During the school day, unless she was monitoring the class or working with a reading group to the back of the classroom while sitting at a table, she would sit at an adult-sized student desk to grade papers or check students' work. Next to the adult desk was a stereo system that she used to play soft music when the students were completing quiet seat work, such as art, worksheets, and social studies projects.

Relationships with Students and Their Parents

Relationships with students. Mary had 16 students in her classroom, including 14 students identified as "regular" education students, one identified as a gifted student, and one student identified as having special needs. She had three children from families known to be Houmas Indians in her classroom and the rest of the students were Caucasian. Many of the Houmas Indians lived in the nearby community of Dulac, Louisiana, but some moved into the community where the school was located, even though there was not as much trawling or shrimping done in the community as there was in Dulac, where the majority of the American Indian population came from in southern Louisiana. At least four of the students lived in walking distance from the school and the buses traveled only about two or three miles to get the children from their homes and bring them to school. At Bayou Elementary about 60 percent of the students are from the community where the school is located, and the other 40 percent have moved into the community over the past five to ten years. According to the interview with the principal

and a local minister, many new families moved into the area during the last few years because homes were cheaper to buy down the bayou. This area flooded quite easily when hurricanes came through and people who could afford to move to higher ground in the suburbs of Houma sold their homes for a cheap price and moved away. The new families that moved into the neighborhood tended to be young with low incomes. At one time, according to the principal, many families in the area lived off the land: fishing, hunting, and trapping, but much of that “old way” of living had passed. Back then, the wives stayed home and reared the children, but now many of the women work in Houma or do baby-sitting and housecleaning for other working mothers. Mary had three students in her classroom whose mothers were school teachers in nearby schools. Most of the fathers worked offshore: seven days on the job and seven days at home. About seven to ten of the women with children in the school did not work outside of the home, and volunteered at the school.

The relationship that Mary had with her students might have been labeled as “a professional relationship.” She said, “I am not here to be their friend. I am here to be their teacher” (Interview 1: p. 11). She worked diligently with her students, monitoring their progress and asking them questions to be sure they were learning the material. She expected them to follow directions, and to engage actively with their school work, and to be enthusiastic when they walked into the classroom.

Mary wanted her students to be enthusiastic about learning. She said that she wanted them to be eager when they walked into the classroom and to participate in her lessons and activities that she had planned in reading, English, math, spelling, social living, and science. She felt that, if she spent time preparing her lessons to make them

interesting, the students would come into the classroom ready to learn. Because of the long hours she spent preparing lessons and activities, she seemed disappointed whenever they showed indifference for her work by acting and looking bored and uninterested.

As was explained by Applegate et al. (1977), the expectations and perceptions of beginning teachers can affect what has become known as the core of “classroom management.” Mary tried different reward systems to encourage her students’ involvement. She rewarded them with stickers and prizes from the box she called the treasure chest, where she kept small gifts. As the year progressed, Mary constantly reinforced her classroom management procedures. One approach she began using was counting to three when she wanted the students to become quiet. When the students realized that she was counting, they sometimes would stop talking and listen to what she had to say. If they did not stop talking when she counted to three, she lowered their conduct grades. She also reminded the students about raising their hands and not talking out of turn, and she enforced her seating procedures.

Mary’s expectations of her students, academically as well as socially, were uppermost in her mind, as was the case for some first-year teachers in Applegate et al.’s study. The other problem that she spoke about was the lack of respect that she received, at times, from some of her students. She, like many other first-year teachers, was affected by “reality shock” that Marso and Pigge (1987) found in their study of 211 beginning teachers. She expected respect, but the “reality” was that the students sometimes seemed disrespectful. She explained that at the beginning of the year, the students were wonderful but toward the end of the school year they were starting to relax a little. There were times when she expressed her concern for the lack of respect for all

teachers, not just beginning teachers by their students, and she was not sure how to handle her feelings on the subject.

Mary appeared to go about her classroom activities in an organized fashion. She had particular places for the students to sit when they were at their tables and when they were seated on the floor. When the year began, she had name tags taped to the table tops. The students found their names and sat at their assigned seats. She also marked the floor with numbers on tape and when she told the students to come and sit on the floor, they knew where they had to sit.

Mary's days seemed nonstop with her students. In the early morning board work, which started the day, the children copied mathematics problems and sentences from the board and began doing their lessons. Mary took roll within a few minutes and quickly began the morning lesson in reading. As the day passed, even when the students would line up, she did not stop her lessons but continued to focus on the material they were studying. The only time she was not questioning or explaining topics was when she ate lunch. She did sit with her students in the lunchroom, as was school policy, but her table was set next to the table assigned to Jane, the other new teacher, who was her close friend, and they talked to each other during lunch. Most of their conversations were about schoolwork, but every now and then, their conversations changed to personal topics, such as Jane's wedding that would occur in November. After lunch Mary took her students back to class to begin a new lesson. Since there was only one recess at this school, in the afternoon, she never had time away from the students except when the students had physical education twice a week or library once a week. Many days, I saw her rushing around the classroom preparing homework folders or last minute papers that

needed to go home before the bell rang for the students to go home at 3:00 p.m. Even until that last bell, she continued to question students and review what they had learned that day.

There were two students who stood out in my observations. The first student was a young boy who was a transfer student from another school in the parish. This student came to her just two weeks before the Iowa Test was to be given. She was concerned, knowing how important the Iowa Test scores would be, that she would be held responsible for the test scores of the student. She had not taught the student all year, and she was afraid that he might “bring down” her scores (Interview 11: p. 10). The anxiety grew as she tested his basic knowledge of reading and math and found out that he was not a high-achieving student. She had actually said, “It is not the kid’s fault, but he’s dropping in on my class right before the Iowa Test. It’s not his fault that he’s not a strong student, but he’s not a strong student, and that’s going to bring my class down” (Interview 11: p. 10). I was learning how much pressure this new teacher felt regarding the performance of her students on the high-stakes tests – the Iowa Test.

The second student who seemed to cause Mary concern was a student in special education who had been classified as developmentally disabled. As the nation has moved to include all students, whether regular education or special education into classrooms together, so has the state of Louisiana. It was mandated by Bulletin 1706: Regulations for the Implementation of the Children with Exceptionalities Act that all students should have an equal education in as normal a classroom setting as is possible. Under most circumstances, that meant that special-needs students should not be put in separate classrooms, but they should instead be included in the regular classes. There would be

help in the classrooms from special education teachers and aides. However, in her case (and many classrooms like hers) the students were sent to a self-contained special education classroom for the basic subjects of reading, math, and English, but it was her job to teach social studies, art, and music without any help. Because of this, the student from special education was in her classroom for the afternoon subjects of social living, art, and music. He came into the classroom about 12:30 p.m. and stayed with the class until the bell rang for the children to go home at 3:00 p.m. Like Kerrie in the study by Bullough (1989), Mary felt unprepared to teach special education. Kerrie in Bullough's study had worried about the student who had special needs in her classroom and felt that she "didn't know what to do." At least three times during the study, Mary expressed the same concerns. She felt she did not know enough about special education to work effectively with the special-needs child, and she did not know how to accommodate her instruction: "Honestly, like I am trying to do the best I can with him, but he can't do the work the other kids are doing" (Interview 3: p. 15).

She was not prepared to teach special education, and she felt unqualified to teach this student. When he entered the room, she stopped the lesson with the other students to find something for him to do, which might be completing a mathematics worksheet, writing his spelling words, or reading a book. Sometimes she sent him to the library corner to look at books or gave art work to complete. The other students did not seem to "include" this student. They reported his misbehavior to the teacher, and he tried to distract them from their assigned work. Mary talked to him frequently about rules and procedures in the classroom.

For the most part, Mary did not have the problems with discipline that Brock and Grady (1998) pointed to as the “number-one-ranked problem” for beginning teachers (p. 180). Even though she looked tired and sometimes seemed frustrated as the year was coming to an end, she was able to maintain leadership of her class with the use of consistent strategies for classroom “management.” She did seem ready for a break, and she was short-tempered at times. This occurred closer to holiday breaks and school functions, such as the Christmas party, the Bazaar, the Mardi Gras parade, and the Easter party. Mary also seemed on edge nearer to the time of the Iowa Test and her own assessment for her certification. As I observed and compared the conduct grades taken, it was noticeable that their conduct grades became lower during those critical times of the year. She lowered at least four or five students’ conduct grades each day. Many of the students, at different times, talked when talking was not allowed and did not follow the rules or procedures of the classroom.

Relationships with students’ parents. Out of the two first-year teachers in this school, Mary had students whose parents seemed to be more interested in their children’s progress. Several of the mothers were teachers in other schools in the parish, and they seemed at times to be so interested that they intimidated her. One of the mothers, who was a science teacher at another school, sent her a note saying that she wanted to keep a math test that she had given to her students to show to one of her teacher friends who taught math at another school. She wondered:

So I am thinking, does she like [the test] and wants to show it to her friend? Now I am worried because she wants me to call her this afternoon because she has some ideas from a book or something that she wants to share with me. Okay, is she finding mistakes and stuff that ... So I don’t know. That is a little intimidating. (Interview 3: p. 17)

Sometimes she felt that the parents were looking over her shoulder and checking every part of tests and papers that were sent home. She seemed to be thinking that they were looking for her to make a mistake.

Several parents of her students worked at the school daily. When the year began, there was one parent who made photocopies of worksheets for the students as a way of helping Mary – about two or three days a week. During January, 2001, I noticed that the parent was not coming as often, and I asked her if she knew why. She said that it was probably because many times the parent had come and there was nothing for her to copy because she herself had not had the time to put packets of work together. She said in one interview that she wanted to be more organized the next year with her papers that need to be copied. She felt that she lost a “good” helper because she did not have the time to get the materials together.

Another parent was a regular at school. She was an officer of the Parent Teacher Club, and she was at school almost every day from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Mary said that every now and then this parent would get on the intercom in the secretary’s office and buzz a message to her child about whether to stay after school or get on the bus. This sort of communication was not unusual at the school; in fact, it seemed almost a custom at this school for as long as other veteran teachers and I (since I taught at the same school some 16 years earlier) could remember. Parents at this school seemed to feel that the school was their “home away from home.” One of the parents whom I interviewed said that the school was part of the community. Many mothers – those who did not work outside of the home – spent many long hours working at the school, and most of the programs at the school were planned by the PTC, whose members were seen working in

the copy room, talking, and visiting in the office. They planned student parties, teachers' luncheons, the Bazaar, the Mardi Gras parade, and the Field Day events at the end of the school year. One day when I was doing my observations, I overheard the parent volunteers talking about their volunteer work, which they took quite seriously – copying things for the teachers, getting whatever supplies they needed for the next activity, and then getting home at a decent hour to cook supper for their families. They seemed to arrange their personal lives around their volunteer work at the school. When the secretary took a break in the afternoon, parents took turns watching the phones, and thus had access to the intercom and could call the children's classrooms in the afternoons.

Once in a while, parents arrived at Mary's door uninvited just to talk to her or to give their child a message. Those interruptions concerned her somewhat, but she thought the problem might be due to the fact that she was in a portable building next to the bus drive, and parents, instead of checking into the office first, would just go straight to her classroom without permission or an appointment to do so. She talked to other teachers about the interruptions, but they said that it was a waste of time to complain about parents coming to her classroom without appointments, since they have been doing that for years, ignoring the sign on the front door about checking in with the office. She wondered if she could have avoided the problem by taking a firm hand to the situation. She said, "I think that maybe I should have said something the first time it happened, and put a stop to it then" (Interview 3: p. 8). There was not an unspoken "open door" policy for the parents, but since I can remember and after observing the comings and goings of the parents at the school, no one, neither the principal nor anyone else, really tried to stop the parents; so they continued walking around the school as if they belonged there.

Most of the time, if Mary needed to talk to a parent, she called the parent after school or during an off hour. It seemed to me that she was trying to work with the parents to keep them happy. She expected them to support the school rules and the rules that she set for her students, such as students doing their homework, coming with needed supplies, and following her classroom rules and procedures. If the students did not follow the rules, she sent parents a note, had a conference with them, or talked to them on the phone about the problem.

There were four major occasions when parents were formally invited to visit the school: Open House, Conference Day, Lunch Week, and Field Day. Open House was held during the first few weeks of September. It was held at night when most parents could attend because they did not work then and the turnout should be higher than if it were done during the day. For Mary the turnout was about average for the school. She had about 10 parents come to the meeting. Each sat at his or her child's table and listened to her explain in 15 to 20 minutes her classroom rules and procedures. I watched the parents listen intently and, after the presentation, walk around the classroom, look over their child's work that was on display, and ask her basic questions about the classroom structure. After about 30 minutes the parents were invited to go to the cafeteria, where refreshments were provided.

The second important day for parent attendance was Conference Day, the day after the second report card went home, 18 weeks into the school year. The parents were sent an invitation with a specific time to come to the school without their child. I was not allowed to sit in on the conferences, but Mary explained the procedures to me. The parents had only about 15 minutes to talk about their child's report card and progress so

far in the year. As the teacher, she had her grade book and any other important papers available to look over with the parents: conduct grades, graded papers, student handbook, and Iowa Test scores from the previous year. Again, she had an average turnout – about 10 or 11 parents who came to their scheduled meeting. The few parents who could not attend sent her notes and asked for telephone conferences. Smaller numbers – about three parents – did not come or contact her about a conference.

The third special event was Lunch Week. Every year, a week was set aside for parents to come and eat lunch with their children. During the year of my study, the parents were invited to come to the school for breakfast or lunch any day of one particular week in early spring. Mary, like the other teachers, sent letters home inviting the parents to attend. She had a good turnout – about eight or nine parents who came to school to eat lunch with their child that week. There was not any special lunch served, just the normal, southern Louisiana everyday meals – white beans and rice, jambalaya, shrimp stew, cornbread, lasagna. The parents waited in the hallway next to the cafeteria entrance and filed in line with their children as they walked into the cafeteria. The children smiled as they saw their parents or grandparents. The students quickly told their teachers that their “Mama,” “Daddy,” “Maw Maw,” or “Paw Paw” was here to eat with them. Some parents helped their children carry their plates, forks, napkins, and milk to the tables, and the parents sat next to their children and talked about home or school. The children sat proud and grinned while their parents sat with them. The teachers and students sat in their usual places in the cafeteria with the teachers sitting at the head of their assigned tables. When the teachers finished eating lunch, they walked over to where parents were sitting and said hello to them and said something nice about the student,

such as “She is the sweetest thing,” or “He is such a hard worker.” The teachers also thanked the parents for their participation in Lunch Week.

Finally, the last special event that the parents were invited to attend was Field Day which was usually held in late April. The parents picnicked with their children in the yard – the field area located behind the school buildings. The parents laid out beach towels and blankets under the oak trees and brought a variety of foods to eat: fried chicken, hamburgers, lunch meat sandwiches, chips, and cold drinks. After everyone ate, the parents watched the activities that the students participated in, such as tug-of-war, bean bag toss, and volleyball that were monitored by the teachers and parent volunteers.

There were other events that parents were not encouraged to attend, but many times they came whether they were invited or not: Fall Bazaar, the Christmas party, and the Mardi Gras parade. Fall Bazaar, sponsored by the PTC, which was held the Friday before the Thanksgiving Break, featured games and activities for the students. It began around noon and continued until about 2:30 in the afternoon. The parents who were asked or who volunteered worked in the individual booths: balloon toss, bean bag toss, and many other games for the students to play. Many parents who were not volunteers came to the event without an invitation. Another special day that parents were not invited to attend was the Christmas party, which was held the last day before the Christmas break. In other classes, parents came to the parties and offered to help serve cake and drinks, but Mary did not encourage this type of participation by the parents. However, all during the day, parents dropped by to give gifts or treats to their children for their party. The party did not begin until the last hour of the day – around two o’clock – but she complained that the students were so distracted that they could not do any kind of school

work. By the early afternoon, all she could do was let her students work on Christmas art and play games until it was time for the party, where they exchanged gifts and shared their treats. Many of the students gave her nice gifts: candy, a gift certificate, and many other gifts.

The last event that the parents were not encouraged to attend, except for the kindergarten students' parents, was the Mardi Gras parade, which was held in February that year. The kindergarten students participated in the parade. Their teachers chose a king and queen from the many kindergarten students, and the PTC made sure that all of the students had beads and candy to throw to the lines of students and parents who watched the parade. The parade took place in the backyard of the school grounds, and the kindergarten teachers led the wagons of students around in a large circle through the yard. It seemed that some of the parents treated the parade as if it were a real parade, pushing each other and some of the children aside to catch beads that were thrown by the kindergarten students. Even though many of the teachers did not think the parents should attend these events that were for the children, parental involvement had been going on for years, and the parents felt that they had the right to attend them. At the beginning of the school year, parents had been sent letters telling them what to attend, but many of them came to other events too.

For the parents living in this community, Mardi Gras season was extremely important, and it was also important to their children. This was one of only two communities in the area, except for the city of Houma, that held parades. There was a children's parade – which was the only children's parade in the parish – which was held the Sunday before Mardi Gras and an adult parade, which was held on Mardi Gras Day.

Many of these people would not go into Houma for the parades, but celebrated Mardi Gras in their own community. In addition, many of the students from Mary's class participated in the children's parade, and the school had a booth to sell drinks and food to the people at the parade. Neither Mary nor Jane, the other new teacher, attended the parades the year of the study since both had other commitments on the parade days.

Professional Relationships

Relationships with other teachers. Mary, as a child, had been a student at the school where she was teaching, and many of the other teachers at the school knew her personally. Actually, several of the teachers there had taught her, and she explained the situation to me:

I already knew just about everybody because I came to school here when I was in elementary school. My mom has been teaching here for 25 or 26 years, so I knew all the teachers. My co-worker [the other new first-year teacher in the school] and I graduated together. We went to college together, so I know just about everybody. (Interview 1: p. 13)

She was friendly to all the teachers in the school, but her self-confidence and desire to "learn the ropes on her own" caused her to stay much to herself. She did not seem to search out the support of other teachers shown to be so important in studies by Punch and Tuetteman (1996) and by Marlow et al. (1997). When I questioned her about how little time she spent in the lounge talking to other teachers, she said that she did not have time to visit with anyone. As I observed, she spent her "off" time copying papers, grading papers, and just tending to her personal needs, like going to the restroom and getting a drink of water. She wanted to be accepted by all the teachers, but there was never much time for socializing. Even though acceptance was important, Mary also wanted to teach in her own style. I did not see her ask teachers, outside of her mentor

and her mother, for advice on teaching strategies. She showed confidence even when she was being assessed. When I questioned her about the assessment, she told me that she was not nervous, even though she did show some tension a few days before it was conducted. But, overall, she was very confident going into her assessment, and she felt that, if she was not doing a “good” job the way she was teaching, then maybe she should not be teaching.

As I observed, she did, indeed, have her own teaching style, and did not like being compared to other teachers, especially to her mother. She was proud to be the daughter of a teacher, but she wanted to make her own way. She told me that some teachers and parents compared the two of them, but she said she did not think that they taught in the same style. For instance, she had her students sit at tables of four. She called on the students for quick answers and rarely used learning centers or reading groups. Her mother had the students sit at one large table, and she worked with small groups during reading time. However, there were similarities; they both seemed to be firm in their discipline. They did not allow the students to move around the room or talk without permission. There was always a reason for movement in the room or a special place to go. Students were taught to raise their hands to ask questions by both teachers. Even though there were similarities, after talking to Mary, I knew that she thought that it was important to “make her own mark” with the parents.

Many of the parents thought that Mary might teach like her mother. If a parent had problems with her mother when she taught their children two years before, then they automatically thought that they would have problems with her. Since her mother taught many of her students two years before, the parents thought that she should have similar

approaches to teaching. For instance, many parents thought that she should write down assignments she gave the students as her mother did, but she thought that third-graders should be able to copy the assignments from the board on their own. There were times when the comparisons to her mother made it difficult for her, and so she quickly wanted to set it straight that she was not her mother.

Mary spent much of her time with the other new teacher, Jane, and they spoke on the phone two or three times a week. At one point at the end of the year, she mentioned to me that she wished that she had grown closer to more of the other teachers. She did not build strong relationships with the other teachers at the school. Since Jane was leaving at the end of the year for a new school, Mary felt that she did not have any friends at the school besides those teachers whom she had known as a child and that she did not have time to make friends with the other teachers. The other teachers got together at least once a month to play card games, but neither Mary nor Jane went to the events. The two new teachers felt out of place – too young and inexperienced to mingle with the other teachers after hours. Even so, most of the teachers seemed to like Mary. When asked, other teachers told me that they knew that she would be a “good” teacher. If she was anything like her mom, she would do a fine job.

In one of her interviews, she told me that it was a known fact that she was given the “smarter” third-grade class in the school (Interview 5: p. 10), and Jane, the other first-year teacher in the school, confirmed that point to me. Mary was given the “smarter” students because of who she was – her mother’s daughter. The parents thought that she would be a “good” teacher just like her mother. Jane explained that many parents of higher-performing students had requested Mary:

None of them knew who I was, so they weren't going to put their kids in a class where they didn't know what kind of teacher was coming in. Can you imagine? It is kind of scary. I mean like the unknown is coming. Like you can get a really bad or a really good [teacher]. (Interview 12: p. 6)

Most of Mary's students were honor roll students, and there was one gifted and talented student in her classroom. She did have one special needs student, who was developmentally disabled, in her classroom; but, overall in achievement, her students were considered the higher-performing class. That concerned her sometimes, because she realized that much was expected from her by the parents, the principal, and other teachers to achieve higher scores, at least higher than the other third-grade teachers, on the Iowa Test. She worried that, since she was given the "better" students, the other teachers would think that her class had to have higher scores on the Iowa Test and on their overall averages. She wondered what these people would think if her students did not do well on the Iowa Test. During my interviews with other teachers, the principal, and during casual talk, I never heard any of them say that Mary was expected to accomplish more with her group of students than the students from the other two third-grade classes.

Other teachers did say that Mary and the other third-grade teachers had much pressure on them to have all of their students do well on the Iowa Test coming up that spring. That pressure was obvious throughout observations and at the workshops on student assessment. She ran around the school copying new material, searching for other resource materials, drilling her students on math facts and in other subject areas. I never saw her where she was not covering new or old material with her students or doing an activity. At times, she would actually tell her students that they needed to learn certain information for the Iowa Test. Also, they had to learn how to write answers in complete

sentences for when they would take the LEAP test the following year. This was an unending subject for her, since the third- and the fourth-grade teachers were under much pressure to bring up the scores for the Iowa and LEAP tests that year. Great importance was put on how well each school in the parish did on the two tests.

Beginning in 2001, all schools in the state of Louisiana fell under a new accountability system. Based on the results of the LEAP tests, Iowa Tests, and student attendance, a “School Performance Score” was developed for every school in the state. Each school had to meet its “Performance Growth Score” with an improvement of at least five points within a two-year cycle and a final score of no less than 100 points within ten years and a growth of 150 points within twenty years in order to stay out of corrective action. If any school failed to attain the growth target, they were placed in “Level I Corrective Action.” Schools placed under corrective action were to be served by the District Assistance Teams (DAT). According to the research, the DAT team was a development of P.L. 103-382 – Title I: Improving America’s Schools Act of 1965. The four-member DAT teams consisted of retired educators, university personnel, and Tech-Prep coordinators. Their job was to assist and support schools in Corrective Actions. The teachers at Bayou Elementary School had heard rumors of what a DAT team might do if it had to come into their school, and they did not want that to happen. They were under the impression that specially selected teachers by the Central Office formed DAT teams, and they would come into their classrooms and the school and basically tell them what they were doing wrong and what to do. On the contrary, the DAT team’s job was to collect data through questionnaires, focus groups, interviews (Contextual Analysis), and observations of each teacher’s classroom, and conduct an analysis. From this

information, the DAT team would find three strengths and three weaknesses of the school. From the strengths and weaknesses the DAT team would make recommendations and suggestions to the principal and staff regarding different ways to reach their performance goal. If – and only if – a school did not reach its goal in the required time, was there a possibility that the school, after working through three levels of corrective action, could have its doors closed permanently.

When attending workshops and meetings and also while sitting in the lounge, I heard much concern about the performance of the students and the teachers. Teachers told each other that it was the third- and fourth-grade teachers' responsibility to bring up the scores that year because the scores the year before were so poor; thus, because of this, there was much pressure on the two first-year teachers to get the students to the level they needed to be in order to do well on the Iowa Test.

Relationship with mentor. In Terrebonne Parish, all beginning teachers were assigned a mentor to guide them through their first year of teaching. The explanation of how mentors are chosen in Terrebonne Parish relates to the study by Little (1990), who found various approaches to identification of the person who fills this “role:” formal applications, peer and supervisor recommendations, interviews, observations and portfolios. In Terrebonne Parish, the mentor must be a certified teacher who has gone through a special training program. For Mary, the choosing of a mentor presented a dilemma. The only certified mentor at her school was her mother, and because of the state policy, her mother could not be her mentor. “The principal asked someone else to be my mentor, but she had kids, and she couldn't do the training. Then she asked someone else, and she couldn't be my mentor. Finally, she got someone who was willing

to get trained. She finally found a mentor for me” (Interview 3: p. 13). The principal asked other teachers at the school to get the training necessary to become a mentor, but most refused. There were several reasons that the different teachers refused. As Mary stated, some teachers had children, and could not devote a week to the training without interfering with their own family life. Others felt that the stress of the training and the low pay that resulted– \$175.00 for each new teacher mentored – was not worth the effort. In addition, most veteran teachers felt that they could not provide the time needed during the year to help the beginning teacher, and they were also worried that mentoring would take away from their own students and their families.

To become certified to be a mentor or assessor in Terrebonne Parish, a veteran teacher, who was recruited by their principal or volunteered, had to go through an extensive one-week training. Principals and vice principals had to go through the same training also. As a certified mentor and assessor, I had first-hand knowledge of the training process. The teachers who wanted to become mentors were trained to be assessors as well as mentors, and this was not something that many people wanted to experience. For about seven hours each day for one week, the teachers being trained had to listen to lectures and watch films on observation skills. They were required to learn how to take “script” notes quickly – writing down as much as possible of what was said by the new teacher being assessed as well as by the students in the classroom. After sitting through several video-taped observations, taking notes, and completing at least four written tests, the trainees learned how to complete the pre-observation interview forms, the observation assessment forms, the post observation forms, and the professional development forms. The teachers and principals with whom I spoke about their training

were extremely upset by the process. They felt that it was a long and tedious process, and the salary for the position was not worth the stress of being trained. When the teachers found out how stressful the training was, the principal had a difficult time getting anyone to accept the position.

The mentoring program was part of the Louisiana Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program which began in 1994. All beginning teachers and new teachers from out-of-state or from private schools, in or out-of-state, who want to teach in the public school system in the state of Louisiana, have to pass assessments in order to become certified to teach in the public school system. This program was in addition to passing the National Teacher Examination, now known as the PRAXIS, completion of required college/university coursework, and earning of college degrees. The assessment process, at the time of the study, took an entire year, two semesters, in which to complete. During the first semester, considered the assistance semester, a mentor was assigned to the new teacher, and that mentor assisted the new teacher throughout the entire assistance and assessment year. During the second semester, the assessment semester, the new teacher was subjected to a formal assessment by the principal or an assigned designee by the principal and a parish-assigned outside assessor. At the end of the assistance and assessment year, if the new teacher passed the formal assessment, he or she was then considered to be a certified teacher. As a trained mentor and assessor, I was able to discuss the assessment process with the beginning teachers whom I studied, and as I later explain in Beth's case, I was actually an active participant in one teacher's formal assessment.

Because of the importance of the mentor's position in a new teacher's assessment, Mary had concerns about the principal's difficulty in getting her a mentor. She did not want to cause so much trouble, but she had no choice. She had to go through the assessment process for certification, and she had to have a certified mentor working with her that year. Mary said,

They had problems finding one, because it is just extra work for that person, and they had to miss a week of school. As far as people being mad, I know that one of them was supposed to be my mentor. She kept calling asking, "You're sure you're not mad?" I felt like it was out of my [hands]. I wasn't trying to pick [someone]. I didn't care who my mentor was going to be as long as I had one. (Interview 3: p. 13)

She expressed her frustration at having to ask people to be her mentor. This was not something that she wanted to do. She felt that it was not her fault that there were only two trained mentors at her school and that one was not even working at the school that year because she was on sabbatical. So the shortage of mentors did bother her a great deal. She thought that the Central Office of the parish school district or the State Department of Education should have had more trained people. "I think that not a whole lot of people want to be trained. Maybe if they would pay a little more, people would want to be trained" (Interview 3: p. 14).

The person who did agree to become Mary's mentor was someone with whom she seemed to work well – a second-grade teacher of 28 years who had been teaching at the same school for most of her career. Since their lesson plan times were not the same, the two met on an unscheduled basis at the end of day when there was time to talk. One problem for Mary and her mentor was the fact that, since they did not teach the same grade, many times her mentor did not know how to advise her about lessons and certain subject areas.

Mary would talk with her mentor almost daily, and so would Jane, the other first-year teacher in the study at Bayou Elementary School. They congregated mostly in Mary's mother's classroom and discussed the day's events. As Gratch (1998) explained in her study of Gina, a first-year teacher, it is extremely important that beginning teachers have a strong support system with their mentors. For Mary, this support system seemed necessary, since she had some of the same concerns as Gina: "operational concerns, instructional concerns, and social/personal concerns (p. 222)."

I observed the new teachers at least two times each week in their classrooms, and almost every time when I observed in the afternoon, I would see Mary, at the end of the day, visiting with her mentor and mother, who was mentor to Mary's friend, Jane. Since Mary's mentor taught in the classroom next door to her mother's classroom, she would talk with her mentor when she went to visit her mother at the end of the school day. Mary and Jane would sit and discuss the day's activities with both of the mentors. There were times when I sat in on the visits and listened to their conversations. The new teachers talked to their mentors about problems with classroom discipline and "on-task" and "off-task" behavior. They discussed reading lessons, English lessons, and social living lessons. The new teachers also wanted to learn how to integrate subjects, such as reading, spelling, English, social studies, and science. Topics of discussion included teaching with a balanced literacy approach with language arts, and working with reading groups. The mentors shared ideas, activities, visuals, and resources – whatever they had that might help the new teachers.

During my interview with her, Mary's mentor discussed how she felt about being in the role of mentor for the new teacher. It seemed to me that her approach was similar

to the mentors in Dolley's (1998) study of mentors and their protégés who advised but kept "some distance," allowing the protégés to find their own style. Mary's mentor was glad to be able to help, but she did not want to overstep her bounds, especially with a beginning teacher like Mary who seemed to have her own ideas of how she wanted to teach. The mentor said that the mentor training was a difficult process, but it was worth it to be able to help Mary. She also found out that, once she retires, in another two or three years, if she maintains her certification as a mentor, she can become an outside assessor of beginning teachers at various schools in the state. The mentor also thought that, since she was one of only a few qualified to be a mentor and was in the school without the responsibility of a family, she was in a position to help the principal and Mary by accepting the job.

For Mary, her assessment for certification was a concern. She felt that she could pass her assessment, but she thought that being observed once or twice by her principal and an outside person could not really show if she was a "good teacher." Her mentor was helpful during her assessment – completing a practice assessment in the fall, giving her pointers on her weaknesses, and encouraging her on her strengths. She was confident going into her final assessment, but her mentor kept a close eye on her in case she had any questions or concerns. When the final assessment took place during the spring of 2001, Mary was relieved, since she passed with a perfect score. Her principal and the outside assessor gave pointers as to how she might improve her skills in the future, but overall she did a great job.

Relationship with administrator. Because of the small size of the school, Bayou Elementary School had only one administrator, a principal. Mary had what she deemed a

professional relationship with her principal, Mrs. Scott. She asked her for input on school related needs, such as supplies, and also on academic questions and classroom management issues. If she wanted anything for her classroom, she said, “I just went to Mrs. Scott and asked. Yes, her door is always open” (Interview 2: p. 5). She felt that she needed to be familiar with the rules, procedures, and policies of the school, and by doing so she would not need to bother the principal with unnecessary questions. She did not see the importance of having a personal relationship with her principal outside of the school even though they had a friendly relationship in the school setting. She wanted to work well with her principal and appreciated her principal’s help whenever she offered assistance:

I don’t really have a real personal relationship with my principal I guess in a way maybe it wouldn’t be really a good idea because if you have too personal of a relationship then if you get in an argument or something then maybe your relationship at school wouldn’t be, you know, as good as it was before. (Interview 2: p. 4)

She thought that the principal’s job was to run the school and help teachers with school-related issues, not personal problems. Since there were no specific guidelines to the access to the administrators for the new teachers, she decided that she would approach her principal in the same manner in which other teachers approached her. The principal used a school newsletter to keep the teachers abreast of the weekly on-goings of the school telling, for example, who was going to be out for workshops or school business or what particular report was due to her office or the Central Office. The newsletter also included teachers’ birthdays and other special occasions, such as weddings and baby showers for teachers. The principal wrote notes on the sign-in sheet, letting everyone know which teachers were absent for the day. The sign-in sheet was

also used to give information that came into the office on a daily basis, such as announcements for workshops or school board decisions made at the last meeting, which was held every second and third Tuesday of each month.

Mary was fortunate, she thought, because her principal had a laid-back approach to working with the teachers and did not bother teachers who seemed to know what they were doing. She knew the principal from prior experience student teaching the school the year before, and she felt that she could talk to her. Mary did expect her principal to support her in her discipline of students and support her when she had to send a student to the office. She also felt that the principal should intercede when she had problems with parents. However, she did not express the need for classroom visits, feedback, and constant affirmation that was connected with the 173 newly hired and novice teachers in Chester and Beaudin's (1996) study. She was satisfied with having her students to herself and only reached out for help when absolutely necessary.

The atmosphere at the school was informal and congenial throughout the school year, and I was included in every part of the school's program: Fall Bazaar, baby and wedding showers, Open House, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter lunches, Teacher Appreciation Week, Field Trips, and Field Day activities. My name was on the daily sign-in sheet, and I had a mailbox with my name on it. The principal encouraged me to stay for workshops and staff meetings. On one occasion, the principal planned a workshop for the teachers and decided to have a stress relief class because she felt that the teachers were becoming nervous about the Iowa Test and LEAP test. I was asked to attend, but was unable due to other observations scheduled that morning. She also cooked for the teachers when they had special lunches for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and

Easter. She got the PTC to assign parents to watch the students while we ate, and she monitored the classes during the luncheon. She did not come to eat until the teachers were finished with their meal because she felt that it was important that someone from the staff watch over the parent volunteers with the students.

Mary rarely had discipline problems, but, when she did, she tried to deal with discipline on her own and not involve the principal until she had used all other options available, such as talking to the students, keeping them in for recess, using the detention room, or calling parents. Seldom did I see her approach the principal about classroom management. She monitored student behavior by walking around the classroom, reminding students about the consequences of poor behavior, and following through with those consequences when it was necessary.

Each school in the parish had to develop a school-wide management program. At Mary's school each teacher had to provide a bulletin board that displayed conduct cards for each student in the classroom. The conduct cards were marked with colored circles which stood for letter grades: A was green. B was yellow. Red was a C, and black was a D. If a student misbehaved in a manner that the teacher thought was inappropriate (e.g., talking out of turn, getting out his or her seat without permission, disturbing others), the student had to move his or her card to the next color. If a child got a D (black dot) in conduct, the child was sent to detention. This procedure continued throughout the day. At the end of the school day, whatever conduct grade the child had was written in the grade book, and the process repeated itself the next day.

In her interviews, Mrs. Scott, the principal, had nothing but praise for Mary. She felt that the new teacher was a self-confident person who wanted to be independent, was

able to work more on her own, and was doing quite well in her role. She told me that Mary's self-confidence was one reason that she did not worry about her working in a portable building. Even though she was a beginning teacher, she should be able to manage alone if needed. In the portable building if there were any problems, or if she needed help all she had to do was buzz for help on the intercom, and someone would respond in a few minutes. She could not leave the students alone in the classroom if she became ill or needed something from the main building; so it was important that the principal thought that she, as a new teacher, could handle most situations that might arise. Since the principal, also felt that she did not have to be concerned about a teacher as efficient as Mary, she did not come to visit Mary's classroom as much as she did the other new teacher.

Personal and Family Relationships

Relationship with her parents. During most of this study, Mary lived with her parents, long-time residents of the area who lived only ten miles from where the school was located. Mary, who grew up in the country, had attended Bayou Elementary School as a child; and was thus comfortable with her surroundings at the school. Her family enjoyed camping and traveling. Her father worked in the oil field business, and her mother, as mentioned above, was a teacher at the school. Her fraternal grandmother, who lived next door to her parents' home, had also been a teacher, and she joined Mary's mother in helping her granddaughter prepare for her position as a teacher. The two women gave her suggestions and guidance during her college days and her student teaching and throughout her first year of teaching. As pointed out earlier, Mary's family

history of teachers seemed to have made a difference in her becoming a teacher (cf. Goddard & Foster, 2001).

Mary moved from her parents' home into her own apartment in March, 2001. Before, when she lived with her parents, she did not have to worry about cooking, cleaning, and taking care of anyone but herself and, since her mother was a teacher, the "busy-ness" of being a teacher was nothing new. She stayed up late hours working on lessons, grading papers, typing tests, and preparing hands-on activities and visuals. Most of the time, she did not have a problem with her parents, but one night in October her father woke up late – about 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. – to set the air conditioner and noticed that the light in her bedroom was still on and realized that she was still up working. He was upset with her and told her that it was not necessary for her to put so much time into her schoolwork. Even though his wife and his mother, a retired school teacher, had worked long hours preparing for their classes, he seemed frustrated with the fact that his daughter, like her mother, was following the same pattern of putting in late hours to prepare for school the next morning. She tried to tell him that he did not understand her situation and that she could not just leave her work at school as other people leave their paper work at their offices. If she did not stay on top of things, she would get behind and would still have to catch up later.

There were times when Mary's mother would remind her about the importance of getting her schoolwork completed and getting to school early in the mornings. She told Mary that she needed to get her schoolwork completed before doing other things like going out with friends, shopping, or going to the movies (Interview 3: p. 16). She

reminded her daughter that she needed to learn to “juggle” her schoolwork and her personal life, but she needed to be responsible to her job.

Relationships with other family members and friends. Since Mary had several family members in the teaching profession – her aunt as well as her mother and her grandmother – she did feel pressure about being a teacher. She felt that she knew what she was getting into as a teacher, but she still felt that unless people were teachers, they did not understand all the hard work that goes into teaching. “A teacher cannot stop and go to a movie and go shopping until her work was done. A teacher cannot leave her schoolwork at school at the end of the day” (Interview 15: p.10). Mary thought that sometimes people, like her father, did not understand this. Her sister (who was a pharmacist), her boyfriend’s mother, and her friends who went into other careers besides teaching all seemed not to understand why she went to school so early in the morning. Mary said, “I get to school at 7:00 or 7:15 a.m. even though school does not start until 8:00 a.m.” (Interview 6: p. 8). She said that people just “don’t get it.” They do not understand the time that is needed to get a classroom ready for the day. She felt that some people thought that teachers do all of the extra work, such as designing hands-on activities, putting up bulletin board activities, and thinking up new strategies to work with the students only because they like doing it, not because they have to do it in order to provide their students with a quality education.

Case Study: Jane Gautreaux

Jane Gautreaux, who also taught third-grade at Bayou Elementary, was a 25-year-old first-year teacher who was of Cajun descent like Mary and also a graduate of Nicholls State. She lived with her mother until she married in November, 2000, and then moved

into an apartment located in the city of Houma and farther from the school. She had a great deal of concern for the students she taught, and she tried to treat them all the way she wished she had been treated as a school student. A “good” teacher, to her, was someone who really cared about her students. For guidance in her teaching and dealing with the various challenges she faced, she relied to a great extent on the principal of the school. But she also had other teachers who served as her mentors and guides. For Jane, being a good teacher sometimes conflicted with other goals, including being a good wife. She too decided to stay in teaching, but she got a transfer to another school in the parish for the next year.

School and Classroom Settings

Jane worked with Mary Boudreaux in the same school, Bayou Elementary School. Jane’s position came about because a teacher went on sabbatical, and thus the chances of staying at the school the next year were not good. Jane’s classroom was located in the main building, and her classroom faced the highway that followed alongside LeCompte Bayou. On the front lawn were two huge magnolia trees, one of which draped near the large windows of the classroom. When the windows were open during the spring, we could smell the sweet aroma of the magnolias in bloom.

Jane’s classroom, next to the secretary’s office and across from the special education classroom, was an old room with 12 foot ceilings. There was a large ceiling fan hanging over the center of the classroom, which ran during the warm months of the school year. She also had tables and chairs in her classroom instead of student desks – five sets of tables and chairs which she moved around the room quite often during the

school year. She did so to change the positions where the students were sitting to try to help with classroom management. One door led into the classroom from the hallway.

On the wall facing the highway there were four large windows covering almost the entire wall that had cloth curtains hanging from their tops. On the opposite wall, next to the only door that led into the hallway, Jane had bulletin boards decorated with different colors of poster paper. One bulletin board displayed a calendar, another held some writings of the students, and a third had a conduct chart and student job chart.

There was a table set in front of the bulletin boards, and a computer that did not work was set against the same wall. To the back of the classroom, on the same side of the wall as the bulletin boards, was a cloak room. This room, in earlier years was used to hang the students' coats and store their personal belongings, such as lunch boxes and school bags, but was now used for storage of school supplies – extra textbooks and workbooks, construction paper, art supplies, bulletin board paper, and decorations for the bulletin boards. On the back wall were shelves and a cabinet for the art supplies. Also located against the back wall was a working computer that the students used during their computer time, and a library corner with bookshelves and plastic chairs where the students sat. The front wall had a dry-erase board, and in the corner by the windows was Jane's desk and had a podium, where she put her teaching manuals when she taught.

Relationships with Students and Their Parents

Relationships with students. Jane had 17 students in her classroom. Her class included one special education student, two students who went to Project Read (a special reading program that had a strong phonics base), and 14 students considered to be in “regular education.” Jane's class, like Mary's and the other third-grade teacher's classes,

was formed at the end of the prior year before school let out for the summer break. The students were divided into classes based on Iowa Test scores, oral and written comprehension, and report card grades. Also, parents were allowed to request particular teachers, even though they did not necessarily receive their requests. As mentioned earlier, teachers at the school had told Jane she was given the “lower” group of the three third-grade classes because she was new to the school and, as she put it, no one knew if she was going to be a “good” teacher. After reviewing the Iowa Test scores, watching how the students did on their school work, their participation in lessons, and the results of the first-nine weeks grades, she felt the rumors were true she had been given the lower-performing class. She seemed somewhat frustrated with the knowledge she was probably dealing with the least competent students in the third-grade.

Jane’s students lived within a two-mile radius of the school, and some walked to school or had their parents take them there by car instead of riding the bus. Among her students, which included 13 Caucasians, were four students who were of Houmas Indian descent. At least half of the students were from economically poor backgrounds. One of the students was extremely poor, and some teachers gave this particular child toys and clothes to take home periodically. Jane said that once she rode into the neighborhood where some of the students lived, she experienced a “culture shock” when she saw the broken down unfinished houses and torn up mobile homes along the bayou. She seemed to have the same sense of “not understanding the student world that she had entered” as did Kerrie in Bullough’s study (1989). She thought at least half of the students had never been out of the community to go into Houma, which was about ten miles away. “I remember some of the students saying how excited they were when they had a chance to

go to the mall, Wal-Mart, or to Rouse's [a grocery store in Houma]," she said. Jane recalled, in an interview, how excited and thankful some of the students were when she gave them treats or gifts of school supplies, such as fancy designed pencils, colorful erasers, and little toy pencil sharpeners as rewards for good grades or good behavior. She said that, compared to the students she worked with when she did her student teaching in the city of Houma, these children were more grateful for any extra item they were given.

She also found the children liked playing outside at home. They played football and baseball, they went boat riding and swimming in the bayou when the weather was warm, and they talked about going "shrimping" – during the spring and summer – with their parents or grandparents. Jane said very few of her students ever spoke about playing in the house or with computer games or electronic games as did the children she taught during her student teaching. Some talked about going to their family "camp" – a small house located on the banks of the bayous or set on pilings in the middle of a lake. Many camps had the bare essentials of a home: a kitchen, a living area that might have had chairs, cots to sleep on, and if they were lucky they had a bathroom. Today many camps are more modernized, and they are used for family get-aways or hunting or fishing trips. Back in the earlier 1900's camps were also used for trappers so they could live on the bayou during the "fur season" between November and February of each year. The trappers lived in the camps and dried their catch on the docks of the camps. The people of the community no longer trap for fur because of the regulations on trapping today, and the camps are mainly used for outdoor entertainment. At the camps, the families boil seafood, such as crabs, crawfish, or shrimp, or have fish fries with the catch of the day.

As San (1999) pointed out, for many beginning teachers, the perceptions they have of their students impacts the manner in which they develop their classroom instruction. This was very much the case for Jane too. Jane felt that the more experience she had with her students and the better she understood their lives, the better she could deal with classroom management and the relationships with parents and the community in which the students lived. She devoted much of her energy to issues of fairness in the matter of praise and discipline. Through my observations and our discussions I found she feared being too strong in her discipline. Veenman (1984), whose work is often cited by other researchers, and Goodard and Foster (2001), who also quoted Veenman's findings, found that the relations that beginning teachers have with their students, when it comes to discipline, caused much stress for many new teachers. As Goodard and Foster explained in their study of nine beginning teachers, once "the gloss wears off" many beginning teachers, like Jane are confused at how to deal with classroom management in a fair and equitable manner.

All throughout the study, Jane recalled her own school days, and she did not want her students to remember her, as a teacher, in the manner in which she remembered some of her teachers. Jane's recollection of her treatment as a student relates to findings of a life history study conducted by Collay (1998). In a life history study of three first-year teachers, Collay found that beginning teachers tend to decide how they will teach based on the manner in which they were taught. Jane, who did not want her students to experience the negativity she endured as a young student, recalled being soft spoken as a student – and being told to speak up in class and being embarrassed by the attention paid to her because she could not speak loud enough. She said being acknowledged for the

problem just made it worse. During an interview, she said that she did not want to embarrass her students the way she was embarrassed in school. At the beginning of the school year when I observed her teaching, she whispered into the students' ears if she wanted to correct them about something, such as putting their pencils down until she told them to begin writing, paying attention, or turning to the correct page. She told me on at least four separate occasions throughout the year she did not want to praise any one student more than another. She feared showing favoritism or making the other students look as though they were not worthy of praise. She also worked to avoid correcting a child publicly in front of the other students because she felt that would embarrass the student. If a child needed to be more attentive to his or her work, she asked the student if he or she wanted to sit to the back of the room to be able to concentrate better on the lesson being presented. She did not want the other students to think she was isolating any of them so as to get them on task (Interview 9: p. 4). Also, if a student misbehaved in her classroom and isolation did not work, she sent the child to sit in another teacher's classroom. If she changed a student's conduct grade, she did not tell the student she was doing it because she did not want to acknowledge that a student was being disciplined. She felt that once children saw that their conduct grades were lowered they would stop misbehaving (Interview 9: p. 6).

Jane was concerned that her students did not take their studies seriously, especially during the months before the Iowa Test. She feared they did not always understand the lessons that she taught. Jane did have high academic expectations for her students. She explained, "Well, I think it's pretty important to expect a lot. You might not get as much as you expect, but at least you make the students expect a lot from

themselves. Academically – in any way” (Interview 1: p. 20). She knew she did not have academically the highest students in the third-grade, but she felt if they cared to learn they should have been able to learn. Throughout the year, Jane worried about her students – their academic lives as well as their personal lives. She said, “The only time I got frustrated was when they couldn’t get something. My main thing is that I haven’t been teaching long enough to know all the little tricks. I get frustrated because they are not getting it, and I don’t know another way to teach it” (Interview 3: p. 3).

Jane wanted to be liked by her students – and also to be respected by them. She had a difficult time with the concept of respect. She asked the principal, her mentor, and even me for pointers on how to gain respect. When observing Jane in her classroom, I saw how she interacted with her students. She tried to be friendly with her students but still expected them to do their work without complaining. However, as soon as she began joking with them and tried to talk about other things besides the lesson, the students got distracted. They began to get noisy and would not listen to her until she told them to be quiet and get busy on their work. There were at least two boys who hardly ever listened to her when she corrected them. I would sit and watch these boys continue to play or not pay attention after she told them to get back on track. One day she got upset and told me they did not respect her. She spent the entire school year trying to get one male student, in particular, to do as he was told, but most of the time, he did not. She struggled as she worked with him. I saw her talk to the principal about strategies for working with the student, but nothing seemed to work. She asked other teachers for advice, but he never changed. His attitude seemed to become progressively worse as the year went by.

Jane, like Mary, also had difficulties with discipline during the last two to three months of the school year. During the last two months, Jane lowered the same three or four students' conduct grades daily. She asked for help with discipline from the principal, her mentor, or other teachers, and as she explained, "If I come across a problem, I go ask them. That has been a lot lately. It is just that I am not sure anymore of what to do, or I want to get their opinion on things" (Interview 10: p. 6). As Goddard and Foster (2001) explained, beginning teachers like Jane need support in matters of instructional leadership and classroom management. These were crucial areas that Jane voiced during her entire first year in the classroom.

Finally, she was extremely frustrated at the end of the year because it seemed to her that many of her students did not want to learn. She felt they did not like school and would prefer not to be there. She thought she could make them like school, but her efforts did not seem to work. She had loved school as a child and could not understand how her students did not love school the way that she did. Her frustration was apparent in the following excerpt from an interview:

I wouldn't be able to deal with all of this again. I want more. I want the kids to want to learn more – to motivate me, too. I feel it has to be kind of a mutual thing that I didn't really know about when I started out. You kind of have to have that. They are not wanting to learn when you come in and you just come in and you don't feel like ... you want to teach. I mean I am still trying, but it starts to wear on you and you feel like, "Why try so hard when they're not wanting to learn." I still try for the ones that want to, but it is so depressing. (Interview 12: p. 3)

Relationships with students' parents. Jane did not have the parental support she had expected. She hoped that the students' parents would be involved in their children's education, and it was a surprise when most of the parents did not call or check on their child's progress. She never understood why many of the parents did not show support,

but she felt as a teacher this situation was not good for her students' educational growth. The four major occasions were described earlier in Mary's section on relationships with students' parents were also an issue for Jane: Open House, Conference Day, Lunch Week, and Field Day. Open House was held during the first few weeks of September. That night Jane had a low turnout – only four or five parents came to Open House (Interview 3: p. 10). I saw Jane was nervous as she explained her plans for the coming year to the parents and with only 20 minutes to speak; she seemed to fear leaving out something important. She tried to sound confident about the year to come, and she praised her students and said how much she enjoyed having their children in her classroom. When Jane said she liked her class that year, one parent told her she never had a teacher tell her she liked her child. She seemed surprised by the comment but was glad that she had made it. She felt that was a plus for her with that parent. Once Jane completed her short presentation, the parents visited with her a few minutes and then went into the cafeteria for refreshments.

On Conference Day, held the day after the first report card went home, the parents were given a 15-minute block to talk to Jane about their child's report card and ask any questions they may have about their child's progress. Again, she was disappointed with the turnout. Only five or six parents came, and those were the parents that she felt that she did not need to speak to – those who had children with good grades in academics and conduct. She said, "Like two or three I would have wanted a conference with [but they didn't come], and I haven't seen or heard from them [yet]" (Interview 3: p. 6). For Lunch Week in March, only one of the 17 students had a parent attend the function. That week was an opportunity for the parents to sit and be with their children and share the food that

their children ate daily, sitting next to their children in the cafeteria. While parents sat at all of the other tables in the cafeteria, she only had the one parent come for the entire week. Jane was disappointed and embarrassed for her students. Later during the year she said,

I am just very upset because I don't have very much parental concern. It is the ones that don't need to be concerned about their child at all because they are doing great that are worried. I have kids tell me crying, "I don't get the help at home." I just want to take them. Bring them home with me and help them out because I know they are not getting it. (Interview 12: p. 9)

As described earlier in Mary's section on the students, the last event of the year in which the parents were invited to participate was Field Day. Jane was unable to attend because her husband had surgery, but I was able to take her students to the Field Day activities. I told her students in advance where the different stations of activities were set up, and I monitored the bean bag toss booth. I kept an eye on the group while they circulated through the activities. She was disappointed she was not able to attend the Field Day activities, and she stayed as long as she could on that school day, but her husband needed her to be with him while he recovered from his surgery.

Parents came, Jane noted, for other special occasions at the school they were not invited to attend. One was the Fall Bazaar, where at least five to six parents came to be with their children, but did not volunteer to help with the function. The teachers walked around the yard behind the school, where the booths were set up, and monitored the students' activities. Later in December there was the Christmas party. At least two parents came with small children who seemed to disrupt the planned activities. These parents came and sat in her classroom and watched as she served cake and drinks to her

students. She received a few gifts – inexpensive knick knack items and candy but nothing as elaborate as Mary.

In February there was the school Mardi Gras Parade. Many parents attended the function, not just the parents of the kindergarten students participating in the parade came but parents of the older students. Many of Jane’s students’ parents came. One parent, whom she could never get to come in for a conference, was at the parade. She was not happy about that, but as long as no one disrupted the event, the principal did not say anything to them about being at the parade uninvited.

Professional Relationships

Relationships with other teachers. A relationship with the other teachers at Bayou Elementary School was important to Jane. She told me she wanted to be friendly with everyone. At the beginning of the year she had high praise for all of the teachers. “They are just such good teachers. They are all good teachers” (Interview 18: p. 7). She felt they tried to help her with her first year in the classroom. Jane said, “I feel like I hit a gold mine over here because everybody has wanted to help in any way that they could. This whole staff has helped me” (Interview 12: p. 11). She often asked for suggestions on teaching strategies and classroom management, and talked with other teachers about her approaches. They willingly helped her with ideas and suggestions. In a study of over 600 teachers, Marlow et al. (1997) found that helping beginning teachers and supporting them can make them feel less isolated. Jane wanted to share ideas with the other teachers, and many of the other teachers shared strategies and lessons with her. Chester and Beaudin (1996) also explained in their study of newly hired and novice teachers that first-year teachers who received little support from other teachers in their schools did not

have the same self-efficacy beliefs as those who received support and encouragement. As Jane said, “I want them to tell me ... or just answer any kind of question that I have, if I’m confused about something, they’ll answer it for me” (Interview 1: p. 15). Jane did not have a problem with other teachers critiquing her class. She welcomed positive feedback and was willing to risk negative feedback in order to learn from the teachers that she associated. Even though Jane received support from other teachers, she always seemed to be looking for more.

Jane, like Mary, was assessed in the spring of 2001. The two young teachers went through the practice assessment in the fall of 2000, and were formally assessed the following spring. For the formal assessment they were observed by the principal and an outside assessor. Although the two teachers had different outside assessors, both were Central Office personnel. Jane, like Mary, was nervous about her outside person because she had some knowledge of who the person was but did not know what the assessor expected from her. They went through the orientation of first-year teachers in August, 2000. Both were subjected to practice assessments by their mentors and their principal in the fall and knew what to expect from the two people, but neither had any idea what the outside persons would be searching for when they came to observe them in the spring. I went to the orientation also, and noted that the presenters said things that could have frightened the teachers more than helped them – horror stories about beginning teachers who failed assessment. Because of the comments made by the presenters, both women said their largest concern for the assessments was not knowing what to expect from the outside assessor. The other teachers at their school, who knew

they were nervous, encouraged them and told them they were doing a “good” job teaching, and should not have any problems passing their assessments.

Jane told me she was nervous and afraid that, on the day she would be observed for the assessment, the students would misbehave or not participate when they were asked questions or were asked to perform activities. The other teachers reminded her about what to do when being assessed, such as calling on different students when asking questions, walking around the room and monitoring the students’ work, asking higher-order thinking questions, and acknowledging individual differences when presenting the lesson.

The most helpful teacher for Jane, especially during her assessment, was Mary, the other first-year teacher. “Mary really helps me a lot. She was really a good [friend] and very helpful” (Interview 11: p. 3). Since Mary and Jane were third-grade teachers, they were able to teach the same lesson for their formal assessment. Mary, who had completed her assessment first, loaned Jane her visuals and posters of geometric shapes and helped her review the presentation of her lesson plan. As Jane explained, “Mary would keep coming into my classroom the whole week before and say, ‘You remembered all of this, but you need to remember ...’” (Interview 11: p. 3). The two young women talked on the phone for hours about their assessments and the lessons they were teaching. If Jane was not sure about a lesson they were going to teach, she knew she could call Mary, who helped her understand the lesson. If either of the women was discouraged, she knew the other would be there to give support. The young teachers would call each other several times a week when they were upset about problems with the students. If they were confused about a lesson they were teaching or forms that might be due in the

office that week, they would talk to each other about them. Every few weeks, they went to each other's home and ate dinner. They said they would use the visits as a time to "let off steam" about the everyday issues of teaching: students, parents, teachers, administration, their assessments, the students' assessment, and lessons and subjects they were teaching. They told me they felt more comfortable talking to each other than to the other teachers about such things because they did not want the principal, their mentors, or other teachers to think they were having any problems their first year.

Interestingly, I observed other teachers trying to hide their own frustrations from the new teachers. At one workshop earlier in the year, the veteran teachers were upset about the changes being made in testing students. The teachers were instructed to give teacher-made tests and to write the objectives and grading scale on all tests. We attended a workshop that was planned to explain the changes in testing procedures. When we arrived at the meeting, everyone seemed calm as long as the new teachers were in the classroom. As soon as the principal sent the beginning teachers out of the room to do bus duty, the veteran teachers began to complain openly to the supervisor, who was sent from the Central Office to explain the changes. When the two young women returned from bus duty, everyone stopped complaining and tried to show support for the changes.

Another time, as I sat in the lounge talking to the other teachers, Mary walked in and tried to join into a conversation between the teachers. The other teachers stopped talking about their school concerns – many of the same issues that Mary and Jane said they talked about on the phone – because they did not want to be misunderstood as being "unhappy or frustrated" with teaching.

Jane, who wanted to be near people who motivated her spent much time with Mary's mentor as well as her own mentor. This teacher was often accessible when Jane needed a shoulder to lean on. Jane explained,

For motivation I go to Mary's mentor, down the hall, because she is a very motivational person. She's very active, busy, and a motivational person. She is very smart, and has lots of ideas. I like going to her. She has lots of materials. (Interview 9: p. 10)

Since Mary's mentor stayed at school late in the afternoon, after all the students and most of the other teachers had left for the day, Jane was able to talk to her about earlier events of the day. When Jane's mentor – Mary's mother – who had a busy personal life, did not have the time to talk to her after school, she would talk to Mary's mentor. After school was about the only time the teachers were able to talk and discuss the day's events. During the day, she said she did not have time to think about questions, much less talk to her mentor. She could not leave her classroom during the day to ask her mentor questions about lessons or discipline, and she had to wait until after school. If her mentor was not available, at least three or four times a week, Mary's mentor was there. She felt Mary's mentor was an accessible resource at the end of the day, when ideas were still fresh in her mind. She enjoyed their talks and felt that the woman really cared about her as a person as well as a peer (Interview 12: p. 11; Interview 18: p. 8).

Jane openly wondered what the other teachers thought about her. She worried if her students did not do well on the Iowa Test the other teachers might think she was not a "good" teacher (Interview 11: p. 13). She also worried if other teachers saw her correcting students in the hall or outside during recess, they might think she could not handle her students (Interview 9: p. 8). On the contrary, many of the other teachers thought Jane had "good" classroom management. They often commented on her ability

to control her students and how well-behaved her students were, especially the students who had reputations of being a “handful” (Interview 17: p. 11).

When I spoke to other teachers and the principal at the school, they told me how much they worried about Jane, who had to drive at least 40 miles a day round trip. She got to school as early as 6:45 to 7:00 a.m. every morning and left sometimes as late as 5:00 p.m. She told me she got up at 4:30 a.m. most mornings, and did school work or cleaned her house before she left for school. As I observed, she looked more exhausted during the first four months of the year, since she was planning a wedding and trying to adjust to the drive and the workload, but seemed to adjust after the wedding in November. The last two months she again started to show signs of exhaustion. She walked slowly and talked in a whisper. She dragged through the afternoon classes and seemed to barely keep her eyes open. She said she made mistakes when she spoke to the students, wrote things on the board incorrectly, and had no energy for the afternoon lessons. She said she called Mary at least two or three times a week to talk about school which also kept her up late at night (Interview 3: p. 10).

Relationship with mentor. The teacher assigned as Jane’s mentor was Mary’s mother, who had been teaching at the school for the past twenty-something years, and had been a certified mentor for the past four years. This teacher also worked closely with the principal, serving on almost every committee there was at the school; including the School Building Level Committee (SBLC), and the PTC. She had worked as a mentor with only one other beginning teacher before Jane, since the school usually received a new teacher every few years. This was the first year that the school had two new teachers at the same time, and only two teachers were trained to mentor, Mary’s mother and

another third-grade teacher who was on sabbatical. Because of the long distance driving, unless a new teacher was from the area, he or she did not want to teach that far down the bayou. Also, this was a school with low teacher attrition, and there were not many openings that came available. The teachers seemed to enjoy working at the school, and many commented how much they liked the principals that have worked at the school. Many also felt that since they were located so far down the bayou that they were left alone to do their jobs. For a matter of fact, one veteran teacher – with twenty-something years of experience in the school – traveled about 50 miles round trip to teach at this particular school.

Jane had certain expectations of her mentor. She felt it was the role of the mentor to answer any questions that the protégé might have about academics and students, and thus she frequently consulted her during the school year. Her expectations for her mentor were similar to the beginning teachers in French's study (1997) about relationships between mentors and their mentees. French found that new teachers expected their mentors to "take the lead in establishing their relationship" and guide them through the process of teaching. Jane wanted and expected her mentor to take the lead, and when she did, they worked well together. Many times she asked her mentor for advice and suggestions on teaching and testing strategies, planning, and classroom management.

Her mentor observed her teaching several times during the school year, and in the fall did a practice assessment which followed the state guidelines of teacher assessment. In her qualitative study, Ganser (1999) offered different metaphors to describe the relationships between mentors and their mentees. One such metaphor, "teaching a child how to ride a two-wheeler" seemed to describe the relationship that Jane's mentor had

with her: Jane was learning to ride the two-wheeler, and her mentor was guiding her along. The mentors in the study described their mentoring as “mother-daughter” relationships or “parent-child” relationships. Her mentor seemed to have such a relationship with her. She tried to reassure Jane whenever she could. However, since the mentor and Jane did not teach the same grade level, it was difficult at times for the mentor to advise her. Nevertheless, what the mentor did not know about third-grade, she was able to find information to help her with her questions.

There was no scheduled times for Jane and her mentor to meet, as was said earlier, Jane would meet most days in her mentor’s classroom to discuss the day’s events. Jane said, “I asked some questions, and she came to me sometimes. It was so hard lately. It was really like I don’t know when she had off, and we didn’t have the same off hour” (Interview 3: p. 8). Most of the questions were about classroom management and test taking strategies. She was extremely concerned the students were not “getting it” (Interview 3: p. 3), and she often asked her mentor and other teachers for advice on teaching strategies or keeping students on task. Jane used her mentor to the fullest. If she had a question when she got home, she called her mentor at her home for advice or suggestions.

For Jane, her relationship with her mentor was essential in having a successful year. In their study of nine first-year teachers, Appleton and Kindt (1999) found beginning teachers who stepped out of their “comfort zones” and trusted their mentors entirely were able to share and confide in their mentors which helped in their development as beginning teachers. She wanted to be open and honest about her

victories and struggles as a first-year teacher, and with her mentor she felt that was possible.

Relationship with administrator. Even though Mary and Jane worked in the same school, their relationships with their administrator were quite different. Since this was the first time that Jane had ever been in this school, she did not know the teachers, except for Mary and Mary's mother, and from the onset, went to the principal for much guidance in various facets of her role as teacher. Jane wanted "acknowledgment and guidance" from her principal, as was the case with many of the first-year teachers in Zepeda and Ponticell's study (1997). The first-year teachers in the study wanted evaluations both "positive and negative." Much the same, she wanted acknowledgment and guidance from her principal with her concerns about teaching strategies, academics, problems with her classroom management, or relations with parents.

Jane thought she should be able to ask the principal for help, and she did ask often (Interview 2: p. 4). She had experienced working under a male principal when she did her student teaching, and she felt that it was easier to confide in this principal because she was a woman. Jane said, "I feel like there is a difference, between a man principal and a lady principal. I feel more closeness to the principal that I have now" (Interview 17: p. 6). Jane, who felt extremely close to her principal, had time to visit with her since they both arrived at school early in the mornings and had their classroom and office near each other in the same building. She got to school between 6:45 and 7:00 a.m., about the same time as the principal, and she spoke with her then about her students and her classroom activities. The principal, who said during her interview that she thought that Jane was doing a "good" job as a teacher, tried to encourage her to feel good about herself as a

teacher and constantly reassured her. She told me that she thought Jane cared for her students and had much empathy for them.

The principal visited her room quite often, and Jane seemed to welcome the visits. Her classroom was down the hall from the principal's office. Brock and Grady (1998) found that beginning teachers needed "classroom visits, feedback, and affirmation from their principals." The attention that Jane received from her principal was important and much desired; however, close to the end of the school year, she feared that her relationship with her principal had become strained. She did not know if the strain was because she was leaving the school to teach elsewhere the following year (at a school closer to home) or if it was because of the frequency with which she went to the principal for advice, which was about once a week, or sent students to the office.

Jane's move to a new school in the district was not really all that unusual for a beginning teacher. According to Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, and Weber (1996), many beginning teachers are displaced involuntarily or by choice move to other schools during those initial years. Jane, however was somewhat concerned about the move and was not sure how her principal felt about her changing schools. That concern seemed to make her feel she was now a bother to her principal, and she began to think maybe she had relied on her principal too much early on in the year about discipline matters, and she had become frustrated with her. Jane, who was analyzing the situation, spoke of her reliance on the principal, particularly with respect to discipline of her students, "If I could redo any part of this year, it would be that I would try my hardest not to send kids to the office unless it was really necessary" (Interview 17: p. 6).

Personal and Family Relationships

Relationship with her mother. For the first three and a half months of the study, August, 2000, through November, 2000, Jane lived at her mother's home. Jane's family was originally from the area. Her father worked in the oil field business, and her mother was a housewife for most of Jane's rearing. When at home, she wrote lesson plans, graded papers, made test papers, and created visuals and hands-on activities. The work she took home seemed to overwhelm her, and she often complained about not having time for herself or her family, being tired all the time, and not being able to relax on the weekends.

Jane felt that her mother did not always support her work as a teacher. Her mother suggested she take time off from all of the work, but she said she would get behind and could not stop the work she was doing until she completed it, even if it took all night (Interview 2: p. 19; Interview 17: p. 6). Also, Jane was engaged and would be married during the Thanksgiving break, and planning for the wedding caused her much distress. She said that four or five times during the months of October and November, she came home exhausted from a long day at school and had to start picking out material for her bridesmaid dresses, selecting the food to be served at the reception, choosing flowers, and planning for her honeymoon (Interview 3: p. 10).

Jane's wedding was the first Saturday that began the Thanksgiving break, and it was a cold rainy day. The ceremony was held in a Catholic church located in the town of Houma. Among the guests were five teachers, including Mary, and the school secretary from Bayou Elementary School, and I attended too. For the reception, we were able to congratulate the bride and groom and their parents, and Jane introduced me to her new

husband. At the reception the food was local fare – white beans, sausage jambalaya (a spicy Cajun dish), sandwiches, shrimp fettuccine, and fruit and vegetable trays.

Relationship with her husband. In November, 2000, Jane was married. During the months before the wedding, August through the beginning of November, she hardly ever saw her fiancée. When she said during one interview she had not seen him in several weeks. I asked her if it was because he lived so far away. She laughed and said, “No, he lives in the same town. I just don’t have time to see him. I’m too busy with school work to talk to him and visit with him. I’m always working on something for school” (Interview 2: p. 19). Jane’s husband worked at a lumber company in the city of Houma, where he advised people on what lumber and other supplies they needed for house building and took their orders. He was very proud of her. I met him briefly, and even though he was shy about talking about her, he smiled and acknowledged how proud he was of her. Jane told me he thought she was a “good” teacher, and he did not know how she could care so much for her students. She said several times, if he had not supported the work that she was doing, it would have been difficult for them as a couple. Most of the time he was understanding about her schoolwork, but every now and then, he expressed his frustration about her unending work for school, especially during the spring, when he wanted her to put everything aside so they could go fishing and go to their camp. She did feel she had put her students before her husband many times during the year. Jane said she would advise anyone just starting to teach not to plan a wedding during the first year of teaching because of the difficulties of planning the wedding and adjusting to married life, which took a toll on her physically while she was trying to learn the “ropes” of teaching.

As was mentioned earlier, there were times when Jane had to choose between her students and her husband. Closer to the end of the school year, her husband had surgery and needed her to stay with him at the hospital in Houma and care for him at home. Jane said she was torn between her duty as a teacher and her duty as a wife. When she was at school, she thought about wanting to be at home. She admitted to being short-tempered with her students during the week of the surgery. Jane said,

It is hard to concentrate on what you are doing that day. I felt ... today I felt in a bad mood because I was worried. I hate that. But it does. It is so hard to concentrate on teaching at the time because you constantly have that in your head because you feel that you need to go, you need to go. You really can't leave your class and call. But you want to go, go (Interview 16: p. 10)

She tried not to bring her personal problems with her to school, but she admitted that it was an impossible task (Interview 16: p. 9). She was moody and was less patient with the students. When she was at the hospital, she thought about her students. Jane did take care of her husband but also spent much time with her students and preparing for her work with the students. She knew her husband was supportive and proud of her because she was a teacher. "And what picks me up is John. I am so glad that he can be He can make me feel so good. He is like, 'I think you are a great teacher!' He says everything so positive and just makes me feel so much better" (Interview 18: p. 6).

Relationships with other family members and friends. Jane has two sisters, an older sister who is married and has one child, and a younger sister, who is still in high school. Jane, the godmother of her older sister's child, had moments when she had to explain to her sister the importance of her job as a teacher. Some years ago this sister had been a teacher herself, but she taught for only three years and then changed careers (Interview 1: p. 19). Several times Jane had to explain to her family and friends about the

enormous amount of work and energy that went into teaching, but at the same time she missed not being able to spend time with them because she was so busy.

Also, like Mary, Jane had an aunt who was a teacher. Jane wished she had the energy that her aunt had and the ability to do everything – take care of a family and do her school work (Interview 15: p. 7). She wanted to be able to “juggle” her career and her family, but she did not know how to do it (Interview 14: p. 8). She tried to get her aunt to advise her on how to accomplish having a family and a teaching career. Her aunt told her to do all of her work on Friday evenings when she got home and enjoy her family for the rest of the weekend. Jane said that was easier said than done because, when Fridays came, she was so tired that all she wanted to do was sleep. She tried to do her housework and school work on Saturdays. Many times she could not get her work finished on Saturdays and had to work on Sundays. Because of this, she felt that she hardly ever had any time for herself or her family (Interview 14: p. 8).

Jane talked about wanting to spend more time with her godchild. She tried to spend as much time as she could with her, but there was little extra time when school was in session. She looked forward to breaks so she could take her for a few days (Interview 14: p. 7). She remembered times when she was too exhausted to go out to dinner with friends or go to the camp on weekends. She recalled a night when she was so tired she fell asleep in her clothes, with the lights left on, and the computer still running. She woke up the next day and did not remember falling asleep. She also remembered several times almost driving off the highway because she fell asleep at the wheel of the car (Interview 3: p. 10).

In early spring an incident happened that made her rethink her priorities. On a beautiful Sunday morning in April, Jane's husband and some friends had finally convinced her to take the day off to go boat riding. She loved boat riding and missed going. She decided to go that day, but knew she had lesson plans to write and papers to grade. She brought her lesson plans with her to the camp. Her friend brought a camera and took a picture of Jane doing her school work. A few days later, her friend showed her the pictures from the outing. On one of the pictures which showed Jane writing her lessons, her friend wrote, "I am all work and no play!" Jane said she felt horrible. She did not want to be thought of as a person who did not know how to have fun. From that moment on, she said she was going to learn how "to juggle" her workload, relax on the weekends, and have fun.

Case Study: Beth Anderson

Beth Anderson, a 26-year-old married first-year teacher, was born in Houma but she was not of Cajun descent like the other first-year teachers in the study. Her father had come to southern Louisiana to work in the oil fields during the sixties, where he met Beth's mother and settled down on the Coteau Road just outside of Houma. Beth, the only first-year teacher in the study who was also a mother, had a daughter who was seven months old when the study began. Another recent graduate of Nicholls State University, she taught at In-Town Elementary, where she had done her student teaching the previous year and now works with students in other teachers' classrooms. During her first year of teaching she worked in the fall with special needs students, one first-grade and the other second-grade, and in the winter she became the teacher of the first-grade class in which she had been assisting—the class that had been taught by her district-appointed mentor.

For Beth, being a “good” teacher meant she had to be creative, understanding, and caring. Even though she had many struggles that year – changing grade levels, dealing with mentor problems, and trying to have a family life outside of school – she decided to remain a teacher in In-Town School for the next year teaching first-grade.

School and Classroom Settings

Beth worked at In-Town Elementary School located in the city limits of Houma, Louisiana. The school, one of only two public schools for African American children in the early 1950’s, was located in the city of Houma. Over the years the school had been transformed from a high school to an elementary school, which now housed Pre-K through sixth-grade. The school is an extremely large building with five wings. Each wing houses mostly one grade level, but a few have two grade levels. The school has 531 students of whom 85 percent are African American, 13 percent are Caucasian, and 2 percent are Hispanic or Houmas Indian.

Beth’s classroom was on the wing of the school that was closest to the main highway leading through downtown Houma. She had round tables instead of student desks in her classroom. There were four sets of tables and chairs in the center of the classroom, and one wall held bulletin boards for some items such as a calendar, student job chart, a conduct chart, and a display board for student work. Another wall held shelves for textbooks and other supplies, and the room had small windows decorated with cloth curtains. The wall at the front of the classroom had a dry-erase board and a chart board used to set up learning centers for the students. There was a computer at the corner of that wall and a tape player, ear phones, and tapes set on a table near the door. Placed against each wall were four rectangular tables, which were used for learning centers for

the students: a listening center; where the tape player and tapes were placed, a phonics table where phonics games were located, a writing table where the writing supplies were found, and a table for math manipulatives and books for center time. Also, there was a large kidney-shaped table set to the back of the classroom that Beth used as her desk and for her reading table when she had guided reading time.

Relationships with Students and Their Parents

Relationships with students. For Beth, working with her students seemed to be “a mission” or a “service” as Lortie (1975) and Joseph and Green (1986) described in their studies of first-year teachers. The idea of a service theme – performing a special mission in their society – was how Beth looked at her students. She wanted to be everything to her students. She said, “I want to be creative, and more creative. Not just the curtsy little stuff” (Interview 1: p. 7). She felt that it was important to help the students both academically and socially. Beth had an idea of what a “good teacher” was: creative, understanding, and caring. These character traits are reminiscent of the qualities of a good teacher pointed out by Dolley (1998): creativity, flexibility, enthusiastic, and intuitive when teaching. They are also reminiscent of those identified in research by Norton (1997) with her findings of first-year elementary teachers. The novice teachers in that study said teachers should be “caring, committed, creative, reflective thinkers with a strong internal locus of control” (p. 17). Beth had certain criteria for what would happen if she were to become a “good” teacher: Her students would learn from her the way that they had learned from their other teacher – Beth’s first mentor. She felt much empathy for her little ones, most of who lived in single-parent homes. Beth said,

I want them to know that I am there for them – that they can come to me when in time of need. I will never turn my back on any of them. I need to be gentle

with them but in the same aspect I am their teacher, and they have to follow school rules. (Interview 1: p. 8)

As I observed, Beth became frustrated when there were student disruptions. That concerned her because she felt that the students had potential, and she attributed the disruptions to lack of motivation for learning. She worried that they did not “have the ‘I want to do it’ inside” (Interview 3: p.2). When she became frustrated with the students, she reminded herself that these children did not have the advantages that she had as a child or that her own child had. She was also exposed to the “culture shock” (Bullough, 1989) that Jane seemed to experience with her students. As a teacher, Beth felt that it was her job to educate her students. She also felt that she needed to relate to her students, but it was difficult for her to do so. She explained,

They can come to me in times of need because I will never turn my back on any of them. In that aspect, being motherly, they need to know that I care. Also, I need to be gentle with them, but on the same note, I am their teacher, and they have to follow the school rules. It is kind of two relationships: the teacher/student relationship and the nurturer/student relationship. (Interview 1: p. 8)

Beth wanted to expect more from her students, but in reality she realized that her expectations should not be as high as what she would have liked. She struggled with the thought of how she should treat her students. Bringing these students up to the expected reading level was not going to be an easy task, and she thought that if she could advance her students even one reading level during the year, she would have made a great accomplishment (Interview 7: p. 7). Beth had reasonable expectations, and this helped her when working with them.

Inclusion seemed to present problems to Beth as it had to the teachers in Snyder’s (1999) study of teachers involved with inclusion classes. Out of 16 students in her class,

five students were classified as “developmentally delayed.” Beth had difficulties with a few of those students. As I observed, she did not have an aide with her at all times, and the special education teacher, an elderly retired school teacher with no training in special education, was assigned to her classroom and was of little help. This new special education teacher agreed to take the position, not realizing the extensive work involved in teaching special education, especially an inclusion class. The teacher told me that she never expected that working in an inclusion class would be so difficult. After a few months of struggling to work in the inclusion setting, she finally closed in a corner of Beth’s classroom with bookcases and asked the special education students to come into the area where she worked with them one-on-one. Given this arrangement, she had no help with the other students during the lessons, and as I watched, I could see how difficult it was for Beth to teach the class without help. She wanted to be an effective teacher, and she perceived herself as a loving person who hugged her students and tried to make them feel wanted and cared for. However, she felt she had a daily struggle, not knowing what the next day might bring (Interview 7: p. 9).

There was one particular special education student who needed much of Beth’s attention almost daily. Earlier in the year, she spent as much as 80 percent of her time sitting with this child while the mentor taught the lessons, and she had to literally run after him in class during center time. He took up most of her teaching time for the most part of the morning lessons until finally in early spring the special education department decided to put him into a self-contained class for the morning lessons. He returned to the classroom only for the afternoon activities.

Close to the end of the school year, Beth told me that she was getting tired and was ready for the school year to end. During the last month, while she tried to work with her reading group, she felt that she could not allow the other students to have freedom to go to the centers or work on individual projects because they would begin running around the classroom unsupervised. I noticed, if she turned her back to the students for a second, some of them would begin fighting or begin throwing their school supplies around the classroom. She said, “It’s sad that you have to constantly be on top of them. You have to constantly be watching over them because they’ll totally get off task like that, with the drop of a hat. There are always problems” (Interview 8: p. 8). Beth said, “One day they’re all great, participating and making good choices. The next day their attitudes are poor, and it’s so hard to build them up” (Interview 8: p. 9).

Even though she was discouraged at the end of the school year, she regained her spirit when she thought about the coming year – starting off in her own regular education classroom, with her own students. She would be teaching at the same school. The class this year never became really her own. Beth said, “They’re not mine. And so, it’s kind of like having to train them all over again. It’s hard because I feel like they’re not mine because they weren’t mine from the beginning” (Interview 8: p. 8). She was ready for a break. She said,

I’m starting to get burned out. I’m starting to get tired. I try every morning. I come in with a new attitude, but come ten o’clock, I think God this is going to be a long day, and it was. It was long. I think the days are going to get longer and longer because I’m ready to go. (Interview 13: p. 18)

Another problem as a result from taking over a classroom in the middle of the year was a lack of teaching materials. The teacher who preceded Beth had taken all of her teaching supplies with her. She realized that it was now her job “to get these kids

where they needed to be” (Interview 7: p. 6). She started teaching in a new setting as a regular education teacher in February, and had only mathematics’ supplies to work with and only 25 dollars of school funds to purchase school supplies. Many teachers and friends loaned her supplies to get through the year – visuals, teaching aids, manipulatives, books, crayons, and scissors. Even though many teachers tried to help her by loaning her supplies, she still felt frustrated that she had to start working, during the middle of year, in a classroom that was bare. There was only the minimum of essentials. She said that she now knew how the new beginning teachers felt when they started in their new classrooms in the fall.

Relationships with students’ parents. During the year, I saw few parents at the school. When I interviewed a school custodian who was also a parent, she told me that parents rarely came to school. I also asked her about the PTC. She said that the club met only once that year, sometime in September. Many parents did not have their own cars to come to the school, and so they either used the bus system, which passed in front of the school, or had another family member who owned a car, bring them to school if it was needed. If a child became sick or got into trouble with the office, the parents were called to come to the school. If the parent did not have transportation, the student, if sick, went back to the classroom, or if suspended or expelled, he or she had to sit in the office until the end of the day.

Sometimes it was difficult to maintain contact with parents. The contact Beth had with parents was on occasion, when they showed up for conferences. I was in the class one day when a parent came for an unscheduled conference about her child’s progress. Beth, who was not sure how to handle the situation, stepped outside while I monitored

the students' work and talked to the parent. Another time, she had a difficult conference with a parent who blamed her for the child's difficulties, but she calmed the parent and explained her classroom procedures. The parent left somewhat satisfied. She felt that most of these parents were quick to blame the school for their children's problems, but rarely did they look at their own lives for a cause of their children's difficulties socially or academically (Interview 13: p. 16).

Once she tried to call a parent in for a conference only to find out that the parent had caller identification on the phone, and if the call came from the school, she would not answer the phone. She then tried to call the parent's workplace just to find out that the parent no longer worked there. She could not understand how a parent would not answer the phone if she knew the call came from the school. She said. "And I thought, what if something happens to her child? She doesn't want to know?" (Interview 13: p. 6).

Professional Relationships

Relationships with other teachers. Since the school was extremely large, Beth did not have the time to meet and mingle with all of the other teachers, but she did feel she had a workable relationship with most of the teachers. She said,

I am friendly with all of them [other teachers]. I am not really close to all of them and that is because I choose not to be Instead I found one or two people I am friends with everybody at the school, but there is really one other teacher in this school that I talk to, and it is not my mentor. (Interview 1: p. 9)

The staff at this school was large – 28 regular education teachers for grades Pre-K through sixth grades and 22 teachers for specific subject matter or groups of students, such as self-contained special education teachers, inclusion teachers, teachers for the gifted classes, teachers for the special programs (e.g., Project Read and Reading Recovery), and teachers for homebound children. There were also a band teacher, a math

coach, a teacher for children who were severely and profoundly handicapped, and a math facilitator on the campus. On a wing connected to the back of the building, the curriculum specialists for the entire parish had their offices. In addition, there were office workers, custodians, and cooks. It was a difficult task to get to know everyone. As I walked around the school grounds, I saw teachers talking firmly with students but not loudly, patting them on the back and praising them for a job well done. Although frustrated and tired at times, most seemed to work hard at trying to fulfill the goals of the school: “to provide equal opportunities for all students to achieve intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically and to provide an atmosphere which is conducive to growth and development.”

Since all of the first-grade teachers were housed in one wing of the school building, these teachers had access to each other during the day. Beth said that she wanted to connect with the other teachers, especially the other first-grade teachers. She wanted to be able to

throw out ideas of things that this one is doing and that one is doing – steal ideas from other people because that is what makes the better teachers. You know when you steal a little from this one and a little from that one. Because I know myself, I get a mental block of what to do. When someone mentions it, I’d say, “Why didn’t I think of that?” That is the type of relationship where everyone is willing to share. (Interview 1: p. 9)

The one teacher Beth “would talk to” most often was another first-grade teacher who taught across the hall from her (Interview 9: pp. 8 - 9). This teacher, who seemed to fill the mentor role, was a young teacher with only a few years of teaching experience. She was accessible and extremely welcoming. If Beth had any questions about teaching first-grade, she went to this teacher for guidance. She visited with the teacher at least three times a week after school to share the day’s events. She tried not to bother the

teacher when she was teaching, and most of her questions came after school or during the monthly grade level meetings. One time when I was observing, she asked me if I knew what chicken pox looked like. I told her it had been years since my children had that childhood illness, and I was not sure how to describe the marks or recognize them on a student. She had the student walk across the hall to ask the other teacher to check the red swollen spots on her arms. The other teacher sent the child back with a note saying the spots might be chicken pox and that she should send the child to office to see the nurse. That she did immediately. The nurse decided the spots were just mosquito bites and Beth had nothing to worry about, but, by coincidence, two weeks later she had four other students out with the chicken pox.

Beth's confidant was the first-grade-level leader, and once a month she and the other first-grade teachers sat together and planned lessons and themes for the next month. They spent time after school sharing ideas and thoughts about the day and discussing their families. The other teacher told me in our interview that she enjoyed helping new teachers. This teacher was assigned to supervise the student teacher who had been working with Beth's mentor before she left, so she was very busy. She tried to assist Beth as well as she could, but it was difficult to do so with teaching her own class and having her own student teacher. As I watched the teachers work, I noticed how little time the teachers had for themselves. They were constantly running around trying to get all of the paperwork and school work completed during the little bit of lesson plan time that they had – one hour for art a week and one hour for library a week.

The teachers at the school were extremely busy, and the administration provided many activities for the students and teachers to participate in. For instance, the school

provided special activities for Black History month as a part of its program of improvement. The school was predominantly African American, about 85 percent, and the principal felt that it was important to stress the heritage of the students. To accomplish this, she provided outings for the students and invited other African Americans to come and perform for the students. For Black History month she invited Charmaine Neville to perform with her band for the students and the teachers. Ms. Neville, who imitated Louis Armstrong and sang “Hello Dolly” for the crowd, was a hit with the students. She took a few volunteer students from the audience and asked them to sing and pretend to play a trumpet. The teachers participated too. We were asked to stand up and march in a line, doing a “Second Line Dance,” while waving white tissues and Mardi Gras colored umbrellas as the band played the Mardi Gras Mambo. All the teachers stood and marched and pulled the students into the line while laughing and singing.

Because of the size of the school and its staff, Beth had difficulties getting to know everyone, but she did get to know a number of the other teachers besides her assigned mentors, her informal mentor, and the other first-grade teachers. When she was teaching special education, she worked well with at least one of the other veteran special education teachers. If she was confused about an individualized educational plan (IEP) or other paperwork dealing with special education, she went to this one special education teacher, who provided explanations on these matters and also advised Beth as to how she should work with behavior problems that arose during her time as a special education teacher. When I interviewed the special education teacher, she told me that Beth was doing a “good” job considering she did not have a special education background. She felt

that most of the teachers in her school had the same vision for the school and the students. They were encouraged by the administration to treat the students in a positive manner, and always, always reinforce “You can” instead of “You can’t” to the students.

Relationships with mentors. Teachers like Mary, Jane, and Beth thought that they knew what to expect from their mentors. The Central Office explained during the orientation of first-year teachers that the mentors’ jobs were to get the new teachers through teacher assessment, but Beth had a unique situation with her mentor. She began the school year as a special education inclusion teacher, working each day in the classroom of her mentor, who was the classroom teacher. This situation, according to Little (1990) in his review of studies on mentors and their mentees, should have been the perfect scenario – a mentor and mentee working together all day long, not having to find time to discuss strategies and lessons, and the mentor being able to oversee the mentee’s class on a daily basis. This seemed not to be the case, since there was some tension in the relationship.

Beth’s mentor was one of two regular education teachers working with her, who was the special education teacher for some of their students. As the special education teacher in an inclusion classroom, Beth spent her mornings in her mentor’s first-grade classroom, as described above, and she spent the afternoons in another second-grade classroom that I did not observe. She was working in an inclusion process in accordance with the federal government’s Bulletin 1706, which requires placing students in the least restricted or most “normal” environment that can be provided in the school. Because of this mandate, special education teachers like Beth work with their students in a regular

classroom setting. These teachers also help the regular education teacher by teaching lessons and assisting other students in the classroom.

When I first began the study with Beth, she mostly sat and watched the classroom education teacher (her mentor) or the student teacher teach the lessons. She monitored her students and during the small group sessions, she taught a reading lesson to her five or six students. Within a few weeks of observations, she began teaching some of the lessons, and I was able to see her present the lessons and not just oversee one particular special education student. When she was able to teach, she began her lesson by having all of the students sit in a large group on a rug, and she started with the day's introduction to the calendar and the "Student of the Day." Each day a different student was chosen to be the "Student of the Day." The student helped the teacher write a sentence on the board, and other students called out adjectives that described good qualities of the student of the day, such as "nice," "helpful," "cheerful," "hard worker." If the mentor was out sick or at a meeting, Beth then led in the morning activities. As I observed, the students did most of their class work with the use of learning centers. They had specific activities to accomplish in each center which pertained to the subject being taught. Reading was taught in the mornings, and all learning activities in the morning were related to literacy development: reading words from a set list of words placed on the overhead machine or dry erase board, reading books, writing stories in the writing center, and listening to the taped stories in the listening center. During this time, the mentor worked with a small group of three students on their guided reading lessons while Beth helped her special needs students with their lessons in the Mastery Reading program. Afternoons were spent doing math lessons, social living lessons, and art activities. The math lessons were

completed with the use of centers, while the social living lessons and art were done in large groups. During the last weeks before the mentor took her leave of absence, which I explain in more detail later, she had Beth work with individual students in centers instead of working with her special education students.

For center time in the morning, working with the language arts block, and center time in the afternoon, working with mathematics, social living block, art and music, there was a procedure that all of the students followed. Each morning the mentor or Beth would explain what they were to do in each center before the procedure began. To be able to accomplish the center activities, the mentor had a chart board which every student could interpret in order to know which center they were to begin for the morning and afternoon lessons. Once the teachers explained what was to be accomplished for the day, they began the lesson with the assignment of certain students to move to their center. Each was joined in the assigned center by the individual who was to be his or her partner. Then the students were instructed to begin their center work for the day. Every 20 minutes the mentor rang a bell and sang the “Clean-Up” Song. Then the students cleaned their centers and moved quietly to the next assigned center. This continued until all five centers were covered during the time permitted. It took about a month for the students to learn where to go without being told, but once they learned the procedure, they moved without much disturbance.

At first, Beth said how she appreciated her mentor’s help and guidance. She explained how much she had learned from her mentor about a “balanced approach” to teaching language arts (Interview 7: p. 3). Many teachers in this parish learned what is called balanced literacy by attending a month-long summer session of training and

meeting once a month for an entire year for updates and focus group sessions. The approach that was used in Terrebonne Parish was based on I.C. Fountas and G. S. Pinnell's book Guided Reading (1996). A reading specialist and a small number of veteran teachers who were extensively trained in the approach presented it to about 30 percent of the elementary teachers, grades kindergarten through third-grade. Once the teachers were trained, many of them took the ideas and strategies back into their classrooms and incorporated what they had learned into their language arts programs. Beth and her mentor approached the program with the use of centers, whereas other teachers, followed the eight components of balanced literacy with a variety of techniques: read alouds, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, shared writing, interactive writing, guided writing or writing workshop, and independent writing in group settings. With the use of books, a variety of other texts, and an assortment of writing papers and utensils, students were encouraged to be creative and active in their learning process.

As I observed during the lessons, Beth was learning the procedures of the different centers, being creative with lessons, and applying positive reinforcement and praise in many different ways. She learned so much about the learning centers that when she became the classroom teacher later in the year, she adjusted well to the workings of the centers. The principal told me that she wanted Beth to take the position for the rest of the year because she knew how the mentor approached her center program. No other teacher in the school set up centers and applied a balanced approach to language arts in the same manner as the mentor. Also, the principal did not want to make too many changes for the students since the year was more than half way over. She said that Beth

knew the students and was familiar with their individual needs, and thus she was the best person for the position.

In her narrative study of 17 beginning teachers, French (1997) found that first-year teachers sometimes felt insecure when working with their mentors. They also feared rejection by their mentors. Finally, they had certain expectations of their mentors, and if those expectations were not met then the beginning teachers became frustrated. The idea that mentors should guide the mentee step-by-step throughout the year was a recurring theme in a study by Gratch (1996), who interviewed Gina, a first-year teacher who participated with a group of ten first-year teachers. Gina wanted more guidance from her mentor during the first year. For inference, on one occasion she was put in charge of the computer for the learning center games and activities but did not know how to use the relevant programs. She struggled with the computer center, but she finally figured out how to work it for herself.

There were at least two occasions when I saw the mentor unexpectedly turn over the day's activities to Beth. On both occasions, she became stressed, in part, it seemed, because she was working alone with the centers and the mentor was working on other odd jobs in the classroom. Beth felt that she needed assistance with her special needs students and that she did not always get it when she was teaching.

I was able to interview the mentor once during the year, right after she left for her leave of absence. We discussed the reasons that she took a leave of absence and discussed her relationship with Beth. She honestly did not know what caused the friction between them, but she did say that she hoped that they could become friends and would be able to work together in the future.

After her district-assigned mentor took sick leave, Beth was left without a designated mentor, and a fourth-grade teacher was asked to fill in the role for the rest of the school year (Interview 7: p. 1). The new mentor taught in an entirely separate building, did not have the same lesson plan time, and had never had a mentee before. The new mentor told me in an interview that she did not know what to do to help Beth, but that if Beth needed to speak to her, she would help in any way. I asked her if she thought she could work with her, and she said that, the final assessment had been completed, there was not anything left to do until the closing of the year. Beth did, however, need some guidance before the closing of the year. There were forms she did not know how to complete, cumulative folders that needed attention, and grades to average.

Beth said that she hardly spoke to her new mentor. She thought that it was easier to go to another first-grade teacher who worked in her building than to find the time to go to her mentor. As I observed, the person who actually helped her get through the rest of the year was another first-grade teacher about whom I will speak under the next category – Relationships with Other Teachers. For Beth, having a mentor, whether it was a trained mentor or just another teacher in the same grade level, was beneficial. Contrary to Evertson and Smithey's (2000) findings that trained mentors seem to do a better job working with mentees than nontrained mentors, Beth did seem to work better with the untrained first-grade teacher down the hall than the trained mentors who were assigned to work with her.

Relationships with the administrators. The school where Beth taught had a principal and an assistant principal, both of whom she liked and respected. Since Beth

came to In-Town Elementary School as a student teacher, she had some understanding of the rules and procedures of the school. She said that when she was told she was going to student teach at the school she was concerned about the placement because she had heard how difficult the students were. Once she spoke to her supervisor at Nicholls State University about her placement, and her supervisor told her that she thought that she would have a rapport with the students, she decided to give it a try. After speaking to her supervisor from the university, I realized the supervisor wanted to get more student teachers into In-Town Elementary School – student teachers who cared about the students’ personal needs as well as their academic needs. It seems the principal too wanted new young teachers who were sympathetic to the needs of the students, academically as well as socially.

Once Beth began her student teaching at the school, a year prior to study, she knew this was the place where she would like to teach when she completed her student teaching. She did not teach in the spring after her student teaching because she had a baby in January, but she later began her first job at In-Town Elementary School as an uncertified special education teacher in the fall the following year. As I will explain later, she eventually took a position as a regular classroom teacher that same year.

I asked Beth about the orientation process for new teachers at her school. She said that the special education department had its own orientation session, which mainly covered such matters as IEP’s for special education students and the accommodations for those students in the regular education classrooms. For Beth it was important to have the support from the administration and the special education department. She needed the encouragement and knowledge that the special education department would help her,

especially since she was not certified in the field of special education. Snyder (1999) explained in her study of teachers who worked in special education or inclusion classes that support was essential to their success in the classroom.

The department's session also focused on their special reading programs (e.g., Mastery Reading Program for grades first- through third-grade and the Corrective Reading Program for grades four through twelve) that all special education teachers were expected to use with their special education students. Because the orientation did not address such matters as classroom organization, Beth knew that she was going to have depend more on the administration and other special education teachers to help her settle into her new position. Her administrators talked to her and other new teachers in the school about the procedures and rules of the school and the school's academic goals and the philosophy of the school. After talking to the administration, she felt that there was an open door policy with respect to their office that would be helpful to her as a new teacher.

The present principal started in this school about four years earlier. The principal had been specifically selected to work at the school. Since the school was known to have the lowest academic scores, based on the LEAP and Iowa Test scores, and had some of the most difficult discipline problems, it needed a "strong" leadership base. Before the principal came to the school, teacher attrition had been extremely high – about 50 percent. Many beginning teachers and veteran teachers who transferred in from other parishes and states were sent to this school for their first jobs. After one year of teaching in the school many of the teachers would transfer to other schools in the parish or leave teaching to pursue other careers.

In Terrebonne Parish teachers earn seniority in accordance with the number of years they have taught in the parish, and for many years before this study, many teachers did not want to teach at In-Town Elementary School or other schools with similar demographics and reputations. Thus, it was the new teachers or veteran teachers from other parishes or states who filled the vacancies in the schools with behavior problems or low academic ratings. Another problem was that In-Town Elementary School had physical condition deficiencies – dusty yard areas without many trees, old buildings, gym and walkways and some inoperable bathrooms. This problem made teachers feel that no one cared about the condition of the school or the people working there. Also, there were problems with students' behavior. The principal found out quickly that she would have to get the discipline situation under control before she could deal with the numerous other problems. During the first months she spent most of her time calling parents and many times the police to come and deal with the discipline problems.

The principal said that, when she first arrived, the situation seemed almost impossible. She explained to me: My first job was to pick up the morale of the teachers, and the second job was to gain control of the discipline” (Interview 1). She assigned the vice principal particular duties to deal with the student body, and she took on the task of building a “workable” relationship with her staff. She encouraged strong veteran teachers from other schools to transfer and work with her at the school, and many did. Some new teachers chose to work at the school. Attitudes of the students and the faculty improved once the administration began their work to address discipline problems of the school. The attrition rate for teachers dropped to about 30 percent during the past four years. In addition, the principal made strides to improve the overall condition of the

school. Overall, the administration was the “backbone” of the school, and without their support and guidance, new teachers like Beth might not have stayed teaching at In-Town Elementary School.

Punch and Tuetteman (1997) found that school administrators’ support of beginning teachers can alleviate much of the stress on those teachers. The principal at the school where Beth taught gave recognition and support to the teachers, including Beth. The principal said that once she got those two areas – student discipline and teacher morale – more settled she could then begin working on the academic problems of the school. The principal was able to get the community and church support for improving of the school grounds.

The administration was able to encourage their teachers by giving incentives for their attendance at school. At one of the faculty meetings that I attended, the principal gave away tickets to a local performance of a Broadway play to the teacher who did not miss any days of school during the month of October. Since there were several teachers who had not missed days, the principal drew from a box the name of one teacher for the prize. This sort of thing was an ongoing incentive for the teachers. Teachers were encouraged to attend workshops to learn new techniques and strategies through programs supported by grants and funds donated to the school. Improvement on the academic side of the school has been a slow process, but improvement was visible during the year that I was able to do the study. The Iowa Test and LEAP scores have been slowly rising during the past four years since the arrival of the new administration.

Beth knew coming into the position that the administration had a vision for the school – to provide a well grounded education as well as a feeling of safety and a loving

atmosphere. Very seldom did I ever hear teachers raise their voices or belittle students, and most of the teachers used positive feedback with their students. The principal carried a pocket full of coupons to use as a reward system and singled students out and rewarded them with these coupons during the day. It was public knowledge – through the newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, and state web site – that the school had the lowest tests scores on the LEAP and Iowa Test scores in the parish. Thus, it was the job of the administration to keep the morale of the teachers up as well as work towards improving the scores of the students.

According to Beth, the administrators were “good role models.” Beth said that their enthusiasm, energy, and dedication to the students were “contagious” (Interview 7: p. 8). The school, which was extremely large, housed as many as 800 students, grades Pre-K to sixth-grade, and the administrators stayed busy. As I walked around the campus, I saw the vice principal talk with the teachers and students in the hallways and on the school grounds. The principal also walked around the campus checking on the business of the school. As difficult as it seemed because of the size of the school, the administrators were highly visible to the teachers and their students.

If Beth had any questions concerning her teaching assignments, which changed during the school year from being a special education teacher, working with a small number of students, to being a first-grade teacher in a self-contained classroom, the administrators answered those questions to the best of their ability. For teachers like Beth the support that was given during a transition from a special education teacher to a “regular” education teacher was vital to their transition into their new positions

(cf. Snyder, 1999), so if the administrators did not know the answers to Beth's questions, they needed to find someone who did know the answers. To my knowledge, she consulted with the principal as many as eight to nine times throughout the year about the students' needs, her own personal needs, or her professional needs. If she needed suggestions in dealing with her students or their parents she felt that she could talk to the administrators about those concerns. Beth gave an account in an interview of an occasion when a parent came to school and began criticizing her for the academic problems that his child was having in her classroom. This occurred right after she assumed the regular education position that had been held by her mentor. The parent complained about the grades of his child, and he strongly suggested that if Beth could not help in the situation he would take the matter to the Central Office. She immediately told her principal about the situation and received reassurance. The principal stepped in immediately and helped her so that the problem would not escalate. It was obvious by the manner in which Beth spoke about the administrators – always smiling, complimentary – that they were helpful to her during what would have been a difficult year, given the changes in teaching assignments and other challenges.

The experience that Beth had with her administrators supports the findings of studies by Chapman (1984), Punch and Tuetteman (1996), and Marlow, Inman, and Betancourt-Smith (1997). These researchers found that administrative support helps reduce attrition rate of first-year teachers. For Beth and other teachers in the school, the administrators' positions of working closely through observations, interactions, helping with discipline, and providing morale "boosters and incentives" were the key to keeping new and experienced teachers in their school.

Personal and Family Relationships

Relationships with her parents. Beth, who was born and raised in suburbs of Houma, seldom spoke about her parents or siblings in her interviews. She had two younger brothers, ages 23 and 16. Her father, who had lived in Baton Rouge as a child and came to Houma to work when he was a young man, worked in the oil field business since Beth was a child, and traveled overseas to work on oil rigs. Her mother, who was of Russian ancestry, had stayed home to raise the children. I asked her if she had any “Cajun” blood in her. She said she did not, but her husband’s family did and had she learned much from his family about being a Cajun. When I asked her about her childhood compared to her students’ lives, she mentioned that, since her family had lived through the hardships of the oil crunch of the seventies, she understood what it was like to watch every penny you had and not see your father for long periods of time.

During her first year of teaching, Beth dealt with illness of her father and the death of two family members. Her father had to have by-pass surgery at Terrebonne General Medical Center, and she expressed deep concern for him. This situation, much like Jane’s with her husband, caused Beth much concern about the time she had to spend away from her students. During this medical emergency, which occurred soon after Beth took the first-grade class as her own, she was torn as whether to stay with her students or go to the hospital to be with her family. She decided to take the days off and had to do much to get ready to be away. After the fact, she thought it would have been easier to have stayed with her students than to plan materials for a substitute teacher. When she was with her father, she worried about her students, and when she was with her students, she felt that she should be with her family. Time away from school was difficult for

Beth, as it had been for Jane. Also, Beth had to get the students back on track when she came back to her classroom. Her students were unruly, and it took several days to reinstate her rules and procedures.

Relationship with her husband. Beth's husband was supportive of her work. He helped around the house, washed dishes, and picked up the baby's toys. He cooked and played with the baby when she had to work late. She felt that she neglected her husband during the first year of teaching, and she said,

Now, my husband ... I really don't spend any time with him. He watches television, and I do school work. I don't think that I've taken a whole lot of time away from my daughter, but I think I've taken time away from him." (Interview 10: p. 6)

Beth explained to her husband that, if she got a job teaching, he would have to help her with the chores and help with the baby when it was necessary. When she was offered the position at the school, they were both ready for her to accept it (Interview 1: p. 3). They wanted the extra income and felt that if she worked outside of the home, their financial situation would improve, but according to Beth neither realized the time that would be taken from her family when she began to work (Interview 4: p. 7). She recalled a comment her husband made during the school year when she mentioned that she would like to open a day care center, since she loved babies and enjoyed working with that age group. Her husband told her, "No! If you ever get another job, it's going to be a job where you leave your work at work" (Interview 12: p. 2).

There was only one other time that Beth remembered her husband complaining about her spending so much time at home on school work. It was Good Friday, school was out, and she had planned to do her lesson plans, grade papers, and do any extra school work that she needed before sitting back and relaxing for the coming week off.

She said her husband told her, “No! No! I am off for three days. You have ten days off. You are taking this time with me.” She did take the days off and enjoyed the time with her husband and baby. She did not speak about what they did during the holidays, except to say that she had a good rest, and she explained, “I spent pretty much the whole week just being with my little girl and enjoying every minute of it. And I didn’t start school work until Friday night” (Interview 12: p. 1). She said that before that day, her husband had never complained, and she had not realized that he was disturbed by how much time she was spending away from the family on weeknights and weekends. She said,

I find that I always, you know, in the back of my mind, [think] I have to do this, I have to do that. I won’t take away from my daughter because she is my number one priority, but it’s like my daughter can’t wait but my husband can because he’s older and he can fend for himself. I find that I really don’t take away from her too much, but I do from him because at night when I feel like I should be winding down ... I don’t. I don’t (Interview 12: p. 1)

Relationship with her daughter. Beth was the only first-year teacher in the study who had a child. As was said earlier, Beth made her daughter her “number one priority,” but several times during the study, that priority interfered with her commitment to her students. Beth said in frustration:

With the baby, I’m limited to what I can do [at home] during the day. Clean house and that’s about it. I don’t do any school work when she’s up because I can’t concentrate. So I have to wait until nighttime and by that time I’m exhausted. (Interview 13: p. 19)

Beth’s schedule, with time split between family and school, seemed exhausting to her. Her mother-in-law baby-sat for her daughter, who was seven months old at the beginning of the study, so that Beth could go to work. She described her schedule for weekdays in the following way: She got up about 6:00 a.m., dropped her daughter off at her mother’s in-law about 7:00 a.m., and headed to work. In the afternoon, as soon as she

straightened her classroom for the next day, and took a few minutes to talk to the other first-grade teacher about the day's activities, she rushed to pick up her daughter, usually around 4:00 p.m. If she had a faculty meeting, it might be as late as 5:00 p.m. Beth then went home and played with her daughter while cooking supper until her husband came home. She did not do any schoolwork until she put her baby to bed, which could be as early as 7:00 p.m. or could be much later. Then, and only then, Beth would begin grading papers, filing tests, or making manipulatives until quite late – between 11 p.m. and 12:00 a.m. Finally, she went to bed, hoping that the baby would sleep through the night. The next day she got up early to begin the routine all over again (Interview 5: p.16).

During several interviews, Beth likened her role as mother to her role as a teacher (cf. Bullough & Knowles, 1991; Bullough, Knowles, & Crow, 1989; Ganser, 1999). She compared her motherly feelings for her child to those for her students who she felt, did not have, in all cases, the love and attention that they deserved (Interview 15: p. 7).

Relationship with other family members and friends. Rarely did Beth talk about other family members or friends, although I knew that she had other relatives living nearby. As mentioned earlier, Beth had her grandfather and an aunt, who lived in the town of Houma, pass away near the time of her father's surgery. It was an extremely difficult time for Beth, because she had already spent much time away from her students with her father's surgery and was feeling the stress of the new position during this time of mourning and loss (Interview 9: p. 7).

Even though there were conflicts during the year, Beth felt that her husband and parents understood and respected her position as a teacher. She did feel, like Mary and

Jane, that some people, in general, did not understand how difficult it was “to juggle” a family and a teaching career. She seemed hurt when friends and family members made critical comments to her about the time she spent working after school. She said, “The people think that we have the benefit of having the summer and the holidays off, that should make up for I guess the time that I put in after school and on weekends” (Interview 10: p. 6). She felt that they did not believe that she needed to work that hard. They thought that she should be able to leave her work at school at the end of the day, as other people do in other jobs.

Case Study: Susan Guidry

Susan Guidry, who was 24 years old when the study began, taught seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade special education classes at East Junior High School, where she had once been a student herself. She was born and reared just outside of Houma, Louisiana. Her family, who are Cajuns, have a farming background and have lived in southern Louisiana for three generations. Susan, who married during the study (and separated from her husband), was living in the city of Houma. She, like the other three first-year teachers, had her degree from Nicholls State University; she was certified in secondary mathematics and history as well as all levels of special education. For her, a good teacher was someone who showed concern for her students’ academic as well as for their personal welfare, kept order in her classroom, and was actively involved with the staff of her school – both in the school and out of the school setting. She was not able to create the kinds of relationships she had hoped with her students, and she had some struggles with the special education department in her parish. For Susan, a major priority was her role coaching the girls' basketball team. As a former student and basketball

player at East Junior High School, she had fond memories from her past as a student. She worked well with the other faculty and the administration and seemed to thrive on the personal relationships she formed. Susan was willing to continue teaching at East Junior High School the next year as long as she could teach regular education and continue coaching the girls' basketball team. She was given a mathematics position and also her coaching position for the following year.

School and Classroom Settings

Susan taught a self-contained special education class for seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade. She also coached the girls' seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade girls' basketball team. She worked at the only junior high school that was part of the study – East Junior High School, which is located at the eastern outskirts of Houma, about four miles from Beth Anderson's school, In-Town Elementary School. Susan's school, which stands alongside of the main highway that leads into the city of Houma, was built in 1963. From Susan's classroom window could be seen the same bayou – Bayou LeCompte – as from Jane's classroom window (down the bayou) at Bayou Elementary School.

Susan's classroom on the outer wing of the school facing the highway was situated near the side entrance to the school. On the same wing were a few other special education classrooms and a language arts class and a computer lab. Although she had 16 students, she had at least 25 desks in her room at all times. By the front door of the classroom was a television set which sat on a platform high above the door and was used every morning for the students to watch updated news reports for the state and the country. The wall next to the door had a chalkboard where Susan wrote the objectives

for the day and any assignments for her lessons. On the wall facing the highway were six small windows covered with plastic blinds. The opposite wall had bulletin boards that Susan used to hang students' work for display, students' pictures, and a chart listing consequences and rules. At the back of the classroom were two desks: Susan's desk nearest to the windows and another teacher's desk located by the bulletin boards. On the back wall were shelves which held textbooks, magazines, dictionaries, and art supplies. There was also a large round table set to the back of the classroom between the two desks that Susan used for her Corrective Reading lessons. Earlier in the school year Susan had a broken computer in her classroom against a wall, but by mid-term, it was gone. She also had a stereo system, which she used to play soft music when the students worked on individual classroom projects, and a shelf that was used as a learning center.

Relationships with Students and Their Parents

Relationships with students. Susan had three classes, but I was able to see her work only with her second period class of 12 seventh- and eighth-grade self-contained special education students ranging in ages from 14 to 16. In her interviews she was clear about what type of teacher she wanted to be and how she wanted her students to react to her:

I don't expect to be their best friend or their buddy. I expect them to respect me. I expect them to look at me as a person who is just trying to help them, not a person who is trying to ridicule them and make fun of them or trying to make them feel stupid. I'm hoping that they see me as someone they feel safe with, and they are not afraid to answer questions. I hope that they have fun. Learning shouldn't be boring. (Interview 1: p. 6)

Her idea of how she wanted to relate to her students seemed to be a reaction to memories of teachers she had when she was a student. She recalled how some teachers treated students – with disrespect and ridicule. Susan wanted her students to enjoy her

classes and to trust her as a teacher. Susan did not want to be a teacher who made her students feel stupid and lower their self-esteem. She explained:

I want to be the kind of teacher that students think that they can come to and confide in. I know it isn't a contest about who likes whom best, but I don't want them to dread coming to my class. I want them to either enjoy it or be okay with it, [to] be comfortable and feel like it's a safe environment for them to learn and not feel ridiculed or feel stupid. (Interview 1: p. 6)

My observations showed Susan's efforts to make the lessons interesting. She had the students participate in plays, using art to make brochures, pamphlets, and masks for their plays. She encouraged her students to read books and magazines during their spare time. Susan had her student teachers do hands-on activities with the students and other interactive activities that should have encouraged participation (Interview 9: p. 1). When there were activities, most students seemed to enjoy the lessons. However, some students took those opportunities to sleep in class.

Perhaps out of pure frustration or lack of knowledge about how to get the students on task or interested in being in school, there were times when she treated her students in a manner that she did not want to treat them. She criticized them for not participating or not doing their work. At least four or five times when I observed her teaching, she got upset with some of the students who would not participate in the lesson. She said to me, in a frustrated manner, that the students were not trying and did not care about their work. This class began at 7:15 a.m., [and I too found it difficult to stay awake because it was so early], and, for many of the students, it did not take much for them to put their heads down on their desks and go to sleep. She would walk up to the students who tried to sleep in class and tell them to sit up or they would receive an F on their daily class work. Many of the students would sit up for a while, but before the end of the hour and thirty

minute class, they would have their heads on their desks again. One time while I was in the classroom, she questioned a student about her absence from the day before. As I sat there, she asked her why she did not come to school. The student told her she missed class because of personal reasons. Susan told her that she had heard that she was picked up by the police for taking her mother's car the night before and asked if that information was correct. Again the student shrugged her shoulders and tried to go back to sleep. When I observed her teaching, Susan had the most progress with her students when she had hands-on activities planned for a lesson or when the student teachers helped with the lessons. She admitted that it was not easy to get the students to participate in the lessons that she taught because they had to try to read books that were too difficult for them and also because they did not seem interested in reading.

All did not go smoothly with "discipline" that first semester. There were several students who gave Susan a difficult time that semester. Those students talked out of turn, made unnecessary noises, and were rude and disrespectful to Susan. At least five or six times, when I was observing, a teaching assistant from the district, called a Assist Teacher, came into the classroom and talked to different students about their behavior. During the first half of the school year, Susan had more occasions when she needed assistance with students than during the second half of the year. On one occasion, she had problems with a student who threatened her. According to Susan, a student came into her room one day with what Susan called "a bad attitude" (Interview 3: p. 3) and ended up threatening her. A teacher in another classroom called for help for her over the intercom, and the student was taken by the police and the principal from her classroom.

Although some students had difficulties, there was one student that was extremely fond of Susan and even seemed to have a crush on her. He gave her sweet notes and blackberry dumplings for Teacher Appreciation Week, and was most of the time attentive in class.

The second semester, Susan's class members, three students from the first semester and nine new students, were more involved and participated in more of the activities provided. Susan seemed to have built a reputation with the students for being firm on discipline. She explained to me that during the first semester she had to be "a witch." She said, "I was a witch for the first month, but I think that's what has made this second semester so enjoyable. I knew that I had to be strict to make it work. I had to change. Now I find it's easy" (Interview 9: p. 4).

As I mentioned earlier, for Susan, the fact that she worked in the kind of environment that she enjoyed in her youth – "continuation theme" (Lortie, 1975) – was an important part of her success at East Junior High School. I believe that the continuation theme that Lortie spoke about was manifested in Susan's desire to coach the girls' basketball team – to continue the good times she had had when she played basketball at the same school. She said that she related better to her basketball team – The Lady Owls – than to her students (Interview 13: p. 5), and she felt that it was coaching basketball that got her through the year (Interview 14: p.4). Basketball season began in late October and continued through the beginning of February (Interview 1: p. 5). She was always in a good mood when she spoke about her basketball team – smiling. Sometimes she came to class speaking with a slight laryngitis and looking tired from a game the night before, but she felt it was worth it to have had the opportunity to coach

the girls. Susan was in her glory when she was coaching. She bragged on her girls, and, as said earlier, tried to encourage other teachers to come and watch the girls play basketball. When her team won, which was all but two games, she was in her prime. She beamed when she talked about the games that her girls played. Susan seemed to relive her youth through her basketball players (Interview 1: p. 5).

Susan seemed not to want the school year to end because she liked having something to keep her busy. She applied to teach summer school, but did not get the job because the positions were given to teachers with seniority. However, she was looking forward to teaching mathematics next year, at the same school, instead of special education. The new position was going to be seventh-and eighth-grade mathematics and a beginners' algebra course. She was glad in some ways that the year was ending, because she was ready to start a new year with a new teaching assignment and new students (Interview 13: p. 4).

Relationships with students' parents. Since Susan was a special education teacher, she was supposed to have annual IEP meetings with the parents to present plans for their children, but this did not happen for all the students. Susan scheduled and planned for IEP meetings, but many parents did not attend. She mentioned only two face-to-face IEP meetings that parents attended and indicated that most of the "meetings" were held on the phone or by mail. Susan was concerned about the lack of parental involvement (Interview 11: p. 4). For the Open House, not one parent came – a situation reminiscent of Jane's class when only one parent came to Lunch Week activities. On the night of the Open House, Susan and I walked down the halls, and she asked other teachers how their turnout was for Open House. Some said that two or three parents

came, and a few said that they had eight or nine parents attend. She was very unhappy that night and felt that she wasted her evening expecting the parents to come to talk to her. She expressed her frustration:

Until parents want to take that responsibility, nothing is going to change. By the time I get them [the students], a lot of things have happened, and their personalities, how they are, are set. When you've got eighth-graders, you're talking about fourteen-year-olds. You're telling me that I've got to change fourteen-year-olds in 182 days? I don't think so. (Interview 11: p. 5)

As a child Susan had strong support from her own parents. She remembered her parents attending every school function or activity in which she was involved and every basketball game that she played. As a matter of fact, her parents were still attending her school activities. It was difficult for Susan to understand how parents choose not be as involved with their children's lives as her parents had been and still were with hers. The students' parents seem to show so little interest in their children, and for her this had been the most puzzling part of teaching the students that she had this past year.

Professional Relationships

Relationships with other teachers. As a coach for the girls' basketball team, Susan spent much of her spare time with the other coaches at the school. They had sports in common and got together after games to talk, and she sometimes went out to dinner with some of the coaches. She helped the other coaches with their sports activities, for instance, assisting the cheerleader coach with her cheer leading squad. She was dedicated to the sports of the school and rallied support for sports from other teachers. Susan personally invited the other teachers to come to the basketball and football games. One night when I attended one of her games, several of the teachers also attended. They invited me to sit with them, and I was able to say hello to Susan's parents who were also

at the game that night. One of the teachers told me that Susan was a “good person” and that she was happy to come and support Susan and her team. She told me the next day that there were several teachers, even a teacher who never attended games before, who came to her games because she had invited them. She showed me the thank-you notes that she was sending the teachers who had been attending the games.

Chester and Beaudin (1996) found in a large study of 173 newly hired and novice teachers that support from experienced teachers was vital to their self-efficacy beliefs. They needed to know that other teachers in the school liked them and supported them. This was the case with Susan, who spent long hours working on her relationship with other teachers. She felt that she had a good rapport with the other teachers at the school (Interview 1: p. 3). Susan had the self-confidence that was needed to get through a tough year, and the emotional support that she gained from the staff was an enormous boost to her self-image. She originally thought that her relationship may have been based on the fact that she was a former student at the school; nevertheless, she felt good about her relationship with the teachers. When I spoke to teachers about her, most had nothing but good things to say about her. One teacher said that she had school spirit, which was important to the school. Her principal and vice principals saw her as a person who took pride in her students and her basketball team. Other teachers liked her enthusiasm, and several remembered her as an outgoing sports-driven student. They felt that she continued that same attitude in her teaching and her coaching. Susan said,

I came here as student. A lot of the teachers I had, when I was a student, are still here. I had a very good experience here as a student. I was a little nervous because they had so many new people, but everyone greeted me with open arms. It is so nice. It makes me feel so wanted. (Interview 1: p. 3)

She did feel that it was important to be related to as a colleague and not as a prior student, but as with Lortie's (1975) findings, teachers often like Susan, want to teach in a school that was or resembled the school that they attended as a young student – the continuation theme. Earlier in the school year Susan said, "Some teachers still see me as a student. They don't see me as a peer teacher, so that was kind of weird" (Interview 1: p. 3). She seemed to strive for that acceptance.

So far this year I have been to every volleyball game. I have been to football games and to dances. I am trying to make myself well-known and well-liked. Susan said, I think that I am still getting to know the faculty, and they are still deciding, "Hey, do we like her, or do we not like her?" (Interview 1: p. 5)

As the year continued, Susan felt that the teachers in her school were extremely helpful. The teachers who shared the same planning time gave her pointers on teaching reading and English. She said, "I'm lucky that I'm off with a lot of the reading and English teachers. They'll always interject things. If I ever need help, I know they'll help me" (Interview 8: p. 3).

Susan was accepted by many of the teachers. Much stress was alleviated from Susan because of the relationship that she had with the other teachers – the kind of "praise and recognition from fellow colleagues" that Punch and Tutteman (1996) found to be so important for new teachers. Susan's efforts to befriend other teachers and the work that she had accomplished through sports and socializing at the school did not go unnoticed. She made many friends and enjoyed going out to dinner and the movies with them. By the end of the year, it was the many new teacher friends who helped her get through a tough time in her personal life.

As for the special education teachers at her school, she mostly had positive relations with them. Susan spoke frequently and favorably about one particular special

education teacher at her school. This teacher was her supervisor when she was a student teacher, and he was the head of the special education teachers at the school. When she needed help with writing an IEP or understanding paperwork sent from the Central Office, she knew that he would help.

Finally, Susan was given an opportunity as a special education teacher to have two student teachers from Nicholls State University work in her classroom from January until early May. These young women observed Susan teach and were allowed to teach lessons to Susan's class. They were extremely helpful to her during those months with the students. She worked well with the student teachers, and they seemed to learn much from their experience in the classroom (Interview 9: pp. 1, 2, 5).

Relationship with mentor. Susan's mentor was a mathematics teacher who taught ninth-grade honors algebra in a wing of the school building that was entirely separate from Susan's. Since their lesson plan times were at different periods of the day, there were few opportunities for the two teachers to work together. After completing the practice assessment in the fall, the mentor met with Susan and gave her suggestions for improving her lesson. She also told her about her strengths. This was the only major interaction that they had as mentor and protégé; thus when the practice assessment was completed, unless she had any questions, the two rarely saw each other for the rest of the year. Susan and her mentor said in their interviews that the situation they had, with the mentor being a mathematics teacher and Susan being a special education teacher, made it difficult for the two of them to work together. For Susan and her mentor there was no relationship to establish (cf. French, 1997) as like there was for the other three beginning teachers. Her mentor tried to advise her early on in the year, and whatever the mentor did

not know, she found someone who could help (Interview 1: p. 8). Her mentor felt that it was important to give suggestions and then allow her to act on those suggestions much like the mentors in Dooley's (1998) study.

As a special education teacher, Susan needed and wanted guidance from someone who could relate to the students whom she taught. She explained that a teacher of honors algebra could not provide that guidance and mentorship that she needed. Susan said, "She [the mentor] felt so bad. We got along so well. It wasn't her fault. It wasn't my fault. It was not a match up" (Interview 13: p. 6). There was no one in special education trained and certified to be a mentor in the district (Interview 1: p. 8). Her mentor explained to me in her interview that she was able to share important deadlines and information with Susan to prepare her for her final assessment, but as far as guidance in preparing a special education lesson for her final assessment, she said she did not know how to help. However, she was able to get help from the head of special education at her school who gave her suggestions and went over what she needed to cover during her final assessment (Interview 1: p. 9).

Relationships with the administrators. Susan had three administrators: a principal and two assistant principals. She also had special education supervisors and a facilitator from the Central Office, who worked with several teachers in the parish. The principal and assistant principals at the school were extremely busy with discipline problems and paperwork in their offices and were seldom seen visiting classes. Interactions were few in number. There were only a few times that I saw an administrator visit Susan's class, and that was to ask her questions about particular students. As I walked through the halls, I saw different administrators talking to teachers and students. Once when Susan's

class had a play, the principal was invited, and he came to watch the students' performance. According to Susan, the only other time that she was observed by an administrator was for her practice assessment in the fall and her formal assessment in the spring. Other than that, every now and then, an administrator might poke his head in the door during a lesson to say hello.

Susan explained that she was recruited by the principal for the special education position that she was teaching (Interview 1: p. 9). She did not have the difficulty finding a permanent position, especially since she was a special education teacher (cf. Boe et al., 1998). She had done her student teaching at the school, and as soon as the principal knew that she was available to teach, he called her by phone and offered her a position at the school. There were several openings in the special education department in the school, and he allowed her to choose and rank the three positions she would most like to teach. She said that she was given her second choice because a veteran teacher with seniority in the school got Susan's first choice. Nevertheless, she was extremely satisfied with the position that she received – seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade special education reading and spelling classes (Interview 1: p. 2).

She spoke kindly of the assistant principals. One of her assistant principals was actually her basketball coach when she went to Bayou Land High School, which was also located in the city of Houma (Interview 1: p. 9). As a student and a basketball player, Susan had had some difficulties with him when he was her coach, but as a colleague and a coach herself, she seemed to get along quite well with him. The other assistant principal was "wonderful," according to Susan (Interview 1: p. 9). This particular assistant principal was also her inside assessor (i.e., the person assigned at the school to

assess new teachers for the State Assessment Program). She got along well with him, and he seemed to like her. He told me during our interview that he thought that Susan was doing a “great job.” During his two observations and the few times that he was able to walk into the room for a minute, he felt that she had “good” classroom management. As did the principals in Brock and Grady’s 1998 study, Susan’s vice-principal equated “good” teaching with “good” classroom management skills. When he walked into her classroom the students were always quiet, and she hardly ever sent students to the office for discipline problems. If she did, it was for serious offenses. He said that he felt she did a good job during her assessment, and he liked the fact that she was able to get her students to participate in her lessons. She had much respect for this person, and felt that if she had a problem, or a need as a new teacher, she could go to him for help or advice. Susan prided herself on not being afraid to approach her principal or assistant principals with concerns she had with her classroom, students, or other teachers (Interview 1: p. 10; Interview 2: p. 2). She also felt that the administrators thought of her as a working teacher – instructing students, coaching basketball, and attending extracurricular activities. Susan said,

I think we have a good relationship because they know that I know what I am doing. And they know that They know that I am good at it because they have all seen me. Once again I’m not just a seven to two-fifteen teacher. They have seen me at all the games and tournaments. They have seen me at all the away games. All that kind of stuff. They know that I am not in it just for the paycheck, that I am in it because I want to be involved. (Interview 1: p. 9)

Susan seemed to have some difficulty in her relationship with the Central Office’s special education personnel. She would have liked more support from the Central Office personnel; she wanted more visitations and more access.

Early in the school year, Susan decided that she would not continue as a special education teacher the next year, and, when a mathematics position became available for the coming year, she accepted it. In connection with the feelings of Susan, Chapman (1984) and other researchers found that first-year teachers need help and guidance, and if they do not get it, many times they leave the teaching profession. She did not leave the profession entirely, but she left a field of education that is desperately trying to retain certified teachers.

Personal and Family Relationships

Relationships with her parents. Susan's parents lived in the suburbs of Houma all of her life. Her father worked in the oil industry, and her mother worked in the business department at the Houma Medical Center in the town of Houma. Her grandparents were farmers, and when her mother went to work, Susan and her younger brother spent many a day working in the fields on their grandparents' farm.

Susan's parents were extremely supportive as she was growing up, and the support continued, as mentioned above, when Susan became a teacher. During her first year of teaching, they attended all of her basketball games, her Open House, and her Awards Ceremony (Interview 11: p. 4). They helped her prepare her classroom and bought many of the supplies that she needed to set up her room (Interview 13: p. 6). Her parents were proud of her, and they were there for her throughout the school year when she was going through some rough times. As mentioned earlier, the relationship that Susan had with her parents made it difficult at times for her to understand the different sort of family patterns of the students that she taught.

Relationship with her husband. When the study began, Susan was married. She had been married about two years to a policeman who worked the night shift. Her position as a teacher and the girls' basketball coach kept her busy from six in the morning until ten or so at night (Interview 13: p. 5), and her husband worked the graveyard shift and was never around during the day. Susan did not say whether or not her husband supported her teaching career. In fact, she rarely spoke about him during the entire school year, until early in April when she informed me that she was getting a divorce. For the rest of the year she spent much of her extra time, after school, adjusting to living alone and trying to get through the days with her students. She did say that if her school year had been any more difficult – her divorce, her assessment, the students' assessment, and her disruptive students – she did not know how she would have survived the year (Interview 15: p. 3). Some days were fine and other days were difficult. She sometimes came to school exhausted from sleepless nights. Her support system during this difficult time was composed of both her family and her friends, including many of the teachers and coaches with whom she worked (Interview 13: p. 5).

Relationships with other family members and friends. Susan did not mention many friends outside of her teacher friends. She did say that she felt that most of her family understood her position as a teacher because several other members in her family were also in the teaching profession. Her aunt was a home economics teacher, and a great aunt and great uncle were both principals.

Conclusions

As the preceding pages show, all four beginning teachers wanted to be “good” teachers, and, to all of them, being a good teacher meant having particular kinds of

relationships with students, administrators, and other teachers. However, they differed in the kinds of relationships they sought and achieved. Mary valued being “professional” in all these kinds of social interactions; Jane sought to foster the emotional as well as intellectual development of her students and tried to fill a kind of protégé role herself to learn more about teaching from administrators and other faculty as mentors; Beth tried to form a relationship with her mentor but instead reached out to another teacher who seemed to relate to her during a time that she needed guidance and encouragement – moving from being a special education teacher to a classroom teacher; and Susan wanted to engage her students—excite them about learning—and establish close connections with administrators and other teachers.

There was another kind of definition of “good” teacher that also impacted their first year of teaching – that defined in the state credentialing procedures and in the state accountability system. All four teachers were in a probationary period, and their certification was dependent upon their first-year assessment, which relied to a great extent on observations. The assignment of a formal mentor was associated with this assessment, since the mentor was supposed to help prepare the new teacher for observations and evaluation. Also, in the current accountability climate, the quality of a teacher is often determined on the basis of students’ scores on high-stakes tests, such as the LEAP or Iowa Test. For three of the teachers – Mary, Jane, and Beth – much of the teaching had to be directed toward the tests.

These four cases illustrate the importance of other relationships too – relationships with family and friends – which had a great bearing on how the year progressed for each of the teachers: Mary’s support from her very involved parents;

Jane's struggle to do well in both realms of her life; Beth's priorities for where her attention would go; and Susan's failed marriage but her supportive network of family and friends.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE CASES

The four case studies reported in Chapter Four are accounts of the lives of four new teachers during the course of an entire school year, as they checked out, and accommodated, their expectations through actual experience. In this chapter, I consider similarities and differences across the four cases, focusing first on their expectations for the year and then on the relationships that the individuals had with their administrators, their mentors, other teachers, and their students. After that, I discuss what went into the decision that all four made to stay in teaching for another year. I organize this comparison with respect to the five kinds of questions that I asked in the study. My conclusion, which follows the comparison, considers the contributions that are made by the study.

The First-Year Teachers' Expectations

The first questions that guided the study were as follows: What are the expectations and perceptions of the four beginning teachers participating in the study?
How do their perceptions change over the course of the year?

All four beginning teachers—Mary, Jane, Beth, and Susan—wanted to be "good" teachers and thought that they would be good teachers, but they had different ideas about what made someone a good teacher.

Mary, whose own mother was a teacher at the school where she taught, emphasized the competence of a teacher. Competence for her meant being prepared with her lessons, keeping her students on task, being able to adjust to unexpected occurrences, knowing the policies and procedures of the school, and not needing much assistance from others. She wanted to be firm but not too strict with her students—wanted them to respect her—and she wanted “professional relationships” with the administrators and

other teachers. In contrast to Mary, Jane emphasized connectedness. She wanted to be a nurturer, whose students knew that she cared for them, and she too wanted to be nurtured in her relationships with her colleagues. In her view, a “good” new teacher would not have all the answers but should be able to get them from those who had more experience. Beth, who had done her student teaching at the school where she experienced her first year as a teacher, believed that good teachers can do well with “difficult” students. She knew that her school had a reputation for having difficult students in regards to behavior and also had a reputation for lack of achievement. However, she also knew that a new administration had made changes and that the school now also had a reputation for supporting the faculty and helping students develop positive self images. Even though she considered herself a good teacher, she realized that she had much to learn, particularly since she was teaching out of her area of specialization. Like Jane, she thought she could learn much about teaching in a mentor-protégé relationship. Finally, Susan thought a good teacher should motivate her students to learn—get them engaged in their learning. She seemed to see the level of student interest and engagement as criteria of the quality of her teaching. In joining a faculty, she would be joining a social group of people who could be friends as well as colleagues. New teachers might need advice, and they should be open to suggestions and feedback. They should have access to those who can provide guidance

How did these perceptions change? For two participants, there seemed to be major shifts, and they were in the area of connectedness with colleagues. Mary thought, toward the end of the year, that it would have been better for her to develop closer relationships with other teachers. Toward the end of the study, she was thinking that a

good teacher establishes collaborative relationships with other teachers. On the other hand, Jane felt that she should have not tried to get so close with the principal; she had depended on her too much. She seemed to be thinking that a good teacher does not rely too much on others.

The other two participants – Beth and Susan – did not really have changes in their ideas about what a good teacher is. However, they did seem to change their expectations for what they personally could accomplish. Both felt somewhat disillusioned about their own abilities and preparation with respect to special education and believed that they could be good teachers but only in regular classrooms.

Their Relations with Students

The second focus was on students: How do these beginning teachers relate to their students? How do they "manage" their classrooms?

All four of the beginning teachers wanted to establish positive relationships with their students, but how they went about their relationships varied. Mary believed in being clear to her students about what was acceptable in the classroom, how they were to approach their work, and how they were to behave, and then in being consistent in her own behavior with them. She wanted to treat them with respect and have them treat her with respect, and that – respectfulness – is what characterized their interactions for the most part. She had developed what some people call “a classroom management plan” and others call “a leadership plan,” with the various rules and procedures she and the students would follow, and she enforced it with little modification or difficulty throughout the year. She assigned particular seats for the students, not only when they sat at their desks but also when they sat on the floor. Even though her classroom seemed

organized and orderly, her instructional approaches were not all seat work and drill activities. She also included what she called the “fun stuff” – interactive learning activities with much student participation.

The other first-grade teacher at the school, Jane also had rules and procedures, but she did not enforce them in the same manner as Mary. Mary corrected a student in front of others, but Jane pulled individual students aside and talked with them quietly about their offenses and tried to reason with them. She gave them the option of isolating themselves while they did their work. Sometimes she lowered conduct grades without telling the individuals who misbehaved because she did not want to embarrass them in front of the other students. Jane explained that the memories she had as a young student were not always fond memories. She said she had teachers who reprimanded her for being shy and speaking in a soft voice, and she did not want to be that type of teacher. In a number of ways she was like the "mother-nurturer" mentioned in Bullough et al.'s (1991) study. She felt that if she treated her students in a kind manner they would be more responsive. Jane tried to have some interactive lessons, but they were at a minimum because she feared that the students would become too disorderly and also because she thought she did not have time to do the planning they required. She often worried about "getting through" to her students and questioned her ability to communicate with them.

At In-Town Elementary, Beth sought to foster the kinds of relationships with students that were valued by others in her school context and that fit the school mission – treating the students with respect and teaching them to have a positive attitude. The “management” program at Beth's school was not a program like Mary and Jane's where

the focus was on behavior, but the focus was on having a positive image: "You can do, and you can be anything that you want to be." Only once at that school did I ever hear a teacher raise her voice to her students. Beth was extremely proud of her students, and this fact showed in the manner in which she treated them – bragging about their accomplishments and hugging them. She often reminded them to "make good choices" not "bad choices." When they did make what she considered to be good choices, they were rewarded with a big hugs and grins. When they made what she saw as bad choices, she sat them down and talked to them about those choices, asking them if they could have done things differently. To some extent, she was the "motherly" type, like Jane. She was a mother, and felt that her experience as a mother enhanced her "nurturing" tendencies. She worried about her students – about their well being – and wanted them to come to her in time of need. The belief that the students needed her and she needed to be there for them helped her survive the rough times. Beth was very much "service oriented" like the first-year teachers studied by Lortie (1975) and Joseph and Green (1986).

Finally, Susan, who taught adolescents instead of young children, emphasized engagement in her interactions with her students at East Junior High. She wanted her students to be active learners, interested in the material being considered in class and eager to learn. She wanted to make a difference in their lives—turn them on to learning. It was important to her for the students to be motivated in her class and to enjoy the class. She tried to make her lessons “interesting,” and, even though they probably would be considered interesting by most people, it was difficult for the students to stay focused in a class that began at 7:15 a.m. Some of the students could hardly keep their eyes open. Many said how they stayed up most of the night watching television or playing video

games. Some mornings, she spent more time trying to keep her students awake than teaching a lesson. She had no “management” program displayed in the classroom: conduct charts or consequences charts. If Susan's students misbehaved, she tried to reason with them, and if the problems persisted, she either asked for help from the “Assist Teacher,” gave the students extra work for punishment, or sent them to the vice-principal’s office. As a coach, she formed strong relationships with her basketball players – stronger, it seemed, than with her students. She said she had more in common with her players, since she played basketball at the same school when she was a young girl.

Their Relations with Other Teachers

The third question focused on their colleagues and peers: How do the first-year teachers relate to other teachers in their schools?

The four beginning teachers’ relations with other teachers also varied. Mary, who knew most of the teachers before she took her position at Bayou Elementary, consciously limited most of her interactions to those with Jane, her mentor, and her mother. She had gone to the university with Jane, the other first-year teacher in the school, and they had a very friendly relationship: calling each other on the phone almost nightly and having dinner together on occasion. She spent time discussing her teaching – instructional strategies and other factors – and her assessment with the mentor assigned by the district. The mentor, whom Mary respected and appreciated, was happy to provide assistance, but she kept her distance as long as she thought Mary could handle herself in the classroom.

Since Mary had attended the school when she was young and since her mother was a teacher there, it was important to her that the other teachers treat her as an adult and as another teacher—not simply as a former student and as her mother’s daughter. She tried to show, and succeeded in showing, them that she was a capable teacher. She did not interact much with many of the other teachers and thus experienced some of the isolation spoken of by Marlow, Inman, and Betancourt (1997). Toward the end of the year, she regretted the distancing, and she planned to change that for the next year.

Jane, on the other hand, knew few people when she arrived at Bayou Elementary School. In fact, Mary was the only teacher she knew at the school. Jane wanted to be friendly with the other teachers, and she visited with them, during breaks, when she had time. Like the first-year teachers in Chester and Beaudin’s (1996) study, she was glad that she was in a setting where the other teachers were supportive and encouraging. She did not have a problem asking for advice and took being critiqued as part of the learning process. It is possible that room assignment was a factor in the relationships established by Mary and Jane, since Jane had a classroom in the main building, upstairs near the principal’s office, her mentor’s classroom, and other teachers’ rooms, and Mary’s classroom was in a portable building behind the main building. Jane and Mary would share ideas and would also talk to Mary’s mentor about concerns they might have had about their students or their instruction. One other teacher, in particular, provided much support and encouragement to Jane: Mary’s mother, who was the mentor assigned by the district. The two of them established a protégé-mentor relationship that was similar to that of teacher-student—a pattern pointed out in a study by Ganser (1999). Even though Jane wanted the mentor to take the lead (cf. French, 1997; Huffman & Leak, 1986), she

was often the one to initiate interactions, going to the more experienced teacher for advice. Since their rooms were close, she was able to speak to her whenever she needed. Jane believed that her mentor was supposed to support and guide her through the entire year, especially during her assessment period. Jane did have the support that she wanted, and she knew that she could reveal her vulnerabilities in the safe, supportive relationship (Appleton & Kindt, 1999).

In In-Town Elementary, a much larger school than Bayou Elementary, Beth had a difficult time getting to know the other teachers in her school. She did, however, have access to the other teachers at her grade level, since they were all housed together in the same wing. They had monthly grade level meetings so that everyone could meet and discuss lessons and activities for the students. By doing so, Beth had the opportunity to talk to her peers. She had little time to socialize or mingle with other teachers, but she did create a friendship with one particular first-grade teacher--a young beginning teacher, with three years of experience, who was open to helping Beth "learn the ropes" of being a first-grade teacher. As for the first-year teachers in Chester and Beaudin's (1996) study, the relationship with this other teacher was extremely important to Beth. The support she received made her feel a sense of self-efficacy that was evident in many of the studies on teacher relationships. Beth wanted to share ideas with the other teachers and talk to them about what was working and what was not working.

Beth's experiences with her first assigned mentor contrasted with Mary and Jane's experiences with theirs. Beth did not feel secure in her relationship with her first assigned mentor, even though she respected the mentor's teaching abilities, her knowledge, and her rapport with the students. After the first mentor went on sabbatical,

she was assigned a new mentor, whom she never really got to know, since the teacher taught another grade and subject, had a different planning period, and was in a different wing. Besides, both seemed to limit the mentor-protégé role to Beth's assessment, believing that since the formal assessment was completed, their work together was basically over. However, Beth did need help with the closing of school and still had questions about rules and procedures of the school, classroom management, and lesson plans. When there was no involvement by the new mentor, Beth became even closer in her relationship with the other first-grade teacher who became her confident and supported her in the ways that her trained mentors had not.

Probably the most "social" of the four new teachers, Susan saw her relationship with other teachers as an important aspect of her first year teaching, and she established social relations as well as professional relations with many of them. These teachers, like the teachers in Chester and Beaudin's (1996) study, provided the support that seemed to enhance Susan's self-efficacy beliefs. Susan was known to be a hard worker and a fine teacher by the other teachers. She said three or four times during the study that she did not want to be known as a "7 to 2:15" kind of teacher. Susan had a difficult year, and the emotional support she gained from the staff was an enormous help to her self-image. Susan worked at having a relationship with the other teachers. She invited them to her basketball games and they went to restaurants, to the Mall, and to the movies. She helped the other coaches with their teams and offered assistance to other teachers who needed help. Susan, like Mary, had been a student at the school where she was now a teacher, and she too worried that the teachers might not see her as a colleague. Like Mary, she tried to convince the teachers, by her dedication to her work and her students that she

should be taken seriously. Many remembered how active she was as a student and were glad to see her continued enthusiasm as a teacher.

Susan had some difficulties relative to mentor assignment, since her mentor taught in a different subject area. The mentor would not have answers to the many of her questions, and the two had little time to get together. However, because of policy relative to the state-required mentor program, the two had to form some type of relationship in order for Susan to complete the requirements for her assessment. Her mentor did advise her on policy and procedures and tried to help whenever she could. Since Susan seemed self-confident, it made sense to the mentor to keep her distance and allow Susan to use her own approaches to her teaching. After the assessment was completed, the two had little contact. Susan acknowledged that it was not her mentor's fault that they were mismatched, and (much as was the case with Beth) she found another teacher to become her mentor. This individual advised her on specialized procedures, advised her on discipline matters, and was available to talk whenever she had a problem.

Their Relations with Administrators

The fourth focus was on social interactions with principals and other administrators: What kind of relations do they have with the administrators?

There was a dramatic contrast between the two new teachers at Bayou Elementary in the relationships that they had with their principal. Mary kept her relationship with her administrator as professional, and she seemed happy that the principal did not encourage a personal relationship. She knew that she could approach the principal when she had particular needs, such as discipline problems or questions about rules and procedures of the school, but she rarely needed any kind of assistance from the administration. Jane, on

the other hand, wanted the principal to provide feedback and reassurance relative to her teaching and went frequently to discuss her problems and concerns. She was like many of the first-year teachers mentioned by the researchers (Brock & Grady, 1998; Johnson, 2001; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1997) who wanted frequent visits, feedback, and assurance from their principals that they were doing a good job. Jane thought that she had established a very close relationship with her principal, and she felt that, if her principal had been male, she might not have had such a relationship. However, during the last few months, she thought perhaps she should have been more independent and not relied so much on this individual.

The administrators – a principal and a vice principal – at Beth’s school were very visible: walking around the school, speaking to students and teachers, trying to keep spirits high, staying in touch. Beth admired these administrators for the work they did to change the course of In-Town School, and she felt that she could go to them if she had problems with academics or discipline or needed supplies. She did meet often with one or the other of them. Beth felt that her administration was the "backbone" of the school, and without their support and guidance, she might not have stayed teaching at the school.

Finally, Susan had three administrators – one principal and two vice-principals – all of whom she respected. In particular, she spoke highly about one of the vice-principals, who was also her in-school assessor. If she had problems with students, parents, or other teachers, she knew she could talk to any of the administrators, and they would provide support and assistance. She knew their doors were open to her. To a greater extent than the three other new teachers, Susan wanted affirmation from the administrators. She wanted praise when she felt that praise was warranted. Susan

considered herself a hard worker as a teacher and a basketball coach, and she felt that she should be appreciated for her contribution to East Junior High School. As I watched Susan working with her students and coaching her basketball team, I could see how much she wanted to help her students succeed.

Their Decisions to Stay or Leave

The final question guiding the study was: What goes into the new teachers' decisions to stay in or leave the teaching profession?

During the last few months of the school year, the first-year teachers had make decisions about where they wanted to be the next year. Early in March, all of the teachers in Terrebonne Parish had to sign a letter of intent for their individual schools – a letter designed to tell administrators which teachers wanted to remain and, of those who wanted to stay, which ones were interested in teaching a different grade level. The principals used the information to decide on how many teachers they would need for the coming year. Once all of the letters were turned in, the principals at each school let the teachers, especially the beginning teachers and other teachers new to the school and to the parish, know if they were going to be able to keep the position they were now in or have to transfer to another school. Later during the month of April, each teacher signed another letter of intent—this one designed to find out which teachers were interested in a possible transfer to another school in the parish or had plans of leaving the parish for a sabbatical and other reasons.

All four of the beginning teachers in my study wanted to stay in the teaching profession, but their decisions to stay teaching varied. Mary had no doubt that she wanted to stay in the classroom. Even though, there were times during the year when she

was frustrated and had doubts about staying, in the end she wanted to stay. Sometimes when she would become uncertain about a career in teaching, she considered the complications and cost of beginning a new career. Mary was fortunate in knowing that that her position at Bayou Elementary was safe, since she was teaching one of three third-grade classes and for most of the last 15 years the school had had enough students to justify three classes.

The situation was different for Jane. Her position was not secure at Bayou Elementary School, and she had come into the school thinking that it was a one-year position, since she was replacing a teacher on sabbatical. She had prepared herself for a move, but, to her surprise, a fourth-grade position became available. However, as soon as the offer was made, she knew that she did not want it, because she did not want the responsibility of preparing students for the fourth-grade LEAP test. Simply put, she wanted to stay in third grade. All of her tests and learning centers were made, her lesson plans were written, and she really liked working with the age group. All of these factors led to her decision to transfer to another school and teach third-grade there. As much as she liked the principal, teachers, and students at Bayou Elementary, she was ready for a move since she could not stay in the third-grade. She was also tired of the long drives, 40 miles round trip and tired of getting up at 4:30 each morning to get dressed for school to be there at 6:45. She was also ready to teach in a school nearer to her home – in town. Late in April she received an offer that she accepted: a third-grade position at a school closer to her home.

The other two teachers—Beth and Susan—agreed to stay at the schools where they spent their first year, but they changed their teaching assignments. Beth, like Mary,

had a position at her school if she wanted it. She knew that if she wanted to teach first-grade at In-Town Elementary School, she could. She felt that the students needed her, and she decided to stay for at least one more year. She did say that she wanted to teach a regular class, not an inclusion class for which she felt so unprepared. Her only other decision was which room she would teach in. She wanted to stay in the same room, since she already had her materials there, had good storage space, and liked the location (across the hall from her friend, the other first-grade teacher who had helped her during the past year). In the end, no one took her classroom, and she would be able to stay there for the next year.

Like Beth, Susan had a tough time adjusting to the special education classes that she taught. She was not able to accomplish what she wanted to with her students. When a position in mathematics became available at her school, she quickly accepted the position. She wanted to stay at the school – where she was very happy with the relationships that she had formed during the year with the administrators and staff. She was also offered her coaching position at the school, and that was important to her. There was no doubt in her mind that she wanted to stay teaching as long as she could teach what she wanted and coach the basketball team.

Contributions of the Study

What kind of contribution is made by a study of only four first-year teachers in a unique setting in southern Louisiana? What kinds of insights can be derived from it? The major contribution, it seems to me, is what it has to say about the concept of “good teacher.” All four individuals wanted to be good teachers, and all of them thought of quality in terms of relations with other people, including students, other teachers, and

administrators. Yet they thought about those relationships differently and gave different weights to different kinds of relationships. To Mary, a good teacher was competent, professional, prepared in work with her students, and was not overly dependent on administrators or other teachers. To Jane, a good teacher was a nurturer, who could, in turn, be nurtured and supported by others. To Beth, this nurturing capacity was also important, but she also thought a good teacher was understanding and creative. To Susan, a good teacher motivated her students—got them excited about learning—and was an active contributor to the school community. All considered themselves to be good teachers, but all acknowledged areas they might strengthen. For instance, the latter two teachers thought they were good teachers, but they saw limitations with respect to the students they could teach. They did not feel equipped to teach inclusion or special education classes.

Prior studies have addressed the question of qualities that make for a good teacher. For instance, in Dooley's (1998) study, good teachers were seen as being caring, committed, creative, reflective in thinking, and having internal locus of control; and in Norton's (1997) study, good teachers were described as creative, flexible, enthusiastic, and intuitive in their teaching. These studies focused on qualities that are manifested particularly in the teacher's interactions with students. My study had a broader scope in looking at other relations too that went into the concept of "good" teacher – relations with administrators; with other teachers, including assigned and informal mentors; with the students' parents; and with one's own family.

The new teachers' perceptions of what makes a good teacher were complemented and complicated by data from other sources. The administrators in my study provided

another perspective on what a good teacher is, and most emphasized administrative strengths, though they mentioned other qualities. To them the four beginning teachers were all “good” because they had their classrooms well organized, kept their students on task, did not have many discipline problems, and did not need an excessive amount of assistance. This finding was similar to that of a study by Brock and Grady (1998), who said that administrators thought a “good” teacher had good classroom management skills and believed that every child can learn and should be successful in their ability to learn.

In today’s emphasis on accountability, formal assessments are also relevant to the issue of whether or not a new teacher succeeds as a “good” teacher. The issue of assessment – student and teacher assessment – was a recurring theme in my study. I found that first-year teachers’ assessment for certification was a continual concern for all four first-year teachers and that the high-stakes student assessment (the LEAP and Iowa tests) was for three of the four. These new teachers had official mentors assigned by the district for the purpose of helping them prepare for their assessment for certification – to help them score as good teachers on those evaluations. Interestingly, two of the four, Beth and Susan, had to form mentor-protégé relationships with people other than trained mentors. Beth, because of a conflict of interest, had to turn to another first-grade teacher for guidance. As for Susan, her mentor was teaching in another subject area and was located in another building making it difficult for the two to communicate. These two teachers found someone they knew who could help them.

They talked with me about their concern about completing and passing their assessments. They also voiced their opinions about student assessment and how the results of their students' scores reflected on their first year in the classroom. The outcome

of the assessment of their students had high stakes for all associated with the school, since good scores keep schools from going on probation.

This study was completed in Terrebonne Parish in and around the town of Houma in southern Louisiana. Few studies dealing with first-year teachers have been conducted in the South, and no previous research of this type has been set in “Cajun Country.” Of particular importance is what the study suggests about the importance of “family” – family ties and ties to the community – in a first-year teacher’s life. These beginning teachers depended much on their family’s acceptance and help during their first year of teaching. All four mentioned how their parents supported their choice to teach, and Mary, Jane, and Susan had family members who were teachers or were retired teachers. This close connection to someone who taught has been pointed out before in studies of individuals’ decisions to be teachers (Goddard & Foster, 2001). For Jane and Susan, who were both newly married beginning teachers, support or lack of support by their spouses was important. Beth, the only married first-year teacher with a child, needed and received much support from her husband and other family members. Mary, who was the only single first-year teacher in the study, lived with her parents for most of the study, and considered that essential to her successful year.

The study suggests areas that might receive more attention in future studies: For instance, the first-year teachers’ relations with family and friends received some attention but not much. Further research into the personal lives of beginning teachers could explain much about first-year teachers’ teaching lives. More attention needs to be directed to the impact of teacher assessment and student assessment on beginning

teachers' experiences. Also, research dealing with the relationship of the administrators and mentors with the first-year teachers should continue.

First-year teachers have to deal with opening a school year for the first time, learning the "ropes" of teaching, developing their own teaching style, understanding the culture and how it fits into teaching strategies and classroom management, and adjusting to teaching while still maintaining some type of personal life. Through my study I was able to see how extremely difficult it was for these beginning teachers. Without the support of administrators, other teachers, especially mentors, family, and friends, it would be difficult for a beginning teacher to get through that first year of teaching.

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APPENDIX A

ABSTRACT OF STUDY

1. Study Title: Expectations and Experiences: Case Studies of Four First-Year Teachers

2. Investigators:

Principal Investigator: Sandra B. Hebert, Curriculum and Instruction

Home Phone Number: (985) 868-0230

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Nancy J. Nelson, Curriculum and Instruction

Office Phone Number: (225) 388-2333

3. Description of Study

a. Purpose of Study:

Today there is a severe teacher shortage in the United States – a problem complicated by the numbers of new teachers leaving the profession after only a year in the classroom. Studies examining this problem suggest that the new teachers' experiences in their careers do not match their expectations, particularly with respect to their relations with their students and their colleagues. The proposed investigation, which is designed as case studies of four teachers in southwest Louisiana, is intended to provide insights into individual teachers' expectations and experiences. It focuses on the following questions: (1) What are the expectations and perceptions of the four first-year teachers participating in the study? How do they change over the course of the year? (2) How do these teachers relate to their students? How do they "manage" their classrooms? (3) How do the teachers relate to other teachers? (4) What kinds of relations do they have with their principals and other administrators? and (5) What goes into their decisions to stay in or leave the teaching profession?

b. Subjects

The four participants who will be my case studies are first-year teachers in Terrebonne Parish: one teacher from In-Town Elementary School, one teacher from East Junior High School, and two teachers from Bayou Elementary School.

In addition to the four teachers who will be my case studies, there will be other people participating in the study. Since I will be observing the teachers' classes, the students in those classes will be participants. Also I will use the three principals as key informants as well as the three experienced teachers who are assigned to the new teachers as mentors. As the study progresses, I will also identify other teachers from the schools and possibly some students to interview.

4. Procedures

a. Procedures for Selection Participants

I have contacted the Head of Personnel in Terrebonne Parish, the parish where I will be completing the study. He has provided a list of the first-year teachers who will be working in his parish for the 00/01 school year. I have identified the first-year teachers that I would like to use in my study based on the following criteria: (1) they are first-year teachers – having never taught as full time teachers before; and (2) they teach elementary or middle grades. The four participants, if they consent, will come from three Terrebonne Parish schools: one teacher from In-Town Elementary School, one teacher from East Junior High School, and two teachers from Bayou Elementary School.

b. Procedures for Gaining Consent

I have prepared letters to gain consent from my participants. I plan to obtain consent from the four case-study teachers and the principals the first week of the academic year. The next week, I will approach the mentor teachers and will give them letters asking for their consent too. By the third week of the study, I will have decided which classes I will observe, and I will give the students in those classes letters to take home after I explain the procedures to them in class. Those letters will ask for the students' consent and the parents' consent. As I get more immersed into the study, I will learn which additional teachers should also be asked to participate. I have sample copies of all the different types of consent letters I will use.

c. Procedures for Protecting Identity and Privacy

I will use pseudonyms to protect the identity of all people participating in the study, and I will also use pseudonyms for the names of the schools. These pseudonyms will be used in all write-ups of the study, and I will also use them on my raw data (notes, interview transcripts, etc.) so that anyone assisting me with analysis will not be able to identify any of the participants.

d. Procedures for Collecting Data

I will use three major methods of collecting data: (1) observing classes and other social settings and taking field notes, (2) conducting interviews, and (3) collecting written artifacts.

Observations: As a participant observer, I plan to observe the classroom of each of the four teachers in my study for at least two hours each week for a total of 8 hours or more each week. I will take extensive notes with as much detail as possible, including a running record of the time. The notes will be descriptive, not evaluative, in nature. In addition, I will also observe other activities with school, such as parent-teacher club meetings, faculty meetings, and sports events.

Interviews: I will conduct interviews every other week with the four case-study teachers. These interviews will be based on an interview schedule approach. Most questions will be open-ended, and I will use follow-up prompts. The interviews will be audio taped and will subsequently be transcribed and indexed for analysis. In addition to these interviews with the first-year teachers, I will also have two interviews with each of the two principals and two interviews with each of the four mentor teachers. All these interviews will be audio taped too. Sample interviews questions for the first interview with the case-study teachers are attached.

e. Debriefing Procedures

The participants have the right to review any part of the study that pertains to them during any time of the study. The first-year teachers will be encouraged to read, review, and give added feedback on any part of the study that they took part in. They will be able to clarify or enhance the study, whenever they feel it might be necessary. I will give them copies of the interviews to read after they are transcribed. When the study is completed, the first-year teachers will be able to read the results and add comments to the final draft. Other participants in the study will also be told that they can have access to the transcripts of interviews conducted with them.

5. Potential Risks: There are no perceivable risks to the participants.

APPENDIX B

Sample Letter to School Principal

Dear _____:

During the 2000-2001 academic year, I will be conducting a study at In-Town Elementary School, Bayou Elementary School, and East Junior High School that focuses on the experiences of four first-year teachers. The intent of my study, which poses no potential risks to participants, is not to evaluate the first-year teachers but simply to learn what expectations they bring to their teaching and how those expectations relate to the experiences they have in the school settings. The study, which will provide data for my dissertation for my Ph. D. degree from Louisiana State University, will be supervised by Professor Nancy Nelson. She can be reached at (225) 388-2333 of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

I am writing to ask you to participate in two interviews with me regarding your perceptions of the needs of a first-year teacher and your expectations for his or her performance. Each should last no more than an hour. One interview will be held in the fall semester and the other in the spring, and both will be audio taped. You may read copies of the interview transcripts, and add corrections if you see changes that should be made. Also, at any point, you may withdraw from the study if you choose to do so.

For the study, I will protect your identity as well as the identity of all the other participants by using pseudonyms for the names of persons and for the name of the school in all write-ups of the study, including my dissertation. If I use excerpts from my interviews with you, I will identify them with a pseudonym, not your name.

At the conclusion of the study, I would be happy to meet with you to go over my findings, and I would like to give you the opportunity to read parts of the dissertation to which you have contributed.

Please contact me (868-0230) if you need any more information about the study or if you have specific questions about your participation. I am most appreciative to you for allowing me to conduct the study at your school, and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Sandra B. Hebert

Through the above letter, I have been fully informed about the purposes of the study Sandra B. Hebert plans to conduct and about the potential benefits and risks of the procedures she will use. I agree to participate in the study in the way that she has described.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX C

Sample Letter to First-Year Teachers

Dear _____:

During the 2000-2001 academic year, I will be conducting a study at In-Town Elementary, Bayou Elementary School and East Junior High School that focuses on the experiences of four first-year teachers. The intent of my study, which poses no potential risks to participants, is not to evaluate the first-year teachers but simply to learn what expectations they bring to their teaching and how those expectations relate to the experiences they have in the school settings. The study, which will provide data for my dissertation for my Ph. D. degree from Louisiana State University, will be supervised by Professor Nancy Nelson. She can be reached at (225) 388-2333 of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

I am writing to ask you to be one of the four-first-year teaches participating in the study, which will begin August 17, 2000 and end June 2, 2001. This would involve my observing your classes for two hours each week and conducting interviews with you every other week. Two of the hour-long observations would be video taped, and all of the interviews, which will last no more than an hour, would be audio taped for subsequent analysis. You may read copies of these interview transcripts and add corrections if you see changes that should be made. In addition, I also ask you to give me permission to interview your mentor, your principal, other teachers in your school, and students in your classes if they can contribute to the detailed picture I try to portray of the first-year experience. Also, it is quite possible that I might ask you to let me look at school-related documents, such as your lesson plans, and I request your consent for that as well.

For the study, I will protect your identity as well as the identity of all the other participants by using a pseudonym for you and pseudonyms for other persons and for the school in all write-ups of the study including my dissertation. If I quote excerpts from my interviews with you or from my observations, I will use your pseudonym. At any point in the study you may withdraw from participation.

At the conclusion of the study, I would be happy to meet with you to go over my findings, and I would like to give you the opportunity to read all parts of the dissertation that relates to you. I believe that this can be a learning experience for both of us.

Please contact me (868-0230) if you need anymore information about the study or if you have specific questions about your participation. I hope that you will agree to participate, and I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Sandra B. Hebert

Through the above letter, I have been fully informed about the purposes of the study Sandra B. Hebert plans to conduct and about the potential benefits and risks of the procedures she will use. I agree to participate in the study in the way that she has described.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX D

Sample Letter to Mentor Teachers

Dear _____:

During the 2000-2001 academic year, I will be conducting a study at In-Town Elementary School, Bayou Elementary School, and East Junior High School that focuses on the experiences of four first-year teachers. The intent of my study, which poses no potential risks to participants, is not to evaluate the first-year teachers but simply to learn what expectations they bring to their teaching and how those expectations relate to the experiences they have in the school settings. The study, which will provide data for my dissertation for my Ph. D. degree from Louisiana State University, will be supervised by Professor Nancy Nelson. She can be reached at (225) 388-2333 of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

I am writing to ask you to participate in two interviews with me regarding your perceptions of mentoring and of the mentoring relationship that you have with the first-year teacher selected as your protégée. Each should last no more than an hour. One interview will be held in the fall semester and the other in the spring, and both will be audio taped. You may read copies of the interview transcripts and add corrections if you see changes that should be made. Also, at any point, you may withdraw from the study if you choose to do so.

For the study, I will protect your identity as well as the identity of all the other participants by using pseudonyms for the names of persons and for the name of the school in all write-ups of the study, including my dissertation. If I use excerpts from my interviews with you, I will identify them with a pseudonym, not your name.

At the conclusion of the study, I would be happy to meet with you to go over my findings, I would like to give you the opportunity to read parts of the dissertation to which you have contributed.

Please contact me (868-0230) if you need any more information about the study or if you have specific questions about your participation. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Sandra B. Hebert

Through the above letter, I have been fully informed about the purposes of the study Sandra B. Hebert plans to conduct and about the potential benefits and risks of the procedures she will use. I agree to participate in the study in the way that she has described.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX E

Sample Letter for Students

Dear _____:

During the 2000-2001 academic year, I will be conducting a study at In-Town Elementary School, Bayou Elementary School, and East Junior High School that focuses on the teaching experiences of new teachers. My ultimate purpose is to learn how to keep good teachers in schools – not to evaluate teachers or students. The study, which will provide data for my dissertation for my Ph. D. degree from Louisiana State University, will be supervised by Professor Nancy Nelson. She can be reached at (225) 388-2333 of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction.

One of the classes I've chosen to observe is xxxxxxxxxx. I will be attending your class two days a week beginning August 24, 2000. While I am in the classroom, I will be taking notes, and I will also make audio tapes just so that I can get my notes complete. Two times during the year – once during the fall and once in the spring – I will videotape the class.

I am asking for your permission and your parents' permission for you to be observed along with other members of the class. Your privacy will be protected throughout the study, as I conduct my inquiry and write up the results. If in writing my dissertation, I decide to include something that you have said, I will use a pseudonym instead of your real name. Also, in any conversations that I have about the study, I will use a pseudonym. There is a possibility that some students may be selected for interviews, and I am asking for your consent to participate in this aspect of the study as well. If you are chosen, you would be interviewed for no more than an hour. The interview would be audio taped and a transcript made from the tape. If you or your parents would like to read the transcript, I can make it available to you. As with the observations, your privacy would be protected in the interviews and a pseudonym would be used in my write-ups of that aspect of the study.

This study will interfere in no way with your learning and will not affect your grades. Also, you will have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Please feel free to phone me (868-0230) if you need any more information or have specific questions. If at all possible, please sign and return this letter by August xxxx and return it to xxxxxx. I appreciate your assistance with the study.

Sincerely,

Sandra B. Hebert

Through the above letter, we have been fully informed about the purposes of the study Sandra B. Hebert plans to conduct and about the potential benefits and risks of the procedures she will use. I agree to participate in the study in the way that she has described.

Signature of Student

Date

Through the above letter, we have been fully informed about the purposes of the study Sandra B. Hebert plans to conduct and about the potential benefits and risks of the procedures she will use. I give my permission for my child to participate in the study that she has described.

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

APPENDIX F

Sample of Interview Questions First-Year Teachers

Background

1. I understand that you're from the Houma area, why don't you begin by telling me a little about your growing up here? Why did you decide to teach in this place where you grew up?
2. Also, I know that you received your teaching degree from Nicholls State University, so why did you choose teaching as your career?
3. Did you choose to teach at (In-Town Elementary School, East Junior High School, or Bayou Elementary School)? If you chose this school, why did you choose it? If you didn't choose this particular school, explain how you ended up here?
4. Are you teaching the grade level that you want to teach? Explain.
5. What are your thoughts about teaching all subjects or being self-contained? What are your thoughts about block teaching language arts? (This question is only for East Junior High School teacher.)
6. You probably have visited your school. If so, tell me all about the school and your classroom.
7. Tell me about the "Orientation for First-Year Teachers" presentation that you attended in August. What type of information did you receive at the orientation?

Expectations about Self as a Teacher

8. What do you want to accomplish for your first year of teaching?
9. What kind of teacher do you want to be?

Expectations about Self with Students

10. What do you think your students will be like?
11. How do you expect to get along with your students? What sort of relationship do you think a teacher should have with her students?
12. What are your thoughts on classroom management? on discipline? (Ask this questions only if the first-year teacher mentions it during #11 or sometime during the interview.)

Expectations about Self with Other Teachers

13. Have you gotten to know other teachers at _____ School? (Probe after response.)
14. Describe the sort of relationships you would like to have with them?
15. Have you met with your mentor as of yet? If so, talk about that first meeting.
16. How would describe the role of mentor?

Expectations about Self with Administration

17. Tell me how you will be working with other teachers at your grade level.

18. Have you gotten to know the principal? Other administrators? (Probe after response.)

19. Describe the sort of relationship you would like to have with your principal?

20. Under what circumstances do you think you would want to meet with her?

Self-Assessment

21. Do you feel that you are prepared and ready to begin teaching? Explain.

22. How have you prepared yourself for your first week of teaching? Explain.

VITA

The daughter of Pearl Rogers Bourg and the late Andrew Antoine Bourg, Sandra Bourg Hebert attended elementary school in Lafourche Parish and junior high and high school in Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana. In 1984 she received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, Louisiana, and in 1988 she received her Master of Education degree with a major in Curriculum and Instruction and a minor in Educational Administration from Nicholls State University along with certifications as a reading specialist and student teacher supervisor. Her Ph. D., awarded in May 2002, is in Curriculum and Instruction from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

For 16 years, from 1984 until 2000, when she took a leave of absence to complete her study of first-year teachers in Terrebonne Parish for her dissertation requirements, she was a third-grade teacher for the Terrebonne Parish School System. During the time of her study, 2000-2001, she served as a substitute teacher for grades kindergarten through twelve and an outside assessor in the credentialing program for Terrebonne Parish. She returned to teaching third-grade in January of 2002 while completing her dissertation requirements.

In 1996, Sandra has served on a committee to revise the English Language Arts K-12 curriculum standards for the Region III Parishes – Terrebonne, Ascension, Assumption, Lafourche, St. James, St. John the Baptist, and St. Mary Parishes. She is also a certified mentor and assessor of new teachers.