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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the influences of prior life and employment history on the thinking and practice of beginning, second-career elementary and secondary school teachers. Data were drawn from classroom observations, journal writing, and open-ended informal interviews; case studies were then developed illustrating the impact of personal and professional experiences on career changers. Results suggest that personal and professional life histories of second-career teachers played a powerful part in the development of teaching practices. Experiences prior to becoming teachers influenced organizational and management structures set up in classrooms, expectations of and beliefs about children, ways in which curriculum was designed and instructional problems resolved, and views held of themselves as teachers. A task for teacher educators arising out of this study seems to rest in helping individuals recognize the relevance of personal explorations into their often well-established perspectives on teaching. Implications for teacher education include the need for developing programs which promote the kind of thinking necessary to assist career changers examine and utilize their previous life and career experiences to enhance classroom teaching. (LL)

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LIFE HISTORIES AND THE TRANSITION TO TEACHING AS A SECOND CAREER

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LIFE HISTORIES AND THE TRANSITION TO TEACHING AS A SECOND CAREER

In recent years, society has witnessed a change in the traditional view of careers. Many individuals no longer simply complete their formal education–for a large number, that means college programs–enter a chosen career, often developing highly specialized skills, remaining therein until retirement. Rather, as appears to be more frequently occurring in the contemporary context, many individuals pass through a variety of occupations during their work lives, often moving relatively quickly from their originally chosen fields of expertise to other arenas of work. Some individuals move through several professions or occupations. Many teachers' careers witness these moves. In proceeding, we first draw largely on our own experiences with those who choose teaching as a second career.

Our Perspectives

While many experienced and inexperienced teachers leave the classroom every year to pursue careers in related or diverse domains (see, Yee, 1990; Huling-Austin, 1989),[1] a serious concern, also of considerable interest to preservice teacher educators, school administrators, and others, is the recent surge of individuals leaving occupations unrelated to education, entering teacher preparation institutions, and becoming public and private school teachers (e.g., Crow, Levin & Nager, 1990; Tifft, 1989). This latter group of individuals, commonly known as second- or mid-career teachers, make up an increasing

[1]Of recent note is the emphasis on support for teachers' professional development, especially over the first or induction years. As one of many potential counteractions to the present conditions in schools, these kinds of efforts may result in a reduction of the exodus from the profession by relatively inexperienced teachers (those with, for example, less that five years in the classroom). Nevertheless, as other conditions change for the worse and are seen as less conducive to satisfying work conditions in schools, experienced teachers will continue to switch careers. Beaudin's (1991) study of teachers who left and returned to teaching also supports the high rate of attrition of beginning teachers, suggesting that, unlike other groups, few reenter the profession.

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proportion of teacher candidates in programs of preservice preparation across the United States of America and in other Western countries. For example, recent expansion of preservice teacher education programs at our own institution, The University of Michigan, is encouraging applications from these kinds of individuals, and they now occupy about 30 to 40 percent of the graduate preservice teacher education program. Faculty reviewing applications for admission to this Masters degree program report that extremely promising candidates–"some of the most qualified and academically prepared students we have seen"–are presenting their credentials for consideration. We suspect other institutions witness similar trends.

As a group, these new teachers promise much to the profession, particularly in their potential to invigorate the teaching of academic subject matter while bringing to bear on the problems of teaching their unique "other" professional expertise. In addition, we sense that members of this group have unique characteristics and needs which deserve careful examination and special attention if they are to be fostered in their professional growth and ongoing development. We take the position that, in the long run, fostering this growth in substantial ways will enable second-career teachers to quickly and effectively make significant contributions to the betterment of schools, teaching, and learning.

Second-career teachers possess a range of personal and professional experiences which make them qualitatively different from younger, less life-experienced, individuals who select teaching as their first profession. Generally speaking, second-career teachers are older and more mature, often with children of their own. Typically, they possess heightened motivations to pursue meaningful careers in education, maintaining views of teaching as a profession rather than a job. Obviously many of these people potentially carry certain skills

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and attitudes from previous work experiences directly into their teaching, and this is one of the factors that make them seductively attractive to school superintendents, especially in times of economically-driven notions of school competitiveness, achievement, and success.[2]

Some of these second-career teachers leave high-paying, prestigious positions in large corporations and public agencies to pursue "more meaningful" work in the teaching profession. Others encounter or recognize opportunities to follow their long-held instinctual desires to teach, and still others retire from one career, perhaps an "intense, competitive and self-serving occupation," for the purpose of "returning something to society" as one career changer recently put it. Thus, most see pursuance of teaching as a second career to be highly desirable. In addition to a kaleidoscope of motivating circumstances, even including first-career job redundancies and layoffs, these career changers have diverse career experiences, educational backgrounds, and personal needs and interests. Together, these differences shape second-career teachers' perspectives of what it means to "be a teacher" and, ultimately, their teaching practices.

From the vantage point of teacher educators, we view many of the characteristics of second-career teachers as being highly distinctive and based largely on lifetime, idiosyncratic experiences.[3] We sense that these experiences, elements of life histories, shape and inform the perspectives and practices of these new teachers. We are acutely aware of the influence our own personal histories on the development of our careers. In effect, we are "second-" and, perhaps, even

[2]Nevertheless, there is a hint of evidence that this perspective may be a "pie in the sky". This seems especially so when those second-career teachers with extremely rigid perspectives of teaching and schools are encountered.

[3]On one level, as we have said, this is quite obvious yet on this point rests much of the focus of the paper. And, further, while this matter may be obvious, it is usually little considered in programmatic development.

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"third-career" teachers ourselves.[4] We recognize that many of our present perspectives on teaching and education were profoundly influenced by our past experiences of schools, classrooms, teaching, and learning. While we are also mindful of the imposing and often overwhelming influences of school contexts on beginning teachers, we also suspect that, like the experiences of other less mature and life-experienced neophytes, formal preservice teacher education provides little more than an overlay experience, one that may even be washed out with the pounding and agitation associated with the early months on the job (see, Zeichner and Tabachnick, 1981). In fact we concur with Freidus (1989) in this regard, as she stated, drawing on Van Maanen (1977) and Louis (1980):

> Career structure, life stage developments and biography mediate and are mediated by each other. To understand the significance of a career or a career change in a person's life, both the individual and the career environment must be studied. (p. 12)

With this kind of thinking in our minds we set out to examine select elements of the experiences of several beginning, second-career teachers.

This paper reports on aspects of two separate research efforts which investigated beginning, second-career teachers. We were struck by the uniqueness of the second-career teachers whose experiences we explored. We were especially interested in better understanding the influences of life histories on their thinking and practices. Therefore, our express intent is to draw on data from our case studies which illustrate a few of the many ways in which life histories influence beginning, second-career teachers' thinking and practices. There are several parts to the paper. First, we briefly explore some of the

[4]Dianne has worked as an instructional designer, computer lab director, and classroom teacher, and is now a teacher educator and educational consultant. Gary began his first profession in architecture. Involved with designing educational settings he became interested in the profession of teaching, later becoming a secondary school classroom teacher, outdoor educator, principal and, most recently, a teacher educator and researcher–a professor of education.

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relatively scant literature on second-career teachers. Second, we present data and conclusions, in two sections, from case studies of beginning elementary school teachers and from beginning secondary school teachers. Third, we offer some general conclusions and suggest some potentially fruitful directions for research and practice by raising issues for consideration.

Perspectives from the Literature

Recent years have witnessed an increase in the number of second-career individuals receiving teacher certification and entering classrooms to take on the roles and responsibilities associated with teaching.[5] As recently as 1983, only eight states had specific guidelines and programs to facilitate the preparation of these teachers (Tifft, 1989). By 1990, however, 33 states had in place alternative teacher education programs aimed at preparing second-career individuals to enter the classroom (Mangan, 1990). Many schools of education employ recruitment strategies to entice these individuals into preservice teacher education programs (e.g., Murray & Fallon, 1989), and many organizations such as the Holmes Group (1986) actively support and promote such efforts. And other organizations, such as The Michigan Partnership for New Education,[6] are actively exploring notions associated with these kinds of individuals' transition to teaching (see, Powell, 1992). These programs, along with the individuals who pass through them, receive careful attention from educators and policy makers as they seek to understand the effectiveness of the programs for preparing these non-traditional teachers.[7] Perhaps more important, however, are the attempts to more clearly understand the impact which these teachers have on their students

[5]The popular and mass media press often salute these individuals (e.g., see, Issacs, 1990; Tifft, 1989).
[6]Specifically, the School and University Alliance, a "division" of the Partnership. The Partnership is a collaboration between private business, state government, and university interests.
[7]We say this only in comparison to younger first-career teachers.

and colleagues, particularly as related to their decisions to enter teaching in the first place and on their teaching-related decisions after entering the classroom (e.g., see, Madfes, 1990). Although recent literature related to the exploration of this topic is sparse (see, also, Freidus, 1989) and unsystematic (Haipt, 1987-88), perhaps due to the relative newness and scope of the phenomena of well-qualified[8] second-career teachers, several studies have been conducted to date and provide a foundation for examining elements of the two studies presented in this paper.[9]

One of the first teacher preparation programs specifically established for second-career teachers was the Midcareer Mathematics and Science Program, and it continues to be operated by the Harvard Graduate School of Education. This particular program awards Master's degrees and teaching credentials to individuals in mathematics and the pure, applied, and natural sciences. Although it attracts a variety of individuals, these career changers typically exhibit four motivations to enter the teaching profession: "the need to engage in a 'worthwhile activity,' a notion of service to others, personal style, and a love of the subject [matter]" (Merseth, 1986, p. 10).[10] Subsequent studies also identified common themes among career changers related to their reasons for choosing teaching as a second career.

Similarly, and as a result of a study of career-changing vocational education teachers, Wittkamper and Harris (1987) also suggest three broad categories of reasons for switching careers. These include economic reasons, such as retirement, medical factors, layoffs, and income improvement; idealistic

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[8]We think of these individuals being apparently well-qualified because of the richness of their professional'worl backgrounds (see, footnote below).
[9]We do not wish to imply that this is only a recent phenomenon as, for example, the study by Londoner (1970) reminds us. In his study, compared with more recent work, similar kinds of reasons for changing careers are evident. We sense, however, that there are greater numbers of academically highly qualified individuals in today's pool of second-career teachers.
[10]A recent study of the graduates of this program suggest that these individuals do not leave teaching for reasons associated with dissatisfaction with the profession (see, Merseth & Beals, 1991).

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reasons, including self-improvement, impulse, other teaching experiences (e.g., community education night classes), enjoyment of youngsters, and a lifelong desire to teach; and, personal circumstances, such as a need for a change, desire for different work hours, and prior work with schools. Of particular note is the upward mobility move to teaching as expressed by individuals previously situated in more vocational (as opposed to professional) occupations (Wittkamper, 1984; see, also, Goodson & Cole, forthcoming).[11] Many of these same reasons for making the transition to teaching are cited by Crow, Levine, and Nager (1990) in a study of career changers. They also suggest broad patterns of motivation among these second-career teachers, including those called "homecomers" who view teaching as something they have always wanted to do, and the "converted" who chose teaching because of a pivotal life event. Together, these studies suggest that individuals chose teaching as a second career for a variety of reasons and, although many lay persons still believe this is an implausible choice, there is a growing number of individuals who leave well-established careers, take pay cuts, and accept personal sacrifices in order to pursue teaching as a second career (Crow, Levine & Nager, 1990; Tifft, 1989).

Second-career teachers seem to possess clear and distinct characteristics with regard to their reasons for entering the classroom–and many of these appear to be potentially powerfully productive for enthusiastic and progressive teaching practice. It is not clear, however, if the strength of these characteristics continue as second-career individuals settle into their roles as teachers. Given the diverse backgrounds–encompassing both personal and professional experiences–of second-career teachers it is most likely that they adapt to the realities of classroom teaching in vastly different ways, especially in comparison

[11]Interestingly, this is one area of secondary school subject matter that has long relied on career changers to fill the ranks of teachers (see, Wittkamper, 1984), although, in many school districts vocational education is fast becoming a thing of the past.

to younger individuals (see, also Knowles, 1990, 1992). But, conversely, there are a number of commonalities shared by second-career teachers which suggest that they may deal with classroom situations in manners similar to each other despite their diverse personal and occupational histories.

There is evidence, for example, that due to their previous work experiences in organizations of various kinds, second-career teachers may have heightened abilities to deal with certain aspects of teaching, such as the bureaucracy surrounding schools and some of the day-to-day classroom routines, including paperwork and record keeping (Merseth, 1986; Spencer & Tinajero, 1989). They may also have a greater understanding of human behavior due to their wider range of life experiences, and this may facilitate the development of relationships in their new setting (Merseth, 1986). This suggests, quite obviously, that second-career teachers may draw upon the skills and knowledge acquired in previous careers to assist them in their new career of teaching.

Like Bennett and Spalding (1991), Bullough, Knowles, and Crow (1991) explored the various perspectives of beginning second-career teachers. The range of initial teaching perspectives represented in categories generated by Bennett and Spalding (e.g., the scholar psychologist, the friendly scholar, the inculcator, the friendly pedagogue, the empowerer, and the nurturer) were embedded in powerful life experiences and display considerable similarity between some of the teaching metaphors identified by Bullough, Knowles, and Crow in an exploration of beginning teachers--such as those built around being a nurturer, an expert and caring adult, a rescuer, a subject matter specialist, and a facilitator and public servant, among others. The relevance of these kinds of perspectives of teaching, and views of the teaching self, become especially important, it seems, for guiding and facilitating new teachers' growth (see, Knowles, 1992; Knowles & Holt Reynolds, 1991; Knowles & Hoefler, 1989).

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Conversely, there is evidence that perspectives held by second-career prospective teachers which are inappropriate for classroom contexts can have seriously detrimental effects on the progress towards becoming teachers. For example, Knowles and Hoefler (1989) explored the experiences of a second-career student or practice teacher who "failed"–and this prospective teacher's inability to perform at acceptable levels was largely embedded in her personal history, and rested on issues that neither the school or programmatic contexts addressed adequately during her formal preparation. And, this kind of outcome may be more widely occurring than is at first obvious.

Knowles and Sudzina (1991) provide evidence suggesting that some second-career teachers, because of their rigid perspectives among other things, may be at greater risk of "failing" the capstone practicum in preservice teacher education. To add further evidence of the down-side associated with second-career teachers, Madfes (1990), who studied individuals from three universities in three states, suggested that second-career teachers had greater problems in the induction year than younger, traditional-aged beginning teachers. This also provides support for Knowles' (1990) conclusion that, as a group, these individuals either perform exceptionally well or exceptionally poorly in the classroom as student teachers and beginning teachers–there seems to be little middle ground in the quality of their practices within the classroom. Also relevant is the notion that these people need just as much preparation to teach as their younger counterparts, a notion that goes contrary to many peoples' thinking (Madfes, 1990).

Other issues and problems may create additional challenges for second-career teachers. Many make extreme personal sacrifices to enter the classroom, such as taking decreases in salary and changes in professional status–and sometimes considerable adjustments are required to cope with these types of sacrifices. Such adjustments can add to the already overwhelming task of

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adapting to the classroom environment as beginning teachers. Further, some of these second-career teachers enter their initial teaching positions without clear understandings of what the role of a teacher entails–perhaps relying on long-held personal and romantic remembrances of teaching and teachers–and are consequently overwhelmed by the complexities which day-to-day teaching and the realities of the classroom situation (Bullough, Knowles & Crow, 1991; Knowles, 1992).

Bullough and Knowles (1991), writing about the experience of one career–changer, for example, point out that the "the [often long] length of time separating their experience as secondary school students and their current work experience" (p. 101) may create difficulties in making the transition to teaching. In addition, some career changers are unfamiliar with common learning theories, typical and atypical student characteristics, sound instructional practices, and effective classroom management techniques, "not because these things are not taught, but because they moved through teacher education with rigidly held perspectives on the future practices, unwilling to consider alternatives" (Knowles, 1990; see, also Schumer & Knowles, 1991). Although they may possess solid content area knowledge developed through previous career experiences, they may lack certain universal teaching skills, particularly abilities to interact with children. It is unclear, however, in what specific ways prior education-related experiences influence the thinking and practices of beginning second-career teachers. The two studies described below provide a basis for discussing the relationship between second-career teachers' life histories, their thoughts about teaching, and their actions in classrooms.

Case Studies of Beginning Second-Career Teachers

The cases presented here examine second-career teachers' reasons for entering the profession along with the impact of their personal and professional

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life experiences on their subsequent teaching practices and experiences. As mentioned, the data is derived from two separate sets of case studies, one focusing on beginning elementary school teachers and the other on beginning secondary school teachers. Both sets of case studies relied on qualitative research methods, obtaining data through classroom observations, journal writing,[12] and open-ended, informal interviews. Through such techniques, life history data about the second-career teachers and contextual information about their schools and classrooms were obtained.

All of the second-career elementary school teachers came to teaching with experiences of thinking about computer technology and using computers in their previous careers. The teachers held strong beliefs about educational computing and had strong intentions of fully utilizing computer technology in their classrooms, much of this based on their previous uses of computers in the business world. In these cases, previous experiences promised to impact their thinking about curriculum and teaching practices in a direct way.

The other group, secondary school teachers, consisted of individuals with a variety of life experiences, although few recognized their prior careers as having substantial and direct relationships to classroom activities. Nevertheless, they saw their experiences, such as those of homemaker and mother, metal craftsman, cabinet maker, salesperson, and school secretary, as providing useful perspectives on students, teaching, and schools.

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[12]In the cases of the secondary school teachers the written journals were interactive or dialogical. Gary was both the researcher and a kind of facilitator of aspects of their early experiences in the classroom, conducting a weekly seminar and other activities for these teachers, he also responded in the journals, asking questions, seeking clarification of ideas, descriptions of practices, and other elements of the journal writing. In effect the journals represented an ongoing conversation, although one that leaned more towards the teachers' voices being most predominant (see, Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991).

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Each of these studies provide insights into the impact of life histories on the thinking of second-career teachers. We proceed, first by relating aspects of the elementary school teachers' cases, then moving on and focusing on two of the secondary school teachers. Because there was a level of background occupational similarity between the elementary teachers, we do not specifically identify their voices and experiences, hence the appropriately different ways in which we present the evidence.

The Elementary School Teachers

The data and conclusions about the elementary school teachers were part of a larger study (Novak, 1991; see, also Novak & Knowles, 1991). This investigation focused on computer use among six beginning elementary teachers, four of whom were second-career teachers, and it is these people on whom we focus. Three of these four teachers left positions in the business world to pursue teaching because it was something they had always wanted to do. Becoming a teacher, for them, was achieving a lifelong dream. The personal and professional (life) experiences of these second-career teachers, their pre-formal teacher preparation experiences, influenced the ways in which they viewed themselves as teachers, the ways they organized and managed their classrooms, their expectations for students, and their uses of the computer in teaching.

Reasons for becoming a teacher. These individuals chose to pursue teaching as a second career after feeling frustration towards, reduced interest in, and little personal fulfillment from previous careers. These feelings were replaced with those of excitement and personal satisfaction for their new roles. One of the teachers described her attitudinal changes on entering teaching as a second career:

> I am very happy in what I am doing. I used to complain when I was working in business. I had the "I do not want to get up attitude."

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> Now I get up every day at 4:30 to 5:00 a.m. and get in here early to get ready–I look forward to coming in. I am just generally happier. I think I am more positive than I was before.

For some of these teachers a specific event, such as a clash with a superior or supervisor prompted the pursuit of a teaching career. For others, it was a realization that teaching was their "calling." All, however, reported that they had "always wanted to be a teacher." One of these second-career teachers described herself as "a teacher trapped in a business person's body."

These teachers were all women,[13] ranged in age from 27 to 42, and taught in grades four and five in three different, middle class school districts in a Midwestern state. One of the teachers was single and another had children of her own. This latter teacher, a mother, did not feel that being a mother directly impacted her ability to teach, however, certain events associated with her own children fueled her beliefs as to "how" she should teach. She, for example, modeled herself after a favorite teacher of her daughter, and used the computer in her teaching after witnessing the powerful impact it had on her son. She also felt that having a family added extra responsibilities and placed greater constraints on the time she felt was needed to adequately prepare for teaching.

In general, these teachers left high-paying positions in the business world to pursue teaching and were satisfied with their career choice, despite the reduction in pay, and for some, an apparent loss of social standing and status. They were often frustrated with the lack of funds and materials available to them but their sense of satisfaction and reward for taking on this "important" position of teacher won out.

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[13]This gender imbalance was not by intention. It resulted from a selection process that had had as its main criteria beginning teachers who <u>planned</u> to use the computer as an intructional tool in their classrooms.

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School contexts. Since instructional computer use was the "lens" through which these teachers were studied–as mentioned, their backgrounds and previous careers employed the use of computers–it is important to describe their teaching contexts in terms of computer access and availability. These teachers were all competent computer users and were well versed in business applications of computer technology. They were comfortable using the computer themselves, particularly for certain tasks, such as maintaining grade books and word processing. They also had strong personal beliefs about the importance of computers in contemporary life, and consequently of the need for students to be computer literate.

All of the school districts represented in the study had "requirements or recommendations" for computer use. None of the second-career teachers, however, felt "pressure to use the computer in their classrooms" but, nevertheless, they were aware of administrators' and parents' expectations of them to use the technology and had support and encouragement for this use. Each of the teachers had similar levels of access to computers in her school or classroom–an *Apple II* series computer in the classroom and additional equipment in other parts of the school building. Each also had access to a substantial amount of instructional software.

Despite the fact that all of the teachers had previous experience using computers before entering their classrooms, computer use in previous careers, however, was typically of a kind that was very specific to that job and business need and did not relate to using the computer with students. And, their previous experiences were not necessarily with an Apple computer, the type found in each teachers' classroom. One of the teachers described the disparity between previous and current computer usage:

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[My previous experience] doesn't really relate. My job was in the CAD-CAM industry and I had a programmer. I'd say make it do this and make it user friendly and he would. I'd just punch in what I needed and that was that. I had a one credit class [during my teacher preparation] but I don't think I learned enough to do much with it. I learned how to use *Print Shop* and to make puzzles, but not really enough to do much with it now.

Drawing on previous career skills to manage the classroom. To a small extent these second-career teachers felt that they were able to handle some of the demands of teaching by drawing on skills developed during their previous careers:

I think I have an advantage because I was in [the] "personnel" [department] for three years. I know what it was like in the business world and I loved it. I wouldn't give that time for anything--I learned a lot. It taught me to be flexible . . . able to juggle a lot of different things at one time. [Being in] "personnel" helped.

Overwhelmingly, however, the teachers in this study, like many other beginning teachers, were surprised by the vast amounts of time required by their teaching and teaching-related responsibilities, such as planning, grading, and committee work. This was especially troublesome for these second-career teachers because they anticipated that their previous career experiences would help them to more easily cope with their classroom responsibilities, and perhaps even make their transitions into the classroom easier than those of traditional-aged, younger beginning teachers. While they all reported being "happy" with their decisions to pursue teaching as a career, they were frustrated with the time required by their new profession:

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> It's been a lot of work, but it's been rewarding. Don't get me wrong, I love it, but it is a lot different than I expected. I know that during my teacher training they kept telling me those things, but I didn't believe them. I guess I came in here with rosy glasses. I thought I would be different. I thought maybe because I was older or had already had a career it would be easier, but I was wrong! It is a lot of hard work. It's tiring. Now, I have to teach and be on committees, and everything else.

As the school year progressed, these teachers learned to delegate some of the "tedious and time-consuming" tasks, such as putting up bulletin boards, grading papers, and maintaining records, to parent volunteers and to the students themselves. Along with their abilities to delegate work, many of these second-career teachers learned to deal with the complex and rapid pace of a typical elementary classroom and to draw on their experiences in the business world to help in their management of classroom activities:

> Running a classroom is like running a small business and it took me a while to figure that out. I am used to managing 50 things at once from my previous work, and you have to do that in a classroom.

In general, the experiences which these teachers had during their previous careers provided them with a solid foundation for dealing with elements of the classroom environment. Still, they needed an adjustment period, just like any new teacher, to adapt to the roles and responsibilities associated with daily, ongoing, classroom teaching. Although they entered their classrooms with beliefs that their previous experiences would assist them in their teaching, this did not become a reality until they passed through the "culture shock" often associated with beginning classroom teaching experiences (Corcoran, 1981; Ryan, 1970, 1986). Not until these teachers learned to do more than just survive their

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teaching days (see, Ryan, 1986), could they reach back and make effective use of skills learned in previous careers. Near the middle of her second semester of teaching, one of the career changers described her evolution:

> I am much more comfortable with the computer and everything now--like I have it under control. It's just that in the beginning [of the year] it was more of remembering to do things, like take attendance. Now, it is more habit so I can help them more. Now is more planning, then was more surviving.

Having developed their stride, teachers were more able to think about applying appropriate skills associated with computers.

Linking prior experiences with teaching practices. Previous career experiences not only influenced the technical skills which these teachers brought with them to the classroom, they also impacted their beliefs about teaching practices. This latter influence was particularly evident in their thinking about using the computer in classroom instruction. These teachers were comfortable using computers for personal purposes because of regular exposure to them in previous careers, and for some, "computer use was nearly "second nature." They were convinced of the need for their students to be competent with computers because of the increasing importance of computers in society. Further, these teachers wanted more than just "exposure" to computers for their students--they wanted to help them to become comfortable using them regularly, especially for certain tasks such as writing.

> I feel it will be an integral part of their lives very soon. And they need to know how to do the basics. Word processing will be the wave of writing in the future. More so than now. We are an information society and these students--some have never been in contact with the computer and that is doing them a great disservice. That is like

> having them go out there and not be able to read, especially when they graduate from high school and go to college. I really believe in the wave of technology in education.

Although their background experiences helped to formulate their interest in and positive beliefs about the computer, it did little to provide practical assistance in actually using it with students. So, despite their previous computer experiences and strong interest in educational computing, these teachers felt unprepared to use the computer in their teaching.

> In my job in the CAD-CAM industry, if I needed something programmed, I had a programmer and I'd say "Make it do this and make it user friendly." And he would, and I'd just punch in what I needed and that was that. It doesn't relate to this.

Still, as they became comfortable with the routines of the classroom, these teachers used computers regularly in their instruction. This they did in a variety of ways, including drill and practice, word processing, and *Logo* programming. Although each had only one computer to use with a classroom of students, they were able to handle the confusion typically caused by a "one-computer classroom." They scheduled student computer use and managed typical computer-related problems, such as printer jams, malfunctioning disks, and "haywired" monitors with relative ease. Although they did not always possess the necessary technical skills to remedy these problems, they did have the abilities needed "to remain in control of the situation" as they dealt with these unexpected problems. At times they sought the assistance of others; other times they simply regrouped and went on to alternative activities.

Other life experiences, besides those related to previous careers, also impacted these second-career teachers. For instance, role models influenced the ways in which these teachers organized and managed their classrooms. One

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modeled herself after her current principal whom she had seen teach. Another felt she had many role models to draw upon since her father had been an educator for many years. In a sense, all of the teachers were influenced by their own schooling. And, they created "traditional" classrooms, no doubt similar to those in which they participated as students. They also felt most comfortable in "traditional" teachers' role--especially standing in the front of the room, providing direct expository instruction as their students worked quietly at their desks. And, although the teachers had few models in their backgrounds for computer use in the classroom, some reported using the computer in ways similar to those of their cooperating teacher during their student or practice teaching experiences.

In addition, these teachers used the computer--and other teaching methods and classroom management techniques--to make their classrooms "fun places". Some recalled experiences during their own K-12 schooling which were fun and had inspired them to learn, others remembered "boring" teachers and did not want to be remembered that way by their own students, and all strove to create a classroom where "learning was fun."

Since only one of these career changers had children of her own, these teachers were also significantly influenced by their limited experiences with children. They commented that "their kids" (or students) often surprised them with their abilities and intellectual reasoning. They were also, at times, disturbed by some of the social issues which arose in these elementary grades, such as those associated with boy-girl relationships and tobacco smoking. One of the teachers described her experience:

> In the beginning of the year I didn't know that they just didn't get with it right away--they don't until about October. They are on a cycle and I am getting used to their cycle. Now they are on another cycle,

being cooped up in the winter. I don't have kids, so I didn't know about these cycles.

Overall, the teachers felt a strong need to provide the best learning environment possible for their students, but those who had limited prior exposure to children admitted being a little unsure of how to deal with these "little people".

The Secondary School Teachers

The exploration of the beginning secondary school teachers was part of an evaluation of a program which sought to provide high levels of university- and school-based preparation and support for a group of beginning teachers. Each of the teachers was selected to participate in the university-school district collaborative induction program based on their interest in the program and their suitability for the classroom positions they filled. While they each held full-time positions in two schools--a junior high and senior high--they were "given certain concessions" by the school district. Despite the fact that the conditions associated with their professional experiences in the schools, particularly the junior high, turned out to be far from ideal,[14] especially given that they were in an induction program, they did have reduced responsibilities. The beginning teachers taught five periods of a six or seven period day, they were not expected to lead out in extracurricular activities, they had a "mentor" assigned to them, and, their classrooms in each of the two schools were situated in relative close proximity to each other in an effort to provide ongoing and mutual support.

[14]This was especially so given the attention to conditions of induction such as those that Cole and Watson (1991) suggest, as being essential for optimal early professional development (see, also, Cole, 1990a, 1990b, 1991). However, one of the main problems with the successful implementation of the program was the principal of the junior high school who gave lip service to the needs of the beginning teachers and the principles of the program but who, through his allocation of resources and the explicit and implicit expectations placed on the facilitating experienced teachers (or mentors), undermined the efforts of others, including those of the university. Yet, in many ways the second-career teachers worked in contexts that afforded greater attention to the development of practice, something that is denied many freshly certified beginners.

Three other contextual matters stand out as being important in these teachers' early experiences. First, the majority of those who "volunteered" to participate in the collaborative induction program were second-career preservice teachers.[15] The second-career prospective teachers felt that the program gave some credence to their maturity and they saw it as a relatively expedient way to become proficient teachers. Second, they had relatively ample time to prepare for the academic year, as they were appointed to their positions in late spring. Third, they participated in productive and extended orientation activities over the summer months. We proceed by focusing on the experiences of two of the teachers.

Reasons for becoming a teacher. The teachers came from variety of occupational backgrounds and these influenced their thinking about changing careers. For example, Lillian, a 38 year old mother, was greatly influenced by eight years working as a school secretary, yet this experience overlaid a much earlier experience as a college student working with special needs students. She, in essence, had a "nagging urge" to teach and, when coupled with a principal telling her as the school secretary that she "would make a great teacher", the "urge [to become one] became unbearable." She also wrote:

> I felt that I had the patience and empathy to help improve . . . [students'] lives. Since having my own children and being involved in the school system, both as a parent and an employee, I realized the importance of education for "average" students. Since the publication of the *Nation at Risk* report people have questioned whether schools .

[15]Only two of the five teachers (40 per cent) at the two schools were of young, traditional-age prospective teachers. They were drawn from a pool of preservice teachers in which nearly 70 per cent were without a first career (although some of those had masters degrees or other academic qualifications but had never held full-time occupations). The focus on practice, as opposed to theory, was welcomed by the second-career teachers.

. . meet the . . . needs of a high-tech society. I decided to take an active role and contribute to excellence in education.

Like some other second career teachers, Lillian "wanted to give back to the community", and her actions were principled and intentional. She was not simply looking for a job, instead, felt she had "something like a call to teaching"–she "had a job to do". Indeed, she felt as though her mission was to "improve the lot of the average kid," especially such kids' "views [of] and skills with mathematics". Just what was her "job"? And, how did it arise?

Two major elements of Lillian's background were very influential in her thinking about becoming a teacher–and these were important in both motivating her to go back to college and in forming her newfound classroom practices. Being a school secretary, situated figuratively and literally alongside the principal's office, gave her "an insiders' view of a whole lot of things–especially the state of "teachers' discipline and management strategies"–and she "determined to do a better job" as a teacher herself. In particular, she recognized that it was the "students with the poor academic performance who regularly trekked through the office" and, for those students who were "marginally OK, . . . there was nothing much in classes to extend or even hold their interests." Thus, her thinking about "average" students and her attention to them. Not only that, but Lillian also became aware of the importance of teachers making known their expectations of students. Many of the "teachers who had the worst time with students were not clear about what it was they expected." It was not simply a matter of stating rules and regulations but the difficulty, she deduced, lay in teachers' inability or unwillingness to be explicit about the reasons behind the rules. Even more important, Lillian reasoned, was for teachers and students to talk at length about rules, perhaps even "forming them together". She could be, she thought, "a

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substantially different teacher than most", and so she entered the preservice teacher education program as one who would "get students alongside".

In addition, as a much younger college student, Lillian had also tutored individual students, and she "learned the value of hands-on activities" for engaging children in productive learning activities. This experiential notion of learning was also directly related to the activities of her husband, an accomplished artist, and to the general values held by her family about how learning occurs and how it should be facilitated. She had also noted that some of the more successful teachers in the school within which she worked as the secretary were those that emphasized the "practical and real world connections". This was particularly true as she thought about "those teachers who got their students enthusiastic about subject matter." Of course, being a mother, she also watched her children closely as they progressed through school. And, there also, she acknowledged the "importance of hands-on approaches". Schools were, she maintained, far too interested in "presenting material to students . . . without helping to make students active learners, . . . [people] willing to take charge of their own learning." And, she was motivated to do otherwise. She "would make a difference."

Another teacher, Michael, had a markedly different background. He was a single man about the same age as Lillian. He was also very direct, sometimes blunt, in his dealings with people. His experience with children before entering the teacher preparation program was nonexistent. He had been a skilled metal craftsman and, for reasons associated with his health, decided to change occupations. As an undergraduate student he was not particularly successful, although he did earn a degree--some 15 years earlier. Nevertheless, as a direct result of his "bumming around, seeing the world and its rawness," he decided to pursue graduate study, an endeavor at which he was particularly successful.

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Study for the graduate degree in geography grew out of his interest in peoples, cultures, and physical geography, and eminently suited him to teaching, so he thought, because he had the "real experience of places" behind him. And, besides, his professors were impressed with his "oratory skills, . . . and [his] general ability to write and present information." Thus, teaching seemed a useful way out of his occupational dilemma.

Further, Michael's "bumming around left [him] without locational stability . . . and not too many resources" and he "figured that teaching would force [him] to locate permanently for a while." And, teaching would provide a more stable and secure source of income, something of which he had little experience. He even had a "noble reason for entering the teaching profession", as he stated: "I had such a bad experience of schools, I wanted to make a difference." So, like Lillian, Michael had visions of influencing students although he was much less altruistic than her, seeing teaching as "a very pragmatic solution to a whole set of complex circumstances".

School contexts. Lillian began her teaching in an inner city high school although, on all accounts, it was not a school plagued by the typical problems of such locations. She, along with two other participants in the program whose classrooms were clustered in the top floor of the building, was assigned a mentor, a highly experienced classroom teacher who was very supportive and knowledgeable but who had no background in mathematics, Lillian's subject matter. She was assigned a computer literacy class, two general mathematics classes, and two algebra classes--with grade 11 and 12 students. On being assigned her classroom, she immediately went to work preparing it and her curriculum materials.

Michael taught geography and English in the junior high school. He taught six periods of an eight period day, more than the principal originally

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promised him, thus, right from the start of the school year there was a degree of tension between him and the principal, a man whom Michael thought of "as making a good story . . . or argument but failing to deliver the goods". Actually, Michael was less polite much of the time and usually described the principal in words like, "He's full of bull shit and is just out to feather his cap–he isn't concerned about our development [as first year teachers]." Like Lillian, Michael had other new teachers working in close proximity. Unlike her, Michael had little vision as to how to physically organize the classroom for the beginning of the school year.

Linking prior experiences with teaching practices. On completion of her formal preparation to teach, and on the basis of her mathematics teaching methods professor's evaluation of her work, Lillian was said to have "had an excellent background in mathematics." As the professor stated: "She [thinks] about [teaching Math] in conceptually coherent ways." As she prepared for the new year she developed detailed curricular materials based on notions of experiential learning.

Repeatedly, Lillian drew on her experiences of working in a school. She thought about preparation of lessons and curriculum and actively taught in ways that allowed students "to take charge of their own learning," that encouraged exploration of the basic concepts of mathematics through experiential activities. As mentioned in the previous and following sections, it was mainly her classroom organization and relationships with students that propelled her success, and these practices were offshoots of her experiences as a school secretary. Nevertheless, the fact that she was a mother also allowed her to consider "some shortcuts"–her children were convenient sounding boards and helped her think about the usefulness of some teaching strategies. Their presence also reminded her of some of the ways in which they as students responded to other teachers'

instructional and managerial practices and, in this way, she had a "kind of insiders' perspective".

The most prominent element of Michael's thinking about teaching and being a teacher rested on his very negative experience of schools and teachers as a student. Unlike Lillian, he simply had little conception as to "how a good teacher should act". As he said on many occasions, "all the damn teachers that I had were atrociously bad". For him, as a student, school was a "terrible experience." Thus, while he came to teaching with "a glimpse of a noble intention" he was ill-equipped on a number of fronts: he had no experience with school-age students and found it very difficult to relate to them; he had no clear conception of his role of teacher; his only conception of teaching was of very traditional teachers managing very rigid classrooms; and, his view of learning, based on his own experience, was of the "jug to jug variety--[for teachers to] . . . pour it in, and hope it comes out!" And, besides, he was used to being "in total control of the [metal that he] worked--and metal doesn't talk back."

When the professors introduced or talked about various alternative strategies to the most traditional and inflexible teaching methods that he knew, Michael "had nothing on which to hang [his] new experiences of learning about classrooms." But, underneath this disadvantage of not having positive schooling experiences was another issue. He had always worked in fairly autonomous and isolated contexts--ones that displayed marked similarities to the isolation of teaching. He questioned this in the first weeks on the job:

> Will I enjoy teaching? I know I can cope with the academic demands of the job, but what of the social aspects? I'm a pretty solitary person entering into a people-centered career. But much more to the point is the extent to which my own very checkered schooling will help or hinder me.

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He was concerned that his experiences as an often failing student would negatively influence the way he dealt with kids. On the one hand he thought he may be able to empathize with them, on the other he though he might "rebelliously butt [his] head against the bureaucratic strictures of the job." And, the fact that he had often "been his own boss" in his previous work only increased the possibility of this happening. And, it did.

Drawing on previous career skills to manage the classroom. There were a number of ways in which Lillian's work as a school secretary influenced her classroom management. And, in a sense, she had the advantage of insights into some of the political, organizational, and instructional dilemmas and problems of schools. Yet, she had not worked in classrooms. We present two ways in which she drew on her background. In particular, she recognized "the futility of relying on the principal to do the hard stuff as disciplinarian," admonishing other new teachers in the program to "refrain from sending kids to the office unless [they] have absolutely exhausted all possibilities" of action themselves. Her organizational skills were quite exceptional, certainly in comparison with the other new teachers. While she religiously attended to paperwork requirements she did not belabor their importance. After all, she knew from being a secretary how to efficiently deal with voluminous piles of paperwork.

Lillian was also particularly adept at facilitating the "average" students' learning and seemed to have considerable success in getting several students who were unsuccessful in previous math classes interested in the subject. For example, she wrote:

> My mentor commented several times [after] visiting my room "how well some of the poorer students are going". . . . I've worked hard at reaching them, and at last I seem to be succeeding. . . . I'm particularly pleased with [several students] . . . because they have

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taken their learning very seriously. . . . Turning the focus of the class to practical stuff has been very successful.

As one explanation for her success with these students she offered the following:

> I had many opportunities to hone my skills at communicating with the kids who were sent to the [principal's] office. I know how to communicate with those kids. . . . I'm direct but sincerely and genuinely concerned–and they know that.

Michael maintained that there was little in his previous career experiences that facilitated his work in the classroom. After all, he was used to working at his pace, and doing so alone. He simply had to negotiate with clients or contractual agents the scope, extent, and expectations associated with the products of his work. And "these interactions were nearly always one on one," he lamented, "not like the complex interplay of goings-on that [occurs] in classrooms." The reality was that Michael had a "very difficult time" during the first year. When difficulties arose with students he often resorted to using forceful words–just as he had been subjected to a student. "I hate what I find myself doing," he confessed. And, he found himself "swearing at the little buggers, . . . just like [he] would swear at a piece of work gone awry." All in all, apart from the very powerful influences of his own schooling, there was little positive influence and relationship between his work in the classroom and his work in the metal shop.

In Summary

Although there is nothing greatly unusual about the motivations behind these career changers for selecting teaching as a second career, it is interesting to note that the men (including the other not mentioned in this paper) thought quite differently about their career change and teaching than the women. The women had all worked in business-type positions, even Lillian who worked as a secretary. These teachers all left their originally chosen careers to pursue teaching because

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of an instinctual calling to do so. They had always wanted to be teachers and viewed teaching as a more fulfilling and rewarding career than that in which they previously worked. Michael, on the other hand, had worked in a metal shop and was drawn to teaching as a good solution to his need for a new job. It was not something which he had a burning desire to do, teaching simply provided a career which allowed him to at least draw on some of his personal interests. These differences also suggest that individuals entering teaching from a vocational career, such as Michael's, and those entering from more professional positions such as those held by Lillian and the elementary school teachers, may have different motivations for pursuing teaching as a career. The notions expressed here--as outcomes of our exploratory case studies--suggest another arena for research efforts to address.

It is evident that these second-career teachers entered into the first year of full-time teaching with well-developed perspectives of their roles and responsibilities as teachers--they possessed definite ideas of the meaning associated with "being a teacher". Based on their own experiences as students and on their "experiences in the real world", they constructed certain views as to how they should set up, organize, and manage their classrooms. Some of this was based on prior negative experiences which they had with schools, such as bad teachers they had encountered during their own years as a student, or in Lillian's case, poor examples she had witnessed during her years working in the schools. Their own experiences as students also provided these teachers with a traditional view of teaching and with an almost burning desire to create enjoyable classrooms which emphasized good rapport among and fun times for the participants.

Other life experiences also helped to formulate their views about ways to set up and organize their classrooms and about the types of instructional activities

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and management techniques to use with their students. The limited exposure to school-age learners impacted the teaching practices which these teachers implemented. Taken together, this kind of evidence suggests that the personal and professional life histories of these second-career teachers played a powerful part in the development of their teaching practices.

While it might be argued that Lillian's experience was unique in comparison to the other teachers described, we maintain that her work as a school secretary did not provide her with substantial insights into how she should act when in the front of the classroom alone. In this respect her career experiences were of little direct influence. Nevertheless, she did take knowledge gained in the context of her work as school secretary and applied it in most productive ways. All of these individuals simply took what they knew and applied it whenever and where ever possible to the contexts of their teaching. And, for the most part, this was appropriate.

Conclusion and Discussion

The findings of these two studies suggest that personal histories influence the thinking about practice and the actual practice of second-career teachers in significant ways. Experiences prior to becoming teachers influence the organizational and management structures they set up in their classrooms, the expectations of and beliefs about children that they maintain, the ways in which they design curriculum and resolve instructional problems, and the views they hold of themselves as teachers. Like Freidus (1989), we conclude that second-career teachers make the decision to teach based on a complex "interplay of developmental concerns, historical context and personal experience" (p. 260). And, also like Freidus, we see that the decision to teach is linked to some kind of personal transformative goal. However, in contrast to Freidus and due to the limited scope of our exploratory research, we cannot fully support notions of

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gender differences playing out in powerful ways in the professional experiences of second-career teachers. Nevertheless, we intuitively sense that gender-related elements of personal histories may be highly pertinent in their thinking and practices–and we have slight evidence of it being the case. Clearly more research in this area will enable us to better understand the interactions between gender and teaching as a second-career, as well as the relationship between first-career choices and pursuing teaching as a second-career.

To think that life histories, prior experiences, do not influence the perspectives of prospective teachers is beyond question. Yet, for the most part we sense that teacher education programs do not seriously consider nor facilitate preservice teachers' exploration of their prior experiences of schools, cl ssrooms, and teachers–especially as these influence thinking about practice. There was no evidence that anywhere in the formal teacher preparation of these individuals, prior to actually working in schools, that professors of teacher education tapped into their experiences, or induced them to reflect about those prior experiences in other than superficial ways. This causes us to question the impact preservice teacher education programs which promote personal reflection into the motives, beliefs, and skills which second-career individuals bring with them to these programs. And, we ask, Does this kind of reflection during the preparation period influence the later practice of developing second-career teachers? Clearly, we sense that it does.

Surely one of the multiple tasks of teacher educators, and those responsible for initiating second-career teachers into the world of full-time classroom responsibilities, seems to rest in helping individuals recognize the relevance of personal explorations into their often well-established perspectives on teaching. We maintain that there is an urgent need for a better understanding of the impact of life experiences on the developing teacher as well as a need for the development

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and subsequent evaluation of teacher preparation programs which promote the kind of thinking necessary to assist career changers examine and utilize their previous life and career experiences to enhance their classroom teaching.

Implications for Research and Practice

The studies discussed here support the notion that second-career teachers, not unlike traditional-aged, first-career teachers, need assistance with the transition from being students of teaching in universities to being teachers of students working in classrooms. Career changers, especially, could benefit from specific assistance in identifying where and when to make use of previously learned skills or, even more fundamentally, how to meld their previous career experiences with the preparation period and activities associated with formal teacher education. Like Bennett and Spalding (1991) we support the notion of facilitating preservice and beginning second-career teachers explorations of "how their perspectives interact with various school contexts and harmonize or clash with them" (p. 30).

Nevertheless, we do not take the stance that our role as teacher educators is to facilitate their merge into the status quo of classrooms and schools–indeed, quite the opposite. Further, we have reservations about the employment of second-career teachers who exhibit excessively rigid perspectives of schools, classrooms, learning, and teaching. We suspect that these people rather insidiously fulfill the seductive promises of this apparently well-qualified group of teachers by excessively focusing on perspectives that are not only outdated but which represent inappropriate pedagogy. And, the wholesale employment of such individuals may do much to maintain the status quo of public schools.

This kind of potential outcome calls for a better understanding of the key skills, strengths, needs, and interests which second-career teachers possess and the relationship of these to their previous life experiences and to their work in

classrooms. In other words, there is a need to more clearly understand the impact of certain first careers and specific life events on individuals' later development as teachers. Research efforts are needed which identify the common traits of second-career teachers, particularly focusing on those elements which provide insights into the interplay of previous life and career experiences and their subsequent impact on teaching. In-depth studies of individuals may illuminate those elements.

Certainly, calls for alternative preparation programs, sequenced in ways that are both sensitive to prior career experiences and other prior experiences seem essential. Such preparation may require less focus on content area backgrounds and more emphasis on making links and meanings of prior experiences so that emphasis rests on presenting the more human dimensions of teachers' responsibilities, such as presenting subject matter in meaningful and appropriate ways for school-age learners. And, in this regard, solid understanding of pedagogy may be far more important than either academic or experiential qualifications. Especially important may be foci on relationships with students and others, managing classrooms, motivation, curriculum design, and other elements of teaching, such as attention to the social and political milieu of schools and education in general.

The key to all of this may be to help these people recognize, explore, and reflect upon their agendas and intentions with which they enter teacher preparation, striving to uncover the origins and beliefs about teaching and weighing them against the best theoretical and practical teaching approaches that are currently known. What these people have that is unique and a strength when compared to young, traditional-aged beginning teachers is a wealth of life experiences, the background of one or more careers, and a drive that

is often powerfully motivated.[16] Teacher educators need to tap into these perspectives. To achieve this, however, we need a clearer understanding of the differences between those individuals who choose teaching as an initial career and those who are drawn to it as a second career. Are there significant differences in their motivations to teach? Do certain first-careers better prepare individuals to adapt to classroom teaching as a second career, or are some second-career individuals better candidates for successful entry into the classroom than others? If so, what are the characteristics of, beliefs or "practical arguments" (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991) held by, and backgrounds behind these particular individuals, and how can these be enhanced during the teacher preparation process to ensure later success in the classroom?

Finally, given the critical nature of the first-year of teaching, how can second-career teachers be most effectively assisted to work through the early and often very difficult induction period associated with the first year of teaching so that they can fulfill their potential promise to invigorate their students and the teaching profession? To what extent do induction programs need to sensitive to the unique experiences of these people? To these ends we invite further explorations of the role of personal histories in the process of becoming a teacher.

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[16] In saying this we do not intend to undermine the life and school experiences of younger first-career teachers, nor to suggest that they are also not highly motivated as well.

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