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# Can They Teach? A Look at How Professors Learn To Educate

Dr. Roger Hiemstra

*Professor Emeritus, Syracuse University, rogerhiemstra@gmail.com*

Elisabeth S. McCaffery

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Running Head: CAN THEY TEACH? A LOOK AT HOW PROFESSORS LEARN TO  
EDUCATE

Can they teach?  
A look at how professors learn to educate

*In partial fulfillment of the requirements*

*For the degree*

*Master of Education*

Elisabeth Schylinski

May 2012

Department of Education  
Le Moyne College  
Syracuse, New York

CAN THEY TEACH? A LOOK AT HOW PROFESSORS LEARN TO EDUCATE

This Master's Project for the Master of Science in General Education by

Elisabeth Schylinski

has been approved for the

Department of Education

Le Moyne College  
Syracuse, New York

by

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Roger Hiemstra, PhD

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Norbert Henry, EdD

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## CAN THEY TEACH? A LOOK AT HOW PROFESSORS LEARN TO EDUCATE

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for teaching me how to think critically, research, write, and how to build an argument.

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research project was to examine ways in which higher education professors are trained to teach. Eight professors from a small, liberal arts college in the northeast, who were also recipients of the college's annual Teacher of the Year award, were observed in the classroom and interviewed about their educational training and background. By following the strategies of inductive reasoning and synthesizing these professors' experiences and reflections, The author determined that many professors do not receive formal teaching training. The majority of the professors claimed to have learned to teach by trial and error and by emulating their favorite teachers' approaches and tactics. Even so, it took years of trial and error for many to learn the logistics of teaching at the college level.

Given the characteristics of the current millennial college student and the increasing cost of higher education, it is more necessary than ever for professors to engage in some form of educational training to increase the students' value of education. By examining the ethics of these professors and their classroom approaches, the author recommends that the most effective way to train college professors how to teach is to design a training program or orientation experience grounded in adult education theory. Because research suggests most college students are developmentally adults and the fact that the successful professors observed in this study already use some adult education theory in their classrooms, it seems only logical to incorporate adult education theory into a training program for future professors.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Statement of Purpose**

I taught undergraduate students for the first time as part of a five week summer college-preparation program sponsored by an aide-based program. The preparation experience was mandatory for all students receiving scholarships through the program. For an hour every day, starting at 8:30 am, I taught a learning strategies class to help introduce the students to good study habits, note taking strategies, and critical reading and thinking skills. I spent weeks planning and hours thinking of relevant course information and strategic ways to present the information. On my first day, I blew through my first lesson in fifteen minutes. I thought, “what now?” as all 25 sleepy teenagers blinked up at me. Trusting my instincts, I put broad questions on the board and asked the students to write a reflection. I left class feeling shaken, terrified, and unqualified.

I believe many people think they can teach because they have been exposed to school for so many years of their life. After all, most people spend 12 years in the public school system, and more and more people now spend another four years in college. In addition to traditional classroom teaching exposure, people also experience teachers in the form of trainers, music lesson teachers, and coaches, thus exposing more people to teaching on many different levels. It could even be argued that being a parent might be considered a type of teacher, thus having kids is good practice for being in the classroom. Since the classroom is such a part of most peoples’ lives and early development, they believe because they have lived it, they can teach. However, it is not that easy. Or is it?

In order to be able to teach in a public school system in New York State, teachers must take a series of qualifying exams and enough coursework to achieve certification. They have to

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pay fees, take tests, and then ultimately get a master's degree in education. Teachers are trained how to manage classrooms, develop curriculums, detect learning disabilities, manage student/teacher/parent relationships, measure progress, write progress reports, provide feedback, ask questions, and pull answers out of students. Teachers-in-training student teach, which provides them with a dress rehearsal in front of students, lots of feedback, and hours of observations. The New York State public school teacher requirements demand teachers to be trained in a way that they are able to be in a classroom by themselves when they graduate.

The same requirements are non-existent for college professors. Think back to your first college professor. Whatever they taught – English, history, philosophy – did they have degrees in education? Likely not. To teach at the college level, one must be an expert in his or her content area. Academia usually desires well-published and well-educated candidates. Higher education institutions want to employ experts who can teach. But how do people who have been studying a content area for five to 10 years get teaching experience? Sure, doctoral students' lengthy education requirements mean they must have experienced effective and ineffective teaching methods from being a student. But why isn't educational training a staple of any doctoral content area program, especially if the end goal of a specific program is to teach at a college or university?

Why do people teaching K-12 need to go through rigorous training to learn how to teach, but when it comes to teaching more mature, older students, no educational qualifications are necessarily required? Shouldn't college students be guaranteed experts who know how to present material to help them learn? Especially with ever-increasing costs of higher education, shouldn't new college professors know what to expect before they are thrown in front of the sweatpant-wearing, iPod-listening, rigorously texting creatures that are today's college students?



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I want to learn how to teach college students. I want to do it well. I want to know how to make them think, question, get excited, love, breath more deeply, live quietly, ponder, write, and read. I want to learn how to make them care and how to feel connected to a subject. I have had a lot of great teachers, and I have even tried to emulate them in my own classroom; however, I am insecure about my approaches and execution. Teaching is learn-by-doing art. Where do I go to practice more? Why isn't learning how to teach part of my master's degree in education?

I want to be held to a standard that requires me to learn about where my students are in their human development, and why they talk, write, and live the way they do. I want my students to get their money's worth while sitting in front of me. Students pay such a high price for college, and I think it is only right that higher education institutions consider helping their faculty navigate the ways of teaching and being in front of the classroom. Therefore, the purpose of this research project was to examine ways higher education professors are trained to teach. This effort enabled me to synthesize experienced professors' experiences and reflections to suggest productive approaches or foundations for future professorial training programs.

### **Importance of the Study**

This study will be of value to higher education administrators who are interested in maximizing the value of students' educational experiences at their school. By examining how professors learn how to teach currently, I will identify trends in general professor preparation and expose general professorial readiness. This will provide insight for higher education administrators about the teaching experience their professors bring to their classrooms and students. Also, learning what lessons were difficult and challenging for experienced, award-winning professors to learn through their experiences though the years will allow graduate and doctoral programs to have the chance to design programs and classes that teach students these

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traits and approaches. This work will also be of interest to young professors who are interested in learning how to teach well. By examining what seasoned professors say about how to teach and how to learn how to teach, young professors will be able to learn from their examples and experiences.

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### **Chapter II: Review of the Literature**

For people who receive a doctoral degree, being a professor and teaching at the college level is a very common career. If you are an expert on something, imparting your knowledge on others is a natural desire, and, for many, a way to make a living after years of studying a subject and going to school. However, how does one learn how to teach college students? Before they can enter a classroom, many states require elementary and secondary teachers to get certification proving they can, indeed, teach, and they have gone through appropriate classes teaching them how to manage a classroom, discipline properly, and assess effectively. Colleges and universities do not require such certification or proof of one's teaching ability. Does being an expert on a subject like British literature or American history automatically make someone a good teacher? Does being a teacher's assistant (TA) at the graduate level give people enough experience dealing with testing and syllabus construction? Does simply being in classes as a student for years make doctoral students good teachers through osmosis? How do professors know what to do in front of a classroom of undergraduate students? Trautmann (2008) wrote the following:

Doctoral students who intend to become teacher-scholars typically have little opportunity for systematic professional development as teachers; many complete their doctoral studies without ever having taught a class, taken an education course, or had any sort of organized opportunity to develop their teaching skills. Although some serve as teaching assistants, such positions more commonly aim to meet institutional needs rather than to provide professional development opportunities for TAs. (p. 42)

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To determine effective training programs and effective teaching models for professors, I will first examine a few problems that exist in higher education that may cause less-than-effective teaching habits: inadequate training, orientation, and treatment of adjuncts. Then, I will explore what it means to be an effective teacher and the theory that we teach as we are taught. I will also look at some current programs designed to train professors. These range from new interview processes requiring candidates to teach lessons to actual professor development programs at colleges. I will also discuss the changing college student by exploring the learning tendencies and characteristics of the millennial generation. I will conclude the literature review with how the millennial generation essentially challenges traditional approaches to higher education teaching practices.

Bauman (2005), a regular on professor search committees at his college, provided perspective regarding the pressures on current academics looking for work and argued that because of the competition professors face in the job market, knowing how to teach is almost a must:

Today's colleges demand more: You must be experienced yet fresh, demanding yet warm, personable yet technologically savvy, cutting edge yet safe. You must be everything. No wonder some anxious candidates try bizarre gimmicks or respond to contradictory demands with odd behavior of their own. Thirty years ago when I was hired, I chatted informally with the department chairperson and two professors for an hour. No teaching demo before faculty members and a dean, no scripted questions, no pressure from worldwide competition. I had it easier than today's applicants, and I wonder if my skimpy résumé and raw teaching

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ability would have attracted a passing glance in today's academic market.

(p. 36)

Times are changing for professors. Higher education institutions need to evaluate the tools, if any, they give their staff to deliver the best teaching to students whose approval can ultimately determine the bottom line.

### **Existing Problems**

Alverno College is known for its undergraduate teacher education model. Diez, Athanasiou, and Mace (2010) discussed the school's approach to teacher training based on the three types of learners the program encounters: armchair tourist learner, the survivor learner, and expeditionary learner. Diez, et al. (2010) claimed a key to the success of this program was paying attention to how current undergraduates in the program think and then adjusting the approach accordingly. Assessment is one of the highest priorities as the soon-to-be teachers are assessed by students, by themselves, and by each other. Diez, et al. (2010) discussed the importance of a teacher's demeanor and how he or she works with students is tested by required field work. The authors emphasized that Alverno's commitment to the changing teaching world is why its students have made the most effective teachers.

Alverno's program is only one of the hundreds of colleges and universities across the country that provides significant training, education, and support to elementary and secondary teachers in training. This is because states require specific certifications before teachers can get in the classroom. Then, before new teachers get started, they typically go through a training program or orientation at their school to learn the logistics of the district, and then they are sometimes required to participate in a mentoring program throughout their first year of teaching (as defined by state requirements). Because these programs exist and states are generally strict

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about these requirements, it seems as though we, as a country, are committed to making sure that teachers who spend all day with children know how to give effective lessons, how to assess learning, and what to do in an emergency.

It is a very different scene in higher education and has been for a very long time. Mertz and McNeely (1990) studied 15 faculty members in five disciplines and examined their teaching experiences and their training. They found the following:

All 15 professors reported that they had had no assistance with or supervision of their teaching since becoming professors. The majority also reported that they had felt ill-prepared to teach when they began, and that planning for and teaching classes had required a great deal of time and effort their first years as professors. (p. 13)

It appears higher education institutions fail to pay attention to mentoring programs and development opportunities. Adjunct faculty are sometimes not even told about logistics. Dedman and Pearch (2004) wrote, “surprisingly few institutions have regular programs of orientation for their new adjunct faculty, a simple process that would increase adjuncts’ basic knowledge – where to make copies, what to do in emergencies, when and how to submit grades, and the means of providing assistance to students with disabilities” (p. 31). This, in turn, can contribute to an adjunct’s commitment to students and to the institution. “Compared to full-time faculty the adjuncts are less likely to include guest speakers, films and videos, experiments by students, and computer use and Internet assignments. Their use of group work and collaborative projects was also lower than that of full-time faculty” (Dedman & Pearch, 2004, p. 26). It is likely that adjuncts many times just don’t feel connected to the school where they teach, and this could be misunderstood as being lazy or inept. Lei (2007) examined the teaching practices of

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400 community college professors because he was interested in how the difference between professors' status (part-time vs. full-time) and educational level (doctorate vs. non-doctorate) affected their teaching experience. He found that part-time professors were sometimes less engaged because of logistics (lack of office space, mailbox, etc.), and they did not always have the access to technology that full-time professors did. Professors with a doctorate seemed to encourage conversation and discussion more in the classroom than non-doctorate professors who tended to lecture. Lei (2007) recommended four ways community colleges (and likely all higher education institutions) could increase the effectiveness of their professors. These include creating a formal system of faculty instructional support, encouraging faculty to examine different ways of teaching so they don't always lecture, providing adjuncts (and all professors) with appropriate IT support to help diversify their approach, and insisting faculty use computers in the classroom (Lei, 2007).

Some might argue that community colleges are in a different category than private four-year colleges and that full-time professors are different than adjuncts. There are many differences between community colleges and four-year colleges and full-time professors and adjuncts, but here I am exploring what it means to be an effective teacher and how can professors be supported and trained to do so. Teaching happens at community colleges and at four-year colleges, where there are both full-time and adjunct professors. For the purpose of this research, I am interested in the training of all professors including those at both community colleges and four-year schools. All professors are considered of equal interest.

### **Being an Effective Teacher**

Anderson and Anderson (2011) described the phases of a professor's development and maturity by comparing the process to the business "product-life cycle" with stages including:

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introduction, growth, maturity, and decline. They defined the “introduction” stage as the time when “a non-tenured professor focuses on heavy campus involvement, establishing a teaching methodology, increasing confidence in both subject matter and command of the classroom. The new professor spends most of his/her classroom time lecturing and using publisher-provided materials” (p. 119). As the professor gets more comfortable (in about four to six years), Anderson and Anderson (2011) argued that the professor enters the “growth” stage and “as classroom confidence increases, the professor spends less time at the lectern and begins to introduce hands-on learning exercises into the teaching methodology. The instructor also begins supplementing his/her own material as opposed to publisher produced materials” (p. 120). The “mature” stage is when the professor is more comfortable, which allows him or her to make a routine of his or her lecture and tends to have more balance overall. During the “decline” stage of a professor’s career, Anderson and Anderson (2011) said professors tend to spend time reflecting about their teaching life, research is rare, and the professor is now regarded by many as a mentor.

So how does one know how to “establish a teaching methodology (and) increase confidence in both subject matter and command of the classroom” (Anderson & Anderson, 2011, p. 119) that Anderson and Anderson (2011) claim happen in the first years of teaching?

One of the assumed answers to those questions is that because almost everyone has had time in the classroom as a student, we know how to teach because we had so much exposure to it. We should, then, reflect on how we were taught and use those methods in a classroom.

Cohen (2011) wrote the following:

I will never forget my first day in my first English class in 1971, where the professor handed out a syllabus that was 10 pages long. It included a list



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of required reading, a list of recommended reading, and a list of assignments, plotted out for each of the upcoming classes, so complicated that I felt myself grow faint at the sight of it. Even I – rumored to have read Pickwick Papers at the age of 8 (not true, but a great spur to my subsequent achievement) – was intimidated. The experience of that English class affected my own teaching. It conditioned in me the idea that I had to be comprehensive in what I gave students and what I expected of them. If the process was painful, so be it – everything worth doing was painful. (p. 70)

We learn by example. We learn from each other. Calogero (2008) argued that watching others teach is almost necessary if you want to become the best and the most effective teacher:

My captivating history professor taught me other unintended lessons as well. His exams were printed in blurred purple ink from an old mimeograph machine. The papers were so fragile I suspected they were older than some of the students in the room. The dated technology was not the only evidence of ossified exams. Over time it seemed the course's emphasis had changed, but the test items hadn't. We were not closely instructed on the Magyar revolt or the Dreyfus affair, for example, which made answering the exam questions on those events devilishly tricky. The need to update exams regularly was drummed home. Taking another professor's course will offer many lessons like these. But for maximum benefit—to really crank up the heat so that you will be able to best

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simulate the life of your students—the course should be outside your area of expertise. (p. B34)

Calogero (2008) said, however, professors must take another class seriously to get the most out of it:

Commit to taking the course for credit. Sit for the exams and turn in papers and projects. Experience the inevitable conflicts that will arise between course deadlines and the rest of your life. Sign up for a course at least every couple of years or so, when the concerns of your students seem to recede or grow trite. (p. B34)

Mimicking how others have taught is not the only way mimicking can help a teacher become effective. Lang (2007) argued effective teaching in the college classroom means adapting to your students and mimicking what you want your students to do in terms of reflection:

If you run a discussion session in which you hope to encourage your students to explore the family dynamics in their lives in light of a set of sociological principles, then you should model that behavior for them with some public reflections on your own family dynamics. If, on the other hand, you expect dispassionate analysis of case studies, then keep the focus on the texts and ideas, and keep yourself in the background. If we want students to love our disciplines—or particular texts, thinkers, theories, or ideas—as we do, then we should not hesitate to let them see our own devotion to those intellectual pursuits. When we demonstrate enthusiasm for subject matter of our courses, we may inspire our students

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to enthusiasm. When we display a generous and welcoming attitude towards student comments in our class, we may inspire students to treat each other with greater respect. (p. C2)

Lang (2007) argued the importance of showing (not telling) how to connect ideas and think about problems, and Kaelber (2007) discovered how important this is when he embarked on participating in the freshman-year program at his college. When Kaelber sent his daughter away to college, he was inspired to participate in the freshman-year program at the school where he taught. Kaelber, a religious studies professor, was used to teaching upperclassmen. Becoming part of the first-year professor team, he was quickly exposed to the challenges associated with teaching and working with freshmen. Because of his daughter's timely departure to college, he was able to relate more to the freshmen he was teaching and the combination caused an epiphany of what effective teaching should be. Kaelber (2007) wrote the following:

There they were: twenty-six freshmen ... every one of them, I suspected, was feeling very much as Kristen (his daughter) was feeling. That realization dramatically changed my pedagogical perspective. For my entire tenure as a professor, I had worked under the assumption that it was my responsibility to teach and the student's responsibility to learn. I very conscientiously kept up my part of the bargain and expected the students to do likewise ... For the first time, I felt I had some inkling of how it felt to be a freshman. (p. 59)

Subsequently, he changed his approach to accommodate the freshman students:

Although I had always encouraged students to pose questions in the classroom and engage in discussion, I now began placing an even greater

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emphasis on active learning and critical thinking. Rather than using one text to cover any given topic, I now assigned two texts that offered different points of view. (p. 59)

Not only did his personal experience and ability to connect with the students make him a better teacher, but the partnership among the first-year professors was very helpful. Kaelber (2007) noted the relationship of the teacher-teacher support and the teacher-student support: “The partnership among faculty in the program mirrors in many ways the faculty-student partnership that the program engenders. We critique each other, encourage each other, laugh with each other, and even inspire each other. We complain, to be sure, but we also bond” (p. 60).

Effective teaching also may need to be redefined occasionally given the logistics of the class: age, class size, and dynamics of the classroom. What works for freshman, doesn't necessarily work for seniors. Barrett, Bower, and Donovan (2007) explored the teaching styles and effectiveness of online community college instructors by collecting data from 292 professors over 28 community colleges. The authors were interested to see what professors were doing to accommodate the need for a more learner-centered learning environment. To collect data, Barrett et al. (2007) used the Principles of Adult Learning Scale (PALS) and a questionnaire consisting of six demographic questions. They found that most professors' learning approaches were more teacher-centered, most favor this style of teaching, and many were not doing much to accommodate the learner-centered learner. Evaluation is essential in making sure students are getting what they need (Barrett, Bower, & Donovan, 2007).

Bauman (2005) wrote that his university has tried to identify effective teachers from the start. After making the first cut as a candidate for a professorship, the university invites the

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candidate to perform a 30-minute teaching demonstration to the hiring committee. Sometimes the effectiveness of the teacher (or lack thereof) can be seen right away:

One candidate introduced us to poetry by making us read poems aloud to a ticking metronome set at marching speed, so e.e. cummings's little lame balloon man goose-stepped through puddle-wonderful spring like a storm trooper. That same year a different candidate sang to us an Emily Dickinson poem to the tune of Gilligan's Island theme song, so we'd remember it—and her—better. We did. (Bauman, 2005, p. 35)

Bauman (2005) also noted candidates' memorable and telling answers to the committee's questions about teaching:

Q: What do you like most about teaching? A: Student turnover. They leave at the end of the semester. Q: How do you handle unprepared students? A: I read the material to them. Q: Why do you want to teach here? A: My last college didn't give me enough freedom. They were too worried about students' passing the class. Q: What was your hardest moment in teaching, and how did you handle it? A: I had a student who talked too much and was rude and confrontational, so I let him teach the next class. Q: How do you grade poor grammar in English 101 papers? A: Oh, I don't count that kind of stuff. (p. 36)

Without asking these questions and developing a process to get to the heart of what some candidates might consider appropriate in the classroom, some of these candidates might have ended up in the classroom teaching students, whose intellectual stimulation and happiness

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contributes to whether or not they continue to pay a large sums of money each year to attend class.

However, is it really intellectual stimulation and happiness that makes students like professors and determine whether or not they will continue to take classes with certain ones or not? Yair (2007) studied the responses of 1,110 respondents who were asked about their three best educational episodes and 3,045 key experiences were recorded. Yair (2007) reported the following:

The interviewees remembered their outstanding teachers as those who embody the knowledge and skills that allowed them to intellectually engage a class and lead it into fresh intellectual vistas. The respondents suggested that this skillful combination of knowledge and instructional strategies was apparent in the way their professors walked and talked, thought, and spoke. They were remembered as having knowledge at their finger tips – always updated and always challenging. (p. 455)

This idea of being on top of cutting edge of knowledge is right in line with Carusetta and Cranton's (2009) argument that effective teachers must be aware of the world from a global perspective:

On a much larger scale, power relations in the world today – among races, cultures, countries, and political regimes – have led to war, unrest, poverty, torture, oppression, and fear. We need educators who are aware of power structures, critical of prevailing governments and social norms, and willing and able to encourage their learners to do the same. Situating

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learning how to teach in the field of adult education where such discussions are the norm can move us in that direction. (p. 80)

To help a young professor friend and mentee be aware of the global world as he entered academia, Levy (2001) published letters to give him advice. Levy tried to build confidence in the young man by reminding him that the classroom was not a stranger thanks to his years in it. His tips for effective teaching were the following and provide a thoughtful conclusion to this section:

First, come to class over-prepared and with a plan (on paper or in your head or both) as to how the class, the week, and the semester will progress ... Second, start your classes with a question, not an answer. Most things worth teaching—that is to say, things worth thinking about and knowing—begin as either explicit or implicit questions. A corollary: Start your class with a question a normally curious human being would want to know the answer to. Third, whenever you possibly can, avoid straight lecturing. Fourth, if you must lecture, take pains to get your students to respond. Ask for questions, comments, and so on, and do it as early in the semester as you can. (pp. 116-117)

### **Successful Training Models**

Although many have argued that effective teaching can stem from mimicking and modeling favorite teachers, research has shown that in order to be effective teachers, people need to be instructed. Weber, Gabbert, Kropp, and Pynes (2007) studied a pilot graduate student seminar on teaching in the history department at the University of Texas. Essentially, graduate

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students were exposed to different experiences that helped them realize the elements of effective teaching (Weber, Gabbert, Kropp, & Pynes, 2007, p. 45). They concluded the following:

Good teaching is not simply the result of modeling former instructors ...

Good teachers evolve from the trial and error of traditional graduate programs, but the process is inconsistent and uncertain. The current academic climate requires targeted programs, which intervene early in the graduate student's experience to assist future college instructors to develop a comprehensive career plan to understand student learning styles and teaching theory. (p. 62)

In the United States, one of the biggest attempts to train those who teach at the college level has been the Graduate Teaching Fellows in K-12 Education (GK-12), a National Science Foundation (NSF) fellowship program started in 1999 (Trautmann, 2008, p. 42). Essentially, the program provides colleges and universities money to help train graduate students how to teach by providing them experiences with K-12 classrooms (Trautmann, 2008, p. 42). The first school to receive the funding was Cornell University in partnership with the Cornell Science Inquiry Partnerships (CSIP), and Trautmann (2008) described in the following how the CSIP worked:

Working with partner teachers, CSIP fellows determined where and how inquiry projects could help meet class-specific needs and enhance established curricula...In classes with rigid curricular requirements, the fellows redesigned traditional lessons to teach required topics using a more inquiry-based approach. Meanwhile, the fellows participated in a year-long seminar in which they explored strategies for guiding students of various achievement levels in inquiry-based learning, reviewed key



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aspects of educational theory and practice, and reflected on their teaching experiences. (p. 42)

The Cornell graduate students were successful. According to Trautmann (2008), “Ninety-three percent of fellows and 90 percent of their partner teachers reported that the fellows’ teaching skills had improved ‘somewhat’ or ‘greatly/significantly’ a result of their GK-12 activities” (p. 43).

This idea of helping future professors through training graduate students how to teach is not new, but it is becoming more popular now. In 1993, 17 doctoral institutions joined together with the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the Council of Graduate Schools to create an effort, Preparing Future Faculty (Cage, 1996, p. A19). “In 1994, five institutions each received \$170,000 to create special programs for future academics” and provided students with opportunities to develop courses and syllabi (Cage, 1996, p. A19). One of the students who participated in the program says when he began his job as a visiting assistant professor, “he decided to ask education professors what kind of projects he could assign that would relate to their majors. ‘I don’t think most beginning professors would ask those kinds of questions,’ he says crediting the future-faculty program” (Cage, 1996, A20).

An alternative (or an enhancement) to training college professors while they are in graduate school is training programs sponsored by colleges designed to assist professors who work at the institutions. One effective professor training method in higher education is the instructor development program (IDP) developed at the New Brunswick Community College (NBCC) in Canada (Carusetta & Cranton, 2009, p. 75). Because the school prepares students for work in the trades, “priority is given to hiring faculty with considerable experience working in the field in which they teach” and “a condition of employment for instructors is that they

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participate in the IDP” (Carusetta & Cranton, 2009, p. 75). At the beginning of the program (mid-1970s), it was only a week-long program that focused on “adult learning, communication, and adult education methods” (Carusetta & Cranton, 2009, p. 75). Today, the IDP includes “two intensive three-week summer sessions, a practicum that takes place between the two summer sessions, and three other courses from the undergraduate adult education program” (Carusetta & Cranton, 2009, p. 75). The following is how the program is set up:

During the first summer and also as part of their practicum, participants learn the skills and techniques of teaching. They practice making presentations in a microteaching format, create course outlines and objectives, and develop tests for their students – the nuts and bolts of teaching. When they arrive for the second summer, most are relatively comfortable with the basics of the classroom and shop or field teaching, though there are always more topics they want to model; they are learner centered and discussion based... Three weeks is not a long time in the larger scheme of things, but it is an intensive time since we meet daily for five hours and engage in a great deal of introspection and exploration of who we are as teachers and what it means to be an adult educator.

(Carusetta & Cranton, 2009, p. 76)

This program makes the professor a student, which plays on Calogero’s (2008) theory that being a student makes professors more effective. “Participants come to see themselves as adult educators as well as adult learners ... these mature students become comfortable with adapting teaching and learning strategies to suit their classes at the college level” (Carusetta & Cranton,

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2009, p. 76). This training must be offered offsite, Carusetta & Cranton (2009) argued, because of the pressures one may feel when on campus:

Often colleges and universities engage in professional development through in-service workshops and courses offered by their faculty for their faculty. To truly engage people, it is important to remove them, either physically or conceptually, or both, from where they feel constrained by the policies and philosophies of their parent institution. Faculty need to be able to explore new ways of thinking without fear of recrimination. (p. 80)

### **Millennials as College Students**

In addition to the basic challenges of being a college professor (creating courses, writing syllabi, creating an environment that stimulates thinking, writing tests, etc.), the higher education atmosphere is also experiencing a new challenge with the demands of its students. Many of today's college students are considered "millennials" and that label brings unique learning expectations and experiences.

Wilson (2004) claimed millennial students are "cooperative team players" (p. 61), "highly involved and scheduled" (p. 62), and desire to "meet high expectations" (p. 65), and she discussed good, productive ways to teach this new group of undergraduate students. Wilson argues that it is important to really consider what is important to these students in order to give them the most productive instruction in their college classrooms. She stresses using technology in the classroom and demands that nurturing the professor/student relationship in an informal manner is necessary (Wilson, 2004). Millennials, Wilson (2004) said, want clear goals,

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expectations, and standards set for them, and that it is important to keep an eye on students who may have been successful in high school, but may struggle at first in college.

Williams, Beard, and Tanner (2011) argued the following:

Millennials are used to having their self-confidence praised and shored up, so they tend to be receptive to comments and concepts that are relayed in positive tones. They respond better when they're told about the great things that will happen when they make appropriate decisions, rather than the terrible things that could result from incorrect choices. (p. 46)

Williams, et al. (2011) said members of their faculty have used video game structures to provide students with different ways to improve course grades (p. 47). Worley (2011) said that because of students' social media awareness, professors should do their best to take advantage of these social skills. She wrote: "Allowing students to work on team activities will apply their online social skills and improve face-to-face communication" (p. 36).

Worley (2011) also noted that millennials consider talking and texting in class as normal and that a big part of professors' classroom management should be about coming to a good middle-of-the-road agreement with the students about their behaviors. The syllabus must have cell phone policies and when appropriate, professors should let students use the technology to which they are accustomed (Worley 2011). McGlynn (2008) argued that for most professors, this type of thinking means that professors must consider the classroom as a student-centered environment with a focus on process. She says professors must not lose the purpose of the skills students gain in college, but we must help them see the importance of it through their eyes: "Given the shelf life of the information we teach, it is perhaps more important to teach students

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the skills to be able to find information (do research) and to be able to discern and evaluate the validity of that information” (McGlynn, 2008, p. 22).

### **Conclusion**

Today’s professors face many challenges and training for them is not adequate. Research shows that there is a desperate need for professors to become educated on how to manage college classrooms. Especially with the changing psyche of the college student, it is essential that higher education institutions start to investigate ways to implement training programs in their schools. Also, more and more graduate schools should consider that all students who would likely teach during their career should have some hands on experience. Millennials are not afraid to fight for what they pay for and without taking action to improve the quality of professors’ techniques in the classroom, higher education institutions may find themselves answering to unsatisfied students and parents about their expensive classroom experiences.

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### Chapter III: Methodology

#### Participants

As noted in Chapter I, the purpose of this research project was to examine ways higher education professors are trained to teach. The research was done in order to suggest productive approaches or foundations for future professorial training programs. Thus, to provide insight into the training and education of professors, I interviewed and observed eight professors, four men and four women, from a variety of disciplines, from a small, northeast liberal arts college who were previous recipients the college's annual Teacher of the Year award. All observations and interviews took place at the college. I use pseudonyms when I refer to individual professors and their experiences. Here is a list of the participants and their subject area:

Professor Karlin	Political Science
Professor Lossett	English
Professor McKeen	Philosophy
Professor Hartson	Chemistry
Professor Greenman	Biology
Professor Dubrey	Psychology
Professor Taggert	Religion
Professor Daring	English

#### Procedures

I completed this research during the Spring 2012 semester. After selecting the eight professors from a variety of disciplines from the college's list of Teacher of the Year recipients, I emailed the professors to introduce and explain my project. From each, I requested two times to meet: one time to observe them teaching in a class and a second time to interview them about their training in teaching. All the professors I contacted agreed and seemed excited to be a part of the research project. I observed all professors teaching for 50 to 75 minutes. Two professors

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(Daring and Lossett) team taught a class, so I observed both during the same session. During my observations, I sat in the back of the classrooms and did not interact with the class, unless the professor asked me to explain my presence and my project. My interviews with each lasted, on average, one hour. I tape recorded all interviews for accuracy and typed transcripts for ease of use. My list of questions used during the interviews can be found in Appendix A.

### **Analysis**

Inductive reasoning was used to analyze my field notes from my class observations and my transcripts from my interviews. In my field notes, I looked for instances of how the professors engaged the students and interacted with them throughout the class. I paid close attention to how the professors connected with the students while presenting the material. I focused mainly on the professors' delivery of the content and less on what the content was; however, it is important to note that certain disciplines, like science, sometimes lend themselves more to a lecture-type presentation because they tend to be more fact-based subjects. In my interview transcripts, I looked for discussions about training, educational background, inspiration from past teachers, mentoring, and instances of general insight about how the professors came to know and understand how college students learn.

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### **Chapter IV: Results**

#### **Overview**

The purpose of the research project was to examine ways higher education professors are trained to teach and by synthesizing experienced professors' experiences and reflections, I am able to suggest productive approaches or foundations for future professorial training programs. By observing veteran professors teaching and interviewing them about their educational background and experience, I have learned about how they came to be effective teachers and have discovered similarities and trends among all of them.

The most significant finding in this research was that many professors do not receive formal teaching training. Many experienced their first time in front of the classroom in graduate school in the form of a teaching assistant (TA) position or as an instructor of a basic level of their content area. However, the purpose of the graduate program's enlisting graduate students as TAs is not necessarily to provide the student with teaching training, but to fulfill departmental teaching needs.

In this study, the majority of professors claimed to have learned by trial and error about how to be successful in the classroom, and one popular starting place many professors cited was their favorite professors or teachers. By reflecting and remembering approaches their favorite teachers used, they would then try to emulate those approaches/tactics in their own classroom. Even so, it took years of trial and error to learn the logistics of college teaching. Some of these skills included the following: grading, classroom management, different ways to present material, how to test effectively, how to make fair deadlines, etc. Most professors said it took years of teaching and tweaking their approach until they felt as though they had a handle on it.



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In addition to learning the logistics of a classroom by trial and error, all professors noted that it took them a long time to understand how to acknowledge and implement emotional teaching tactics that helped them connect with students and connect students to the material. Almost all professors said that they noticed viewing students as human beings interested in learning rather than a group of people beneath them, made their classroom teaching experience easier. They found listening sincerely to students made students connect more to them, the professors, as well as to the material, and students retained more information. Because of the effectiveness of this emotional awareness, all agreed that parts of teaching can be taught, but in order to be successful teachers, individuals must have a passion or connection to the material and to educating as a whole.

When asked about their worst teaching experience, all eight said that the worst they could think of was when they could not connect with a class. They remembered one or two semesters where they felt out of control of a class or experienced students not engaging in the material throughout a whole semester. These experiences combined with the professors' awareness and effort to treat students as people and not as subjects who are beneath them as well as attempts made by many of the professors in this study to make sure students work together suggest many professors might agree with adult education teaching trends and approaches. Halx (2010) wrote the following:

Many of the newer pedagogical methods in higher education, such as service learning, self-directed learning, and learning communities, are in fact quite similar and consistent with those that adult education has advocated for years. While some higher education institutions now practice these pedagogical methods routinely, adult education practitioners

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have been using them for decades, and as a result, they have refined their use. For example, adult education techniques present a circumstance to *assure* that students always work with one another. (p. 525)

The concept of integrating more adult education approaches in higher education as a way to better convey information and connect with students will be discussed in the “Discussion” part of this report.

### **Training**

The eight professors I interviewed fall into two categories of training: little-to-none (most exposure to an education class might be an educational psychology or education methods class during undergrad) and adequate preparation (including formal education classes at some level of education or deliberate teaching training for a job). Five (Greenman, Hartson, Karlin, McKeen, and Taggart) (62.5%) fall into the first category, little-to-no formal training. Three (Daring, Dubrey, and Lossett) (37.5%) fall into the second category, adequate preparation. The experiences of the three professors who are considered having “adequate training” in education vary. Daring and Lossett attended the same graduate school where they participated in a well-organized teaching training program that provided them with specific techniques on how to be a successful English teacher and how to grade papers. This took place after they were accepted into their PhD programs. They learned to teach by being assigned to teach a basic writing class in the writing program. Daring also took education classes during her undergraduate experience. Lossett had a post undergraduate job that required her to teach speed reading to middle and high school students. Dubrey took some undergraduate education classes, but he was not an education major.

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It is not surprising, however, that all but one of the eight professors were TAs during their graduate education experience. For all, the TA position was part of their scholarship for their degree, and they had to teach. Responsibilities for each varied, but many had to sit in on a large class (usually taught by a seasoned, well-published senior professor) and were assigned to mentor small group of undergrads. The TA would meet weekly with his or her group(s) to discuss what happened during the class. In this capacity, many were also responsible for grading undergraduate work. Although Daring and Lossett's experience in graduate school were slightly different than a traditional TA (they taught a class themselves), I still count it as a TA experience because they had a faculty member who supervised the experience and worked closely with them to provide them with feedback. Of all the professors, Daring and Lossett had the most engaged faculty who took time to mentor them and point out effective teaching methods and approaches. Dubrey, Greenman, Hartson, Karlin, and Taggert had little to no guidance from faculty during their experience as TAs. However, although Dubrey and Taggert both experienced being a TA, it was not their most influential first experience with teaching. As he was finishing his master's degree, Dubrey helped his old high school out by agreeing to fill in as math teacher. He taught there before going on for a PhD, where he would be a TA. Dubrey said the following of his first time in front of the classroom:

My undergrad education classes must have been somewhere in the back of my mind, but at the time, I was just anxious. I had 50 minutes to fill and did I have enough tricks in the bag to get it done? I knew what I had to finish, but I didn't know how to lay it out. I went by the seat of my pants. I have always followed the rule: bring more with you because you never know.

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Taggart admitted being a TA gave him some foundation in how to work with students, but he said that his first time teaching, at a local prison, was the best lesson in teaching because it was the first class he taught by himself:

I took classes on teaching methods in undergrad. This taught me to always think about what my objective is for each class and ask myself, what should students get out of this today? In graduate school, I was a TA, so I led small break out sessions, a discussion group, and I graded papers. My professors were good and sat us down and would work with us to teach us how to look at and grade papers. They showed us what they considered an A paper, and then they would look at our grading and see how we were doing. My graduate school didn't have a formal teaching program for prepping teachers. I really learned how to teach when I taught a course alone in ethics at the local prison. At the prison, some of the inmates didn't even speak English. I gave tests on a table, and it was easy to cheat. So, I made the same test, but put the questions in a different order on each version. One guy was from Columbia and struggled with English. The others tried to help him and were trying to explain that their number three was his number six. I watched them together to manage the test. I was so amazed by how they were trying to help the guys. It dawned on me: I wonder if there are models out there that would support this. That's what drew me to cooperative learning in many ways.

For Greenman, who had tried many different disciplines during her undergraduate years, being a TA was the experience that made her notice that teaching might be something that she

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would want to do: “I had the opportunity to be an unofficial Biology lab TA when I was an undergraduate because I had done so well in the course. I really enjoyed that. I found it fun to explain things to someone and watch the light bulb come on.”

Like Greenman, Karlin’s TA experience was positive and started to make her think about a future in teaching. Prior to the experience, she expected to use her political science master’s degree to work for the government or at a think tank:

As part of my scholarship, I had to go into the classroom and be a TA, and I was absolutely terrified. I had no desire to do it. I did it because of the money. They shoved me into the classroom; I had no idea what I was doing. However, I found after the first semester I liked it and that started to develop my confidence and interest, but teaching wasn’t on my agenda. I was in my mid-twenties, and I feel like I came to teaching through back doors and being pushed into it.

Hartson faced similar fears as Karlin when he first stepped into the classroom:

The first time I was going to teach as a TA, I was so nervous that I could not eat the morning of the class. I never had any education classes or preparation for this. You were told some things during an orientation with the person who was in charge of graduate assistants, and we met weekly with that person. However, we didn’t talk about how to teach or the things we would experience, see, or encounter with the students. It was just about the management of the lab.

Daring, too, cited her first time in a classroom along as the most valuable teaching training she had:

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I took some education classes in undergrad, and I found them mind-numbingly boring and not intellectually challenging at all. The training I got in graduate school was phenomenal. Once you got accepted into the PhD program, we taught for the writing program. We were trained to teach English and how to teach draft, revision, etc. However, during my first experience teaching, I made a mistake that a lot of graduate students make. I wanted the students to love me. I got flowers at the end of the class, but I'm not sure the students learned anything. It's like working on cars. The more cars you fix, the more problems you are able to anticipate. You recognize the signs, but none of that can come from any formal instruction.

Lossett attended the same master's and PhD program that Daring did; however, part of her training came from teaching middle and high school students speed reading through a program known as READAK. READAK trains recent college graduates in a speed reading and concentration course and then sends them to teach the program in schools all over the world. The program was purchased by parents and taught by trained employees like Lossett. Lossett explained the experience set her up well for a career in teaching:

Although it was different from college teaching, some aspects of teaching were the same. It taught me time management skills in the classroom and increased my confidence. To me, so much of teaching is about confidence. It's not just about having the ability to communicate, but it is about knowing the material. You have to know your stuff. Weak teachers don't have enough stuff to teach.

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Hartson remembered an instance during his fourth year of graduate school that ultimately helped his confidence in front of the classroom because it taught him to trust his instincts, but it proved he had limited effective mentoring:

I tried to think of ways to use everyday experiences to explain complicated subjects. For example, supposition of states says the thing you observe is the sum of many different things all added together, so you have this very complex motion and behavior, but you can view it as a sum of many different things. The example I decided to use was a basketball game. I asked the students: what would an alien see and if all he could see is the movement of the rubber, and all he could detect was the motion of the basketball and motion of sneakers. Then, I said, with a little bit of knowledge, they could (figure out the specific basketball) plays. If you look at it all of it all at once, it is just a blur at once. I was proud of my presentation. The kids were engaged and appreciated it, but, and I will never forget this, the professor came to me afterwards and said, “No, no, no, don’t try to explain it to them! They won’t understand it anyway! Just give them the math, and show them the equations.” I was dumbstruck. I couldn’t believe it. To me, the point was if you can understand the concept, the math makes sense.

Although Hartson’s training differed from some of the other professors, all eight professors explained how they were determined to try different approaches in the classroom and reflect on how well they worked. It should be noted that this is likely due to their personalities and drive as determined academics; they all received the Teacher of the Year award. Perhaps

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professors with the same training, but less determination as these eight, would not have become as successful in teaching as these professors have. This is only noted to further make the point that training is essential because schools cannot rely on the fact that all people, like these exceptional professors, will teach themselves how to teach.

### **Impact of Teachers**

Seven out of the eight professors cited past teachers as a way in which they learned how to teach. Dubrey said the following:

I think all teachers have cobbled together what they have seen in the past—the good and the bad, things to avoid, and things to build in. If you do it within your own comfort, you are good. If you try to be someone you're not, you are going to fail. There was a person who taught metaphysics in my undergrad who I admired so much. I don't remember content at all, but he had all these different techniques. One day we're in circles, the next day he was lecturing, and then we were in small groups. It was amazing. I remember enjoying how he presented it. I wish I could replicate it.

Here is an excerpt from my field notes from observing Dubrey's Intro to Psychology class on February 27, 2012:

*Dr. Dubrey asks if anyone has any questions from Friday. Then, he asks if anyone has seen a penny. Students are quiet and exchange quiet snickers (it is Monday morning at 9:30, after all). Dubrey says he has five questions about the penny: What president is on it? What way is the president facing: right or left? Is there anything above his head, if so, what? Is there anything below his head? If so, what? What is to the left of his face? What is to the right of his face? He gives students a minute to think. Asks, "how confident are you?" He then hands out pennies and makes his point: exposure doesn't lead to memory."Just because you have seen it over and over doesn't mean it is in your memory. Think of when you are giving directions to your own house. It's hard."*



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Dubrey could have just started with students imagining giving directions to their house, but instead, he engaged them physically (and gave them money!). The rest of his class was primarily lecture because of the nature of the information being presented, but he still found a way to engage students creatively. This likely traces back to the classroom approaches of the professor he so admired.

Karlin and Hartson not only saw the value in using successful methods professors had used on them and avoiding those that they remembered as being boring, but they reported that once they started teaching, they made a conscious and deliberate effort to observe others' teaching. Hartson said the following:

At first, I was only responsible for a lab. So, on my own, I would go and stand in and watch other labs to see what was going on and what they did. I wanted to see what improvements I might make. I was named outstanding TA because I did that, but I did it because it really eased my nerves.

After her first experience teaching, Karlin, too, started paying close attention to the approaches her professors were using:

I paid attention to things not having to do with content. I found some professors were wonderful story tellers and engaged students in wonderful narrative. I heard how they modulated their voices. They weren't always yelling at you. They sometimes dropped back. It was almost like a ballet: they used their voice, body motion, laugh, as they approached you. I then

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focused on observing content – what’s the purpose of each class? What are you trying to get accomplished and how do you share it with the students?

Many of the seven who reported using old professors as inspiration for their presence in the classroom said their favorite teachers gave them a starting place with everything from creating a syllabus to how to treat students. Many mentioned that the teachers they remembered the most and had the greatest impact were those who treated students like curious human beings and who conveyed empathy. Taggart recalled the following:

I never got any training on how to structure a syllabus, what should be in it, etc. I basically looked at what my teachers had done and followed it. I also still have the notes from the teaching methods class I took. Many of my teachers were also models for empathy. They treated students as equals. They knew they had more knowledge and experience, but they treated you with respect. I learned a lot from that.

Daring, too, noted that her professors helped guide her on her emotional approach with students. However, Daring said one professor laid important ground rules about how to encourage students, but not mislead them and this approach has stayed with her:

The impact of my teachers was enormous. When I worked for a program for disadvantaged students, we had a class on how to grade and this woman said that she didn’t want to hurt the feelings of these high risk students. My teacher said: “Then take them to lunch. Do not tell them they can write when they can’t.” This was a moment of clarity for me: Teachers want to be popular at heart, but you have to rigorous instead of welcoming. Listening and watching professors was enormously helpful

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to me. Being mentored myself gave me a sense of how to mentor other people.

Karlin, who said she really allows the students see her personality when she teaches, says it is because she experienced professors who listened and evoked thought:

I loved the way some of the best teachers conversed with students and that they were open to things and they would say, “wow, let me think about that, what do others think?” They would invite intellectual conversation, and they weren’t showing off, they were listening to students. I thought that was really interesting to sit at a table with someone I was positive knew the text forward and backward and would look at me and say, “that’s interesting, tell me more” and really listen. I learned a lot as that person would challenge me. He treated me as a person and let me see himself as flawed. I was like, wow, look at that. You are yourself and you are comfortable in your own skin, which made me and his students comfortable in our own skins – he wasn’t asking us to be him.

Here is an excerpt from my field notes on March 22, 2012, when I observed Karlin teaching. Her class that day was focused on preparing the students for a trip to Washington, D.C., where they would be looking at monuments and asking the question: why were they built? What purpose do they serve?:

*As she transitioned from the slide of the Prague monument for the Victims of Communism, which was showing a statue of a man fading up steps, (Karlin says,) “I keep smelling this food (referring to BBQ coming from open windows) and it’s killing me!” She moves on to the next slide, a photo of the United States’ Victims of Communism monument, which is a statue of Lady Liberty in Washington (D.C.). (Karlin says,) “What’s the point?” Pauses for comments. Asks class: “Are you kidding me?” (in reaction to comparing the previous slide, making a note that the U.S.’ interpretation of a*

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*victim of communism could be interpreted with Lady Liberty ). “OK, I’m editorializing, but come on!” She explains how different the monuments are and challenges students to consider why the U.S. monument is less gruesome.*

Although dealing with heavy material, Karlin engaged the students and even mentioned her food craving. She was able to ask deep questions, but still allow herself to comment on something so human: a stomach rumbling because of a cookout smell.

Like Karlin, Greenman still uses concrete approaches with students that she learned from an old instructor:

When I was working on my PhD, I had an instructor for several courses, and he made us draw everything. I can’t tell you how much I hated drawing things. I am not a good artist. I have trouble with proportion. But, drawing is the best way to get a sense of the structures that make something unique. I make my students draw. I don’t care if they don’t draw well. I make them do it. They can remember what something is if they have actually drawn it. I think it is a very valuable thing, so I had to adopt that.

As seen here, the impact of teachers on students is great. Professorial training programs might consider spending time working with students on reflecting and processing their favorite or worst memories of teachers. Something can also be learned from Hartson and Karlin’s efforts to actively observe their teachers and note their methods. Perhaps observation could be a significant part of any training program modeled after the elementary and secondary requirements for practicum experiences.

Daring made the point that observing and mentoring are key to training successful educators:

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You can learn vocabulary and diagnostic skills. You learn from great models of teachers and from people who sit down and in very specific ways, give you advice. I never ask students what they think or how they feel. I ask, “where’s the problem in this text?” or “if you were at a bar, would you want to sit down with Hawthorne or Emerson?” I try to engage them in different ways. I think it is essential to learn the language of how to talk to students. I think a great education program would give students loads and loads of time in the classroom and fantastic mentoring.

### **Can Teaching Be Taught?**

All eight professors agreed on one concept: parts of teaching can be taught, but good professors must have something else in their personality, in their make up, that engages students almost subconsciously. In short, you cannot teach passion; you can only show it. As Taggart said, “I have no doubt that teaching can be taught. I was taught how to teach by a number of people through workshops, talking, and working with people. However, I’m not sure about teaching a passion for teaching. I was very influenced by Parker Palmer’s book, *Courage to Teach*, and I agree that good teaching comes from the heart of the teacher.”

Palmer (2007) wrote the following:

Good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects, and their students so that their students can learn to weave a world for themselves...the connections made by good teachers are held not in their methods but in their hearts—meaning *heart* in its ancient sense, as a place

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where intellect and emotion and spirit will converge in the human self. (p. 11)

Dubrey agreed and said the following:

Parts of teaching can be taught. But, one has to have a kind of temperament that transcends different elements of it. It's a combination of methods and personality. There are only so many ways you can present material. Sure, you do a lecture, activities, PowerPoint, but can you convey some passion for a subject matter? And, can you assess when someone knows the material?

Greenman continued and said the following:

You can teach technique. You can teach ways of presenting material that make people more effective teachers, but they have to have something inside to make them want to do it. I think as much as anything, teaching is the desire to help someone understand something, and it's okay that not everyone does that. I do think that if you can teach something, you know it better than someone who does. That idea of "if you can't do, teach" is such a crock. If you can teach it, you know more about it. You have to be willing to invest yourself in it. You have to want to do it.

In addition to the temperament and desire that Dubrey and Greenman noted as instinctual characteristics that cannot be taught to people interested in teaching, McKeen added that learning how to create a community or sacred space in the classroom is something that is part of a teacher's instinct and is something that is important to being an effective teacher:

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You must learn how to tune the venue (the classroom) and learn how to create the community. You have to create a dojo and give it life. You need to give them (the students) the realization that they really do want to bow as they come in with their shoes off and share and tell their stories, hear stories, and gather around. You have to work very hard because (you start to) notice they haven't moved around, and they are not talking with each other, are doing other things in class, and you don't listen to how foul, ugly, and toxic the air is and has become in your environment. If that happens, you (the professor) become angry, pissed off, and bitter. However, it has nothing to do with the content. You can talk to them about anything. It's not content. It's the venue. It's the stage, the holy place, the hearth fire. It's the place you create. You have to try. You spend hours out of the semester tuning the hearth fire. Giving them the opportunity to realize where the hell they are.

Here is an excerpt of my field notes from observing McKeen's class on March 15, 2012:

*“He asks, powerfully: Where are we? Right now? RIGHT NOW? Do we get it?” (He uses) repetition, enthusiasm, depth and talks with his hands. “I don't want to die without understanding the ultimate why (loud)?” “Permission to come aboard?” Pause. “Shall we start?” Calls on student to be the clock (to let him know when time is almost up for class) and starts discussing the student reflections.*

McKeen's asking the students questions like “do we get it?” and “permission to come aboard? (into their thoughts, attentions, etc.)” demonstrates his commitment to creating a community in his classroom. This world, his classroom, even has its own clock check (in the form of a student responsible for letting him know when time is almost up), so that he doesn't ruin the atmosphere

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by checking the clock. In his pauses, you can feel that the students feel the same way. There is no note taking; there are just 21 students glued to him as he launches into his next idea.

Hartson, too, is aware of this need to pay attention to the environment he creates as a professor in the classroom, and said that the desire to constantly monitor students' needs and adjust accordingly is what cannot be taught:

Teaching can be taught, but like a lot of other things, some temperaments are better for teaching. Some can follow a curriculum design, present the material, and then assess. That process can be taught. Show them what to do, and they'll do it. But, there are other components to it. Shaping the way you approach the material based on the needs and the ability of the students you are working with, sometimes happens on the fly. If you pay attention to the need to tweak your approach, and that is a matter of desire. Some people won't do it, and some people don't care.

Here is an excerpt from my observation of Hartson's class on April 2, 2012:

*He puts the equation that is found on the note sheet (handed out at the beginning of the class) on the board. He helps one student do the calculation at her desk. He finds a mistake in his own work: "Uh oh! My numbers are wrong. I need to stop and make a correction..." He works for a minute. "Nope! I am right!" Goes back to student he was working with. "The units will tell you where everything goes." Gives another problem. "I don't put the numbers in until last!"*

Hartson's interaction with the student is kind. The student ultimately made him think he had the wrong number, but he doesn't call her out on it. He is sincerely grateful that she is attempting the work. The back-and-forth conversation with the students is part of the environment he tweaks as he walks through the problems. He gauges how much time he needs



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to spend on something or if another problem is needed to continue to work on an individual issue.

As seen here, all professors are committed to creating environments where students feel comfortable and willing to share ideas, and the richness of their class feeds off of student engagement. It is no surprise then that when all eight professors were asked to describe a bad teaching experience, all eight talked about a time when, as a whole, there was a disconnection between them and the students. This is an interesting point to weave into the notion that part of the spirit of teaching cannot be taught. All professors essentially came to the same conclusion: bad experiences equate those rare times when a class does not click. When this happens, it is as if the students do not let the teacher into their minds, or perhaps, they don't want to consider having an open mind. Given the reflections of the professors about the importance and impact of teaching with the heart, you can see why teaching becomes challenging when students don't respond at all or show little effort as a whole group or class. The human connection needs to be made, and if it isn't, there is a limit to what can be done.

Although these professors suggest that there is an additional element to being a good teacher rather than just knowing pedagogy, methods, discipline, etc., Karlin suggests that training is still essential because without it, real harm to students can be done:

I think there are some things that can be taught. I wish I had some instruction ahead of time instead of figuring it out all myself; it was tough, and I made mistakes. I don't know how much harm I caused. When you are a bad teacher, you can cause real harm. If you don't know what you are doing – that's the tragedy of a lot of schools – they throw grad students in, and they are really screwing up; they don't know what they are doing,

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and people are paying high prices. You don't know who you have traumatized, inflated, discouraged, etc. It's not as bad as being an incompetent doctor, but you can still do some harm. I think everyone should have some instruction to at least think about why you are doing what you are doing, and there is no time in graduate school; you basically just get thrown into teaching.

Suggestions for developing effective training programs for college professors based on these insights will be discussed more in the "discussions" section of this paper.

### **It's Not About You**

Many professors talked about how egos can get in the way of teaching, and most said that they experienced an epiphany of sorts when they realized that teaching and what happens in the classroom was not personally about them. All eight told stories about how difficult it was to learn how to not take the circumstances of the classroom personally. They said any new teacher should expect to wrestle with idea that what happens in the classroom is personally not about him or her. Many noted that their teaching philosophies included acknowledging students as humans (not subjects *below* them) and showing them how thinking critically about their subject matter will help them function in the world. Many are frustrated with students who just want to memorize material, take a test, and get a grade.

Karlin's realization of this was particularly moving because of the content involved. Here is her account of the day when she realized what she was doing and saying in the classroom was more than just theory and ideas:

I didn't realize how influential I was being with my students in a political class that was discussing politicized issues like domestic violence, rape,

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and abortion. I was treating these issues as very scholarly, and I had an approach that was like, “I’m so smart, I’m going to show you the literature and the theory,” and I was not connecting as a teacher that these subjects were truly touching people. This experience was totally my own fault. I was using a book on domestic violence, not realizing some people in the room could have experienced it. One day, a woman went home so angry at her husband for the way he had been treating and abusing her that she got in his face, and she named it that he was abusive, and she said it was against the law. He beat the crap out of her. The next time she came in, she could barely open her eyes. I felt totally responsible. Here I am, 27 years old, full of myself that I know the theory. That was the best lesson I ever had that this (what you teach) isn’t abstract. I worked with her and got her help. I didn’t abandon her, but I was like, “what am I doing?” This matters. This is not performance art. This is not just transferring information. Some of this stuff is way sensitive, and I thought, “I have got to be better at doing this.” That really changed my teaching around. This was not about me any more. When I first started teaching, I thought it was about me because I was so nervous, and I was trying to show I was smart, I was prepared, I could lecture well, and I could run a discussion. I realized with this student that teaching was not about me; it was about them. She made me so much better, but it was such an unfortunate thing. I just went home and cried that night. I felt so responsible. She kept telling me I wasn’t, but I made it about me. It was a very good lesson.

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Regarding your students as people and not just as students changes the way you teach. They are there to learn, but they are not a category or class of person; they are people, and they come to you with their histories, hang-ups, good experiences, and bad experiences, and you can't truly teach them if you don't see that and are sensitive to that.

McKeen, too, said he went through a time when he was arrogant about his work:

Teachers refuse to notice how much work they have to do to make it accessible. That's another step. I look at it as a stairwell where the professor is up on top, and the students are down below. When I was in school, I thought it was my job to crawl up that freaking ladder and get up there with the professor. But, I realized as I got up there as a professor, I had to go down and bring those students up. I had to go down the stairs into the sludge, grab onto those dirty filthy hands, and help them see something that is worth walking up the stairs with me. That was a big lesson. I had such a shocking presumption about how fabulous I was.

Taggart said really listening to a student, person to person, changed his grading policies because the student showed him something he didn't realize before from his professorial point of view: sometimes students need credit and encouragement just for making an effort with an assignment:

I remember handing back a paper to a student one time, and as he was leaving, he punched the door. Of course I was thinking, "I'm glad he punched the door and not me." I caught up with him later and said "what was going on?" He said, "It's not you. I try and work hard on all my

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papers in all my classes and all I can ever get is a C+. I don't know what else to do and I'm really frustrated by that." It got me thinking, grades and stuff ... that is all based on performance. When do we give credit for effort? So I added participation to the grade to count for 25%, if students choose to count it for that much, purely to reward effort. If you made the time, you did the reading and turned in the assignments, you showed up, you get the credit. I don't grade any of that. It's my way to reward effort.

Dubrey said the following:

I don't believe in regurgitation. I want students to challenge (me, the material, or their classmates) without being offensive. You can question with respect. I try to create an atmosphere in the classroom that encourages that. When they read they are critical, when they discuss they can discuss with skill. I tell them they will make decisions. I teach things that are a part of their lives. They will have a role. We are human beings and we interact.

From early teaching experiences as TAs to self-reflection and growth, these professors have navigated their ways in the classroom primarily through trial and error combined with hard work, determination, luck, and improvisation. Although Dubrey is categorized in the same group as Lossett and Daring as having "adequate" training, Lossett and Daring were the only two who had a graduate program that really emphasized the importance of knowing how to teach in addition to knowing one's content.

Through examining these professors' comments about their uncertain early attempts in the classroom, it is clear that training or orientations for new professors are essential. Higher

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education cannot rely on the chance that all academics are as determined and reflective as these professors. Without a doubt, there are professors today who have been told similar things as Hartson was about presenting “just the math” to students and not the concepts, or professors who have experienced similar student reactions to sensitive topics like domestic violence as Karlin did, except they are not as reflective or as insightful as she. Experiences like this happen every day and will continue until higher education institutions start to pay attention to the importance of educational training for professors.

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### **Chapter V: Discussion**

#### **Overview of the Study**

The purpose of this research project was to examine ways higher education professors are trained to teach. The research was done in order to suggest productive approaches or foundations for future professorial training programs. By observing eight current award-winning professors teaching in the college classroom and interviewing them about their personal experiences of learning how to teach and navigating the classroom, I was able to determine trends about how professors develop influential educational techniques, methods, and approaches.

#### **Summary of Findings**

The most important finding in this study was that the majority of professors observed—five of the eight professors (62.5%)—did not receive any formal education training; a few had taken an education class or two in college, but most never sat through an education class, even though all had PhDs. Many of the professors experienced their first time in front of the classroom in graduate school as a TA or an instructor of an introductory level course in their content area. Even then, however, the purpose of most of these TA/instructor positions was not to provide the graduate students with meaningful experience in the classroom, but to fulfill departmental teaching needs. Most of the professors' TA or early instructor positions were not mentored well. More often than not, the professors' main resources for learning effective classroom and teaching techniques were trial and error and emulating tactics their favorite teachers.

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The professors' eventual success in the classroom can also be credited to their determination, work ethic, and reflection abilities. These personality traits allowed them to be open to receiving and appreciating insight and ideas from observing their own work and others around them, including their students' experiences. This allowed the professors to educate themselves through the years as to what it meant to be an influential educator.

The open-minded, motivated, and reflective approach to their teaching experiences allowed most of the professors to discover the value in treating students kindly, with respect, and on equal ground. After years of learning the logistics about college teaching (grading, classroom management, and different ways to present the material) by trial and error, almost all professors said that they noticed treating students as equals and listening sincerely to students made their classroom experience better. Students were more engaged and retained more information. A humbling experience for many, it took a while for most professors to find ways to practice this insight in the classroom and implement teaching tactics and approaches that would continue to nurture this important aspect of the classroom experience.

All professors agreed that parts of teaching can be taught, but in order to be successful teachers, individuals must be passionate or show a true connection to the material. Passion can only be emulated by students if the professor truly is passionate. Most of the professors argue that to be a good teacher, one must have a certain temperament that is observant of students and their needs, patient and adaptive in the learning process, and aware of the power one holds when he or she sits in front of a college classroom. Knowing how to teach is not just knowing how to present material in an interesting way. It is remembering what it is like not to know and being conscious of the realities and pressures students face academically, emotionally, and personally.



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Many of these insights seem to be in line with teaching approaches commonly associated with adult education theory. One of the eight professors claimed to use a majority of adult education theory in the classroom, citing it as a very effective approach for college students. The correlations between these eight professors' experiences, teaching approaches, and adult education theory will be further discussed in the "recommendations" part of this chapter.

### **Conclusions**

The experiences of these eight professors show that training provided to college professors is inconsistent. A few get some form of mentored practice in front of a classroom before teaching a class by themselves, but most do not. This means that thousands of college students around the country might be sitting in front of professors who more than likely have never had any formal education training. With the cost and sometimes the purpose of higher education under public scrutiny in today's economy, it is likely that the lack of professorial educational training may eventually become a point of contention with students, parents, and the public as a whole.

If the training of professors continues to be inconsistent, higher education institutions may be faced with disgruntled students and parents. Students go to college to learn from experts, the professors, and the professors need to be able to convey their knowledge to students effectively and efficiently. Graduate and doctoral programs' main goals are often to create people who are experts in a specific field and who can analyze and examine all issues pertaining to that field; however, many people receiving doctorates usually go on to teach at a higher educational institution in some capacity. Graduate students are done a great disservice by not having an opportunity to practice their teaching skills in a classroom and receive feedback about their approaches, classroom presence, etc.

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Student preparedness for college (from high school) is also a point of contention in the public discourse today. As states continue to change public education requirements, the skills students enter college with may change. This, combined with millennials' distinctive learning and social characteristics, means professors across the disciplines may encounter students who need more assistance, attention, or who may just learn in a different way. Professors need to know how to help these students. If there was a universal professorial training program available, it would encourage dialogue between high school teachers and professors. It would provide an atmosphere to discuss the realities of both the high school and college academic expectations. This new model would allow education to become a collaborative experience.

The bottom line is that a lack of any discourse on professorial educational approaches hurts students. Unhappy millennial students and unhappy millennial students' parents may eventually result in more public conversations about the true value of higher education. After all, as Williams, et al. (2011) wrote, millennials have high expectations, and higher education institutions need to decide how to manage these students' expectations and determine how far they will go to accommodate their requests: "Millennials expect service people to be available 24/7 and answer all queries immediately ... they arrive on campus with a high level of respect for institutions, but they expect an equally high level of performance" (pp. 45-48). As seen in the literature review, millennials desire clear goals and expectations (Wilson, 2004). They desire relationships with professors (Wilson, 2004). They expect classrooms to be student-centered (McGlynn, 2008). Higher education institutions must decide if they are going to challenge their faculty to commit to a student-centered environment to adjust to the changing college student.

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### **Recommendations**

There are three parts to my recommendations for the future of professorial training. The first pertains to the values of adult education. I present a brief overview of adult education goals and ideology and how it can potentially relate to what millennials' learning needs are. Second, I relate some of the adult education themes to my data and the professors' remarks and experience. Third, I claim that given the associations between my data and the themes of adult education, a logical choice to consider as a starting place for a universal training approach for professors is adult education theories. My data suggest that many successful professors subscribe to this.

To further understand the values of adult education, Merriam (2001) referred to the work of adult education scholar Malcolm Knowles when she included his concepts of andragogy and the art and science of helping adults learn. For example, she described his view of how an adult learner was classified:

The five assumptions underlying andragogy describe the adult learner as someone who (1) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning, (2) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning, (3) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles, (4) is problem-centered and interested in immediate application of knowledge, and (5) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors. (p. 5)

Later she noted that Knowles concluded that andragogy is less a theory of adult learning and serves rather as a basis for developing theory (Merriam, 2001, p. 5).

Merriam (2001) also described another element of adult education values, Tough's self-directed learning theory:

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Tough studied and described the self-planned learning projects of sixty-six Canadians. The uncovering and documenting of this type of learning—learning that is widespread, that occurs as part of adults' everyday life, and that is systematic yet does not depend on an instructor or a classroom—generated one of the major thrusts of research in the field of adult education. (p. 8)

Merriam explained that the goals of self directed learning can vary:

Those grounded in a humanistic philosophy posit that self-directed learning should have as its goal the development of the learner's capacity to be self-directed ... transformational learning ... (that) posits critical reflection by the learner as central to the process ... The third goal for self-directed learning is the promotion of emancipator learning and social action. (p. 9)

From Merriam's (2001) discussion, it can be concluded that adult education theory is based on the idea that when adults engage in an educational experience, they want to learn and are ready to learn. They also usually have an immediate need for the knowledge. Also, adult education theory supports self-directed learning where the student is capable of directing his or her learning needs, which might be supported or enhanced by his or her life experience. The processing of self-directed learning may vary, and it can involve reflection or a social action (Merriam, 2001, pp. 5-9). A big part of adult education theory is the interest and commitment of the learner in his or her education.

Halx (2010) began to connect the current undergraduates to this idea and wrote the following:

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Undergraduates have “volunteered” to attend college and pursue a degree. This volunteerism adds yet another adult characteristic to the seemingly non-adult undergraduate student. Adult education teaching techniques are geared for eager and willing students who have “volunteered” to participate in the educational process. Though many undergraduate students might feel compelled to attend college due to bleak prospects for employment that often relate to their socio-cultural circumstance or a regional economic downturn, and though parents are often insistent, most undergraduates enter, and stay in, higher education by their own personal choice. (p. 522)

Halx (2010) continued with the following:

The demographic reality of today’s undergraduate student population clearly suggests that colleges and universities must accept the responsibility to educate students of all ages and stages of maturity. Since adult students are fast becoming the “new majority in higher education”... why is it not possible to accommodate better those adult students, while at the same time presenting a more advanced educational theme to the somewhat younger adult students? (p. 520)

As noted by experts in the literature review, because of millennials’ social- and team-oriented characteristics, it has been recommended that group work should be incorporated more and encouraged in millennials’ classes. These techniques are in line with adult education ideas. Adult education focuses on committed learners who want to participate in their education. It relies on using life experience

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paired with interested learners to create an environment in the classroom (or in the learning experience) where the students are just as prepared as the instructor.

There is a sense that both the instructors and the students bring something to the classroom conversation, almost learning from each other. Millennials' need and desire for collaboration and discussion would thrive in this environment. After all, these students have grown up knowing how to figure things out, thanks to the Internet. If college professors were to engage in adult learning theory, it would be meeting the students' developmental and personal needs. Halx (2010) argued the following:

Adult education techniques present a circumstance to assure that students always work with one another. Learning partnerships are used regularly in adult education with great success. Though learning partnerships are formed both intentionally and unintentionally in higher education classroom settings, the purposeful creation of such partnering would ensure its value is realized. (p. 525)

Much of this intersection between millennials' educational needs and abilities and adult learning theory can be seen in the data. A big part of Taggert's approach to his college teaching is adapting adult learning theories into higher education. His students create learning covenants, a form of self-directed learning, allowing them to determine what they will do for assignments throughout the semester, when they will be due, and how these assignments fit the objectives of the class. Taggert said the following:

I take adult learning theory seriously. You must treat students as adults, with respect, as having capacity to learn for themselves, and taking

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responsibility to learn. The fundamental reality is I will have them for a short time. If I don't enable or encourage their fundamental ability to learn on their own, what have I done? My hope is when they leave, they will be life-long learners. I can't do that if I treat them like children and dictate everything that they must do. We don't trust that undergrads will do the things we think they should do. We don't give them the choice. I was very intrigued with adult learning theory and encouraging students to be self learners and treating them as adults in that respect. I found that as a really good way to engage students, so I was drawn to contract learning theories.

Taggart's approach is exactly what is needed in higher education. He uses adult education theories to give students a say in their learning. This, in turn, creates an environment where students feel more open to share and learn from each other. It shows students that learning is life-long by the professor actively learning from and with them. Taggart's learning covenant is set up to create a sense of community, one that might be mimicked in one's future work environment, where students are expected to respect one another and contribute productively to the conversation. Team work is suggested as a form of learning, but not required. He emphasizes the fact that students are in charge of their learning; he treats them like adults and expects a certain amount of respect to his class and ideas in return.

Hiemstra (2011), an adult education scholar, also advocates using learning contracts, individualized instruction, and self-directed learning in the college classroom. In his article, he quotes several recent students who commented on the employment of learning contracts and becoming in charge of personal learning in their course evaluations:

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“I love the learning contract concept. I was happy to see it at the graduate level.”

“...(he) did a great job balancing the need for structure with my own goals and desires for professional development and learning.”

“This was my first time dealing with a learning contract. I definitely found it helpful to make this course more individualized.”

“Allowing us to individualize our work and focus on things of interest to us is what makes this course work. My most challenging and one of the most rewarding courses to date.”

Although Karlin does not engage in contract learning in her classroom, she is very flexible when it comes to due dates and actively treats students as adults. She works with students to fit learning into their lives. She does not ignore the fact that students are people, too:

I always say at the beginning of a class: “Here’s the due date and work with me if it doesn’t work for you. I do have late penalties written but say that’s only if you just disappear and don’t ask.” My life is easier since I started to do that, and I’m not fighting with my students anymore. It started when I realized I didn’t have to prove I’m tough. I have a student right now, and she disappears and hands in nothing. I sent an alert, filed a deficiency; I followed the rules. But, I thought, this is bigger. So I wrote her an email to say, “look, I respect you as a student. I don’t know if you want to talk to me, but I will listen. I’m telling you all is forgiven, and let’s talk. I miss you in class, and I don’t want you to stay away because you are humiliated or whatever.” She took a week and emailed me back



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and said, “yes, something is really bad is going on in my life, and I was ashamed to come back to you.” So I said, “don’t be ashamed.” We met and talked. It wasn’t about me. Lower level teaching (like in high school) always focuses on “how do I control them – it’s me versus them.” But in college, it’s not about control. I have to have them work within some parameters. I need to create a grade. I give flexibility but some hang themselves with it. There is only so much I can do. I need to have assignments. If you can’t do it, maybe it’s an incomplete. I feel like I’m empowering them.

This concept of working with the students with regards to deadlines is a form of respect and an approach usually used in adult learning. It’s almost as if Karlin is saying, “Look, I know my class is not the only thing in you life. Let’s work together.” Undergraduate students are increasingly busier than they used to be because of the pressures they face to get well-rounded experience during their college years to later impress employers. Millennials are also excellent multi-taskers and are used to having too much to do; it is almost in their nature to always have something going on. In this way, they are similar to adults who work full-time, have a family, and go to school. Again, here is another connection between adult education theory and millennial students.

The idea of developing respect and demanding it with and from students is essential to making adult education theory work. Because undergraduate students, especially freshmen, are used to being talked as if they are beneath their teachers, professors have to work at showing students how to demonstrate respect. McKeen says that the key to getting respect from students, and having them show respect to others, is being truly oneself in front of the classroom. Doing

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so, as Karlin is quoted earlier, shows students that you respect them because you trust them with your flawed, human self:

You have to learn how to wear your heart on your sleeve. You have to take your heart outside of your chest. People say you lead with your smile, but you don't. You lead with your heart. And yet, if you have your heart out there (in the classroom), they (the students) are going to stab it, prick it, and wound it. So, you have to lead with your heart and not take all that crap that comes at it as personal and hurtful. Well, that's so hard to do. I'm so bad at that. I have a monstrous ego, and I get hurt easily and am quick to get offended. You have to learn that that is part of the business. If they didn't do that, it wouldn't be it.

This connects to Halx (2010)'s point about developing thoughtful, honest teacher/student relationships:

Though some undergraduates are "young" in years lived, they may have acquired much more depth of life experience than their years suggest. Focus on the individual and those lived experiences, also creates a faculty/student connection that helps break down barriers to student learning. When the faculty/student relationship is defined by the basic principles of individual focus and learning together, as contrasted to lecturer to receptacle model commonly used in traditional pedagogy, the result is a much richer educational experience that builds on itself rather than relying simple accumulation of facts. (p. 523)

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These eight professors, through their years of trial-and-error attempts, found that the approaches cited by Halx (2010) are appropriate for college students. Halx (2010) claimed adult education theory was behind the professors' intentional efforts in the classroom to create a safe space where conversation and honesty is nurtured. This relates to McKeen's discussion noted earlier about the importance of creating a dojo-like atmosphere in the classroom, Hartson's constant monitoring of classroom interest and attention, Dubrey's attempt to present material in different ways, and Karlin's flexibility with due dates.

This is also seen with Greenman's commitment to giving students the power of the choice. Greenman makes the point that at the college level, students can be more engaging because they have some stake in the outcome. She said the following:

At this level they are here because they want to be here. They have more freedom. Part of what I enjoy is that they have to take responsibility for their education. I don't give it to them. It's a give-and-take thing. They bring in stuff. They send me video clips. They are more independent. Most are there because they want to be. They do have an investment, and so you can deal with things at a different level. Not punitive. It's not babysitting.

Here's an excerpt from my observation of Greenman's class on March 14, 2012:

*Dr. Greenman starts: "Today is a day of choices. I am going to give you a little piece of paper and on it write plants or fungi. You can pick which quiz you want to take." She then puts up the slide and the questions for the fungi and a diagram of a plant and instructs students to name five parts and pick one for bonus.*

Greenman said that this scene is not a rare occurrence; she always gives the students

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choices on tests, quizzes, etc. In some ways, she engages in self-directed learning, even if it is informally.

Although all eight professors admitted that some aspects of teaching can't be taught, there are many parts of teaching that can be taught including the following: logistics of the classroom, assessment approaches, techniques on how to involve students in discussions, pointers on how to deal with difficult students, etc. However, the problem remains: professors don't have the resources or the chance to learn these teachable educational tactics. Lucas and Murray (2002) cited Robert Boice of the State University of New York at Stony Brook admitting that professors are not adequately prepared in teaching when they first start:

He (Robert Boice) alleges only a relatively small percentage of new faculty members come to their first regular academic appointments with any substantial training or prior experience as teachers. Even among the more experienced, most are unable to recall whatever they might have learned about instruction in the sporadic hit-or-miss training they received as graduate teaching assistants. (p. 39)

Lucas and Murray (2002) went on to point out the following about the downfalls of new professors:

Collegiate instruction as a rule still emphasizes a didactic model. Especially among new faculty and those who have never given their teaching much thought, students are often thought of as "empty vessels" to be filled up with knowledge, as "blank slates" on which the teacher writes or as passive objects to be modeled by a master sculptor. Teaching is viewed, it has been said, as an "information transfer" process whereby

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learning flows from the professor's mouth, courses like a river until it reaches the ears of the students, and then funnels into an empty cranium.

(pp. 40-41)

The need for professorial training is dire. Although personality and comfort contribute to all teacher approaches, many new college professors tend to leave students out of the teaching experience. As noted by Lucas and Murray (2002), new professors don't acknowledge that students are people who come to them with preconceived notions and all sorts of intellectual and personal baggage. The majority of the eight professors in this study learned the hard way about what works in a college classroom, and based on these eight professors' experiences, what works well is some form of adult education theory. The student should be acknowledged as an interested, capable, learner with his or her own preconceived notions of learning, and at the college level, we should accept nothing less, especially when considering the "determined" nature of millennials as was so praised in the literature review. The foundation of adult education theory is alive in today's best teachers' classrooms. Since it is already being applied successfully in some college classrooms, why not use adult education theory as a starting place for a universal training program or material? If there continues to be no universal, formal educational training requirement for higher education professors, I find it difficult to know how valuable teaching will ever be guaranteed or even offered to high-paying college students.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Although it was successful, there were a few limitations of this study. The sample size was very small, and it only included professors, at one college, who had been recognized for their contributions in higher education. Not including professors who have not received the Teacher of the Year award and those from other colleges influenced the data because the award

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already assumes that these professors learned how to teach, despite their lack of education. My conclusions also might have been even more obvious if I had included professors who were very new to teaching and/or had been teaching for awhile, but had not received any awards. I also may have been limited by including two professors from the same PhD program. This was significant in this study because the PhD/graduate program that both Daring and Lossett went through included a well-organized mentoring program, which helped them learn how to teach effectively. It just happened that my only opportunity to observe Daring teach was a team-teaching experience with Lossett. I would have preferred to observe her teach in the classroom alone; on the other hand, both provided valuable insights about teaching.

Also, Taggart and Karlin referenced another professor at the college who had done significant research on learning contracts. If I were to continue this research, I would like to study his publications and speak to him about how he would structure a training program for professors using adult education theory.

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### Appendix A

#### Questions for Interviewees

Note: From all interviewees I will obtain a CV, their education history, and their years teaching at Le Moyne.

- Start interview with comments from class observation and summary of thesis project.
- What did you want to be when you grew up? Did you always want to teach?
- What was the first class you ever taught? Did you feel prepared to teach the first time you did it? Why or why not?
- Did you have any education classes prior to teaching this first class? If so, what were the classes?
- Can you tell me a story about your first teaching experience?
- What was the biggest lesson you learned after that first experience?
- What impact do you think your teachers have made on your teaching approach?
- Do you think teaching can be taught?
- What is the secret to teaching college students?
- What would have helped you in your early years teaching?
- Did you have a mentor when you started teaching? If so, what did he or she do to help you along?
- Describe a bad teaching experience.
- Describe your current teaching approach.
- Why do you think you were awarded Teacher of the Year at Le Moyne?
- What do you do before the semester begins to prepare for each class you are teaching?  
What do you do the night before each class to prepare?
- Do you follow trends in education? Do you make a lot of effort to change your teaching approach with the changing students?
- What advice would you give to young college professors?