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## Great Expectations: The Mismatched Selves of a Beginning Teacher

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## Great Expectations: The Mismatched Selves of a Beginning Teacher

### Abstract

As university supervisors we were alerted to heightened emotional responses (i.e., crying, not eating, not sleeping), expressed by paid-interns in an accelerated Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) cohort of STEM practitioners. While research has shown teachers prepared in alternative programs tend to have greater difficulties (Darling-Hammond, 1990), few studies have examined alternatively prepared teachers' beliefs and expectations about teaching and learning (Tigchlaar, Brouwer, & Vermut, 2010; Good et al., 2006). This inquiry describes one paid-intern's teaching expectations during her first year of teaching. In this phenomenological case study, part of a larger cross-case study, we collected data from interviews, observation notes and university supervisor evaluations in an effort to answer: (1) What are the expectations about teaching of a student in an accelerated M.A.T. program who is also a first-year teacher completing a paid internship and (2) In what ways did she address those expectations? We utilized self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) that provides an understanding of how expectations can produce negative effects, such as anxiety or depression. Discoveries suggest the intern held idealistic expectations about teaching, influenced by her personality, prior experiences, and the accelerated M.A.T. program, which she could not reconcile with her experiences as a teacher.

### Keywords

Alternative Teaching Programs, First-Year Teachers, Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT), Self-Discrepancy Theory

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## **Great Expectations: The Mismatched Selves of a Beginning Teacher**

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*As university supervisors we were alerted to heightened emotional responses (i.e., crying, not eating, not sleeping), expressed by paid-interns in an accelerated Master of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) cohort of STEM practitioners. While research has shown teachers prepared in alternative programs tend to have greater difficulties (Darling-Hammond, 1990), few studies have examined alternatively prepared teachers' beliefs and expectations about teaching and learning (Tigchlaar, Brouwer, & Vermut, 2010; Good et al., 2006). This inquiry describes one paid-intern's teaching expectations during her first year of teaching. In this phenomenological case study, part of a larger cross-case study, we collected data from interviews, observation notes and university supervisor evaluations in an effort to answer: (1) What are the expectations about teaching of a student in an accelerated M.A.T. program who is also a first-year teacher completing a paid internship and (2) In what ways did she address those expectations? We utilized self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) that provides an understanding of how expectations can produce negative effects, such as anxiety or depression. Discoveries suggest the intern held idealistic expectations about teaching, influenced by her personality, prior experiences, and the accelerated M.A.T. program, which she could not reconcile with her experiences as a teacher. Keywords: Alternative Teaching Programs, First-Year Teachers, Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT), Self-Discrepancy Theory*

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I just had a nervous tick. I was messy. I wasn't taking care of myself. That's why I just had to let it go. I had to get to the point that it's not that I didn't care, I just had to stop caring about being the best. Just let it go. –Augusta<sup>1</sup>

Augusta's words provide a glimpse of her response to the realities of the classroom in her first days as a teacher. Augusta was a paid-intern completing her accelerated Masters of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T) degree while also beginning her first year teaching. During the course of her internship semester, her university supervisor, Lila, sought out the University Coordinator of Field Experiences to voice concerns about Augusta's transition to teaching. While Lila's other interns were experiencing a reasonably smooth transition into the classroom, Augusta seemed to be having an extremely difficult time. Lila expressed concerns about Augusta's severe anxiety; emotional distress, (i.e., crying); lack of self-care, (i.e., not eating and/or sleeping); and a desire to quit teaching. While some of these challenges are common to first year teachers (Chang, 2009; Fimian & Blanton, 1987; Kyriacou, 2011) it was the severity of Augusta's issues that alarmed Lila.

The Field Experience Coordinator heard similar concerns from several university supervisors; she investigated and discovered the interns had been placed at different schools, at different grade levels, and had different university supervisors, yet each of them were

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<sup>1</sup> All names are pseudonyms

reporting similar issues and all of them were part of the same cohort of M.A.T. students. The Field Experience Coordinator realized something unusual was occurring with this cohort and convened a meeting of the university supervisors involved to discuss if further investigation was warranted; we agreed the intensity of the emotional challenges expressed by the paid-interns justified further investigation. To understand the phenomena fully so that it may be corrected and prevented in the future, we conducted a phenomenological case study with Augusta and her cohort.

The authors of this study represent the research team that was formed to initiate the inquiry, which includes the Field Experience Coordinator, the University Supervisors, a professor, and an additional doctoral student. Together, we endeavored collaboratively to examine the concerns of the cohort in response to what we identified as a problem of practice. From our perspectives and collective experience, we recognized that in order to support these non-traditional students, we needed a better understanding of the nature of their concerns.

After obtaining IRB approval, our initial investigation revealed Augusta's concerns seemed to be rooted in her expectations of teaching. We wondered if her expectations could be considered typical (whatever that was), and if not, why? We suspected her expectations might be behind some of the difficulties and concerns she was experiencing. The following questions guided our investigation:

- 1) What are the expectations about teaching of a student in an accelerated M.A.T. program who is also a first-year teacher completing a paid internship?
- 2) In what ways are those expectations addressed?

### **Alternative Teacher Preparation Programs**

To meet the demands for new teachers, alternative certification programs, such as accelerated MAT programs, are often designed to attract talented content specialists to the profession (Cooperman, 2000; Tigchelaar, 2010; Zumwalt, 1996). Alternative certification programs have similar standards and methods as traditional college and university programs, but they may have differing characteristics, such as, accelerated time frames for completion and reduced credit requirements and admission standards (Darling-Hammond, 1990). The perceived problems of traditionally prepared beginning teachers in their years are well documented and include problems with classroom discipline, motivating students, dealing with individual differences, assessing students' work, relationships with parents, organization of class work, and insufficient or inadequate teaching materials and supplies (Brindley & Parker, 2010; Good et al., 2006; Veenman, 1984).

Students in accelerated routes to teaching represent a unique population of beginning teachers. Teachers who have been prepared through accelerated alternative routes tend to have greater difficulties with instructional planning, classroom management, and differentiating instruction than their traditionally prepared counterparts (Darling-Hammond, 1990; Boyd et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2009; Zeichner & Schulte, 2001). However, there is a lack of research on alternatively prepared teachers' expectations of teaching and how to support them in their first year teaching (Tigchelaar, Brouwer, & Vermunt, 2010). One way to support all teacher education students is through addressing beliefs and preconceptions about teaching and learning.

Good et al. (2006) examined the teaching practices of first year teachers prepared in a traditional program, a non-traditional master's degree program and a graduate certificate program. Researchers assessed teacher performance in three domains: assessment, classroom management, and implementation of instruction. The researchers found teachers prepared in

the non-traditional program performed the worst in all three domains at the elementary and middle school level. At the high school level, non-traditional students scored higher in the three domains, suggesting non-traditional programs may be effective in preparing high school teachers. The researchers call for further research on how teacher preparation can be related to teacher retention. In particular, they suggest research to examine how appropriate expectations may buffer (new teachers) from the difficulties of teaching.

### **Teacher Beliefs and Expectations**

Unlike many other professions, pre-service teachers enter their training programs with 12-14 years of exposure in the field. Termed the “apprenticeship of observation” by Lortie (1975), students develop strong conceptions of teaching and learning from these years of exposure to teaching as a student before they enter an education program (Kagan, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992). These beliefs may influence whether or not pre-service teachers accept information presented to them in their coursework (Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992), and classroom instructional decisions (Thompson, Windschitl, & Braaten, 2013).

Teacher beliefs are developed through personal experiences, experiences with formal knowledge, and the “apprenticeship of observation” (Lortie, 1975; Richmond, Juzwik, & Steele, 2011). Personal experiences include ethnic and cultural backgrounds, beliefs about the self as it relates to others, religious upbringings, gender, and major life decisions. Pre-service teachers’ experiences with formal knowledge also influence their beliefs. Formal knowledge includes beliefs often shared by a community of scholars and includes content knowledge and pedagogy, attained in teacher education programs (Richardson, 1996). Beliefs resulting from the “apprenticeship of observation” may be the most impactful in the formation of pre-service teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning (Lortie, 1975; Richardson, 1996). Critical episodes in a teacher’s past will influence and form her beliefs. It is likely these episodic experiences with past schooling create a template and/or inspiration for a teacher’s teaching practices. As a result of this extended experience and strong beliefs, teachers may teach the way they were taught (Kagan, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Nespor, 1987) and spend more time on instructional practices they see as more valid or important (Powers, Zippay, & Butler, 2006; Winograd & Johnson, 1987).

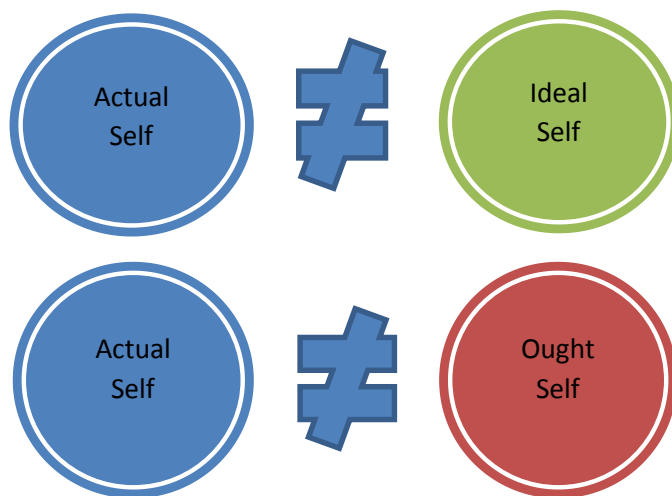
Furthermore, Flores (2006) found the overwhelming duties confronting novice teachers, especially when they felt a lack of support and guidance, caused these novices to develop a narrow and individual perspective, which was accompanied by a shift from a more inductive and student-centered approach to a more deductive and teacher-centered approach. As pre-service teachers progress through their teacher education program, their identity continues to develop as they interact within schools and broader communities (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). Hodges and Cady (2012) claim a teacher’s identity changes when interacting with other professionals, learning new ideas, and integrating those ideas into her own schema. Sachs (2005) states teachers learn how to be, act, and understand their work as a result of their personal and professional aspects of identity.

New teacher use beliefs and knowledge about teaching and learning to develop expectations for themselves as teachers, as well as for the profession based on the sources of their beliefs (i.e., experiences with formal knowledge, such as teacher education programs, and their experiences as students). McNally, Blake, Corbin, and Gray (2008) posit new teachers construct a “revised self that has within it a teacher identity, typically after several weeks of emotional turmoil and vulnerability” (p. 290). These expectations play an important role in pre-service teachers’ identities and how they evaluate themselves.

## Self-Discrepancy Theory

Higgins (1987) proposed the self-discrepancy theory (SDT) which provides a framework for understanding how expectations and beliefs can influence negative affect such as crying, anxiety, and depression. Self-discrepancy theory was developed to provide insight into the mismatches between representations of the self and “different kinds of emotional vulnerabilities” (Higgins, 1987, p. 320). SDT contends negative affect occurs when there is a mismatch between an individual’s behaviors and self-conceptions (actual self) and the standards she set for herself based on wishes and aspirations of how she would like to be (ideal self) or standards she set for herself based on perceived duties and responsibilities, such as those posited by a profession (ought self; see Figure 1). The ideal and ought selves are referred to as the self-guide, through which the actual self is evaluated. The actual, ought, and ideal selves are self-conceptions, but influenced by significant others whose input is valued by the individual (i.e., peers, principals, or instructors). A mismatch between the actual self and either the ought or ideal selves can create negative effects, such as anxiety, guilt, worry, and fear. For beginning teachers the actual self is the perception of themselves in the classroom. This is compared to what the teacher and significant others, such as evaluators, principals, or peers, perceive are the duties and responsibilities of the profession (ought self) or how that teacher wishes and aspires to be (ideal self). If there is a mismatch then negative effects may present themselves.

**Figure 1.** Self-discrepancy model of mismatched selves.



For example, a teacher who just completed a lesson that did not go as planned will evaluate herself by comparing her actual self with either the ought self or the ideal self. If she feels the lesson did not match the duties and responsibilities she believes are part of the profession/lesson or the ideal teacher she aspires to be, then she may feel anxious or worried. Through understanding beginning teachers’ expectations, we can begin to perhaps understand potential mismatches that may cause some of the struggles for first year teachers (Chang, 2009; Fimian & Blanton, 1987; Kyriacou, 2011). This information can be used to provide more effective instruction in teacher education programs by helping pre-service teachers to build appropriate expectations.

## Context

Housed in a large urban university in the Southeast, the program in which Augusta participated prepares cohorts of teacher candidates with backgrounds from science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields for classroom teaching in an accelerated Masters of Arts in Teaching (M.A.T.) Program. Unlike traditional M.A.T. programs that take two years to complete and culminate in a supported internship, this program's students, deemed "scholars" by faculty and staff within the program, completed all traditional coursework over the course of four consecutive semesters: coursework in the fall, spring, and summer semesters; and a paid-internship in the following fall semester. Unlike traditional interns, who gradually take over teaching responsibilities from a host teacher, Augusta and the members of her cohort completed paid-internships, where they were employed as full-time teachers of record during their internships. Each paid-intern in the cohort was assigned a school-site mentor in their content area by the school in lieu of a host teacher, in addition to a supervisor by the university. The program provided a scholarship to cover tuition as well as living and other expenses. However, this award money came with a pay-back contingency. All students were required to teach for two out of the four years immediately following completion of their program in an approved district, or they would have to repay the award money.

Augusta, a single, African American female in her early twenties, obtained an undergraduate degree in mathematics. She is a full-time teacher of record at a large culturally diverse suburban high school in the Southeastern United States. In her first year she taught Algebra II, Algebra II Honors, and College Prep Math. Upon the condition of her hiring, Augusta also served as assistant coach of the girls' basketball teams.

## Methods

Augusta was part of a larger study examining the expectations and concerns of a cohort (N=7) of science and math M.A.T. students in their paid internships. The research team wanted to understand the expectations of paid-interns who were completing their accelerated M.A.T. program in math or science. In order to examine this phenomenon, the researchers used purposeful sampling and invited the entire cohort and their supervisors to participate. Upon agreeing to participate, all of the paid interns in the cohort as well as their university supervisors were interviewed. Each supervisor's field notes, observational logs, and evaluations were also collected and consulted to triangulate data.

A phenomenological single-case study approach was adopted for this paper, as Augusta provided particularly rich data regarding her first-year experiences in a culturally diverse high school in the suburbs of a metropolitan city in the Southeast United States. Phenomenological studies strive to, "focus on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). In this investigation we wanted to explore how Augusta made sense of her experiences during her first semester teaching as a beginning teacher and paid-intern. Case study method aims to provide a "thick description" so as to fully describe Augusta's experiences with this phenomena (Stake, 1995).

## Data Collection

After obtaining IRB approval to conduct the study, two members of the research team interviewed Augusta during the winter break following her first semester of teaching. The end of the semester provided an ideal time for the interview as the recent semester was still fresh on Augusta's mind and, at the same time, she was thinking about the upcoming spring semester. All interviews took place after the successful completion of their final internships. Using a



guided interview protocol, the researchers designed broad questions to allow Augusta to tell her story (Olson, 2011). Questions such as, “Thinking back to the beginning of the school year, can you tell me about your expectations about teaching coming into this experience?” and “Reflecting on those initial expectations, can you tell me about how those expectations were or were not met as you began teaching?” were used in Augusta’s interview. The interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was conducted by a main interviewer and a secondary interviewer who was responsible for taking observational notes as well as asking additional probing questions. Augusta was aware that her university supervisor was part of the research team. No intern was interviewed by their university supervisor. In addition to the interview, the university supervisor’s field notes, observation logs and evaluations were collected to triangulate data.

## **Data Analysis**

A member of the research team transcribed the audio-recorded interview, resulting in 17 pages of transcript. The researchers sent the final transcript to Augusta for member check. All members of the research team read the transcript of Augusta’s interview individually before coming together as a group to memo. Memoing provides an outlet for the group’s conversation and thinking about data (Saldaña, 2012). We collectively read through the transcript line by line and began to identify phenomenon within Augusta’s responses.

Using a qualitative data analysis program (Atlas.ti) software, we set about creating codes that emerged from multiple readings of the transcript and discussion through open coding. Open coding is a process through which data are broken apart to create concepts or terms that stand for small blocks of data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Analysis proceeded to level two or axial coding where categories were developed from the initial codes. Constant comparison method was used to compare data within the transcript. Constant comparison consists of comparing data from two segments of the transcript to look for similarities and differences in order to determine trends in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The group coding process allowed us to study the same phenomenon through different lenses, providing opportunities for triangulation, a method of corroborating evidence from different sources and viewpoints, reducing the chances of misinterpretation, using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, and establish inter-rater reliability (Stake, 2006). We thoroughly discussed these different perspectives to ensure the stability of the coding process. Two-hundred fifty-three codes were initially identified. Axial codes were collapsed into categories based on their relationship to each other. Five categories emerged: personal expectations for success, expectations of teacher responsibilities, instructional expectations, classroom management, and expectations of her teacher education program.

## **Findings**

Five categories emerged from the data:

- a) personal expectations for success,
- b) expectations of teacher responsibilities,
- c) instructional expectations,
- d) classroom management expectations, and
- e) expectations of her teacher education program.

Personal expectations for success included codes regarding Augusta’s expectations for being the best. Expectations of teacher responsibilities included codes regarding her expectations



about the role and responsibilities of a teacher. Instructional expectations included codes regarding Augusta's expectations about students, planning, and instruction. Classroom management included codes regarding Augusta's expectations about student behavior and her own classroom management policies and procedures. Finally, expectations about her teacher education program included codes regarding Augusta's expectations about her program content and its application to her classroom.

### **Personal Expectations for Success**

Augusta knew that her first year would not be perfect, but she expected it to be easier than it was, remarking "I thought it would be not a cake walk per se and I thought there would be some disciplinary issues, but I thought I would be teaching math from 7:30-1:55." However, because of her personality, she saw this as a challenge she could handle, "You go in expecting to be this amazing teacher. ... I was busting my butt to be the best, but you can't be the best first year, but my personality is that I have to be the best." However, this sentiment changed after being awarded Teacher of the Month, "I was getting ready to quit because I can't be the best, and then I got teacher of the month and I was like I don't ever want this ever again. It's too much... If that's how hard you have to work to get teacher of the month then, no. My life is miserable." In addition to being the best the first year, Augusta also had specific expectations about the responsibilities of teachers.

### **Expectations of Teacher Responsibilities**

Augusta did not expect the responsibilities of a teacher to be so time intensive or to include legal responsibilities. She also expected more resources and support from colleagues than what they provided to her. She did not expect planning to take as much time as it did, "The first lesson I ever planned, it was teaching subsets of numbers, real numbers, and I came up with this whole thing the night before and stayed up until 2 am working on it." Multiple preps did not make this easy for her, "...it took me hours and hours and hours to plan for one class, when I have to plan for the next two classes, and I was up late at night trying to figure it out every day." Augusta also did not expect grading to take so much time. After giving a pre-test, "I decided to grade it all that night, and I didn't realize that grading took so much because I did partial credit then I'm grading it so much. How am I ever going to have a life?" Teacher responsibilities took much more time out of her personal life than she initially expected.

As she was getting the hang of planning and grading, basketball season started. Augusta was assistant coach for the varsity girls' team and head coach for the junior varsity team.

I had my grading down, I had my planning time down, I had it segmented, and then basketball came. Basketball started and that was even worse because I had extra responsibilities, extra time after school, but, I've got to plan, plan, plan. I'm at school because I don't come home after school until basketball is over. If we have an evening practice, I probably get home at 10:30.

This extra time affected other aspects of teaching as well, "So I'm at school from 6:50-10:30. So it's taking a lot of getting used to, like how to manage my time while I'm there so I can get things set."

The time crunch also played a role in her personal life, it was like oh, I don't need to sleep ever, I don't need to eat real food. I'll just nibble on things here and there. I don't have to go to the bathroom. I'll just hold that off until the

bell rings at the end of the day. You have to put yourself in that equation somewhere, that means taking some time for you and realize that it's okay. It's going to get done.

Augusta became aware of neglecting her physical needs; she continued, "I just had a nervous tick. I was messy. I wasn't taking care of myself. That's why I just had to let it go. I had to get to the point that it's not that I didn't care; I just had to stop caring about being the best. Just let it go." She devoted more time than she anticipated to her teaching duties, which contributed to her negative affect.

In addition to time, Augusta did not expect the paperwork and legal responsibilities associated with ESE and ESOL students that included federally-mandated individual educational plans (IEP), state-required documentations, and evidence of modified lesson plans. Along with teaching math, they have you sign lots of things and be responsible for so much more, like the individual child's ESOL things....I didn't know the extent of the responsibility and all the things they have me sign off on, and it seems so daunting.

She added, "You have administration saying sign this, sign this. Oh, there is this, you have to sign, and by the way you have this duty and that duty. It's a lot at once." With these comments, Augusta shows that she was blindsided by paperwork and responsibilities that were in addition to teaching math.

Augusta's on-site mentor teacher was in another building, while her department head was in her hallway. In addition, her university supervisor visited her 1-2 times a week, even though she was only required to visit 5 times over the course of the semester. Nevertheless, Augusta stated, "I had no help. I'm sure my colleagues would be willing to help, it's just I never saw them because I was so busy trying to figure out my classroom. I never got a chance to see anybody." Augusta expected to have more support from her mentor teacher, "I thought I'd have a lot of support. Not that I didn't have a lot of support, but I thought I would have a lot more support from my mentor going into it. I didn't think I would be completely alone." Augusta dismissed the assistance provided and perceived herself to be alone.

### **Instructional Expectations**

Augusta's expectation going in to teaching seemed to be that instruction would be confined to presenting subject content, and little else:

I thought I would be teaching math. I teach math sometimes. It's more of you have to have a great classroom management background. You're trying to individualize instruction but teach math to everybody at their own different levels and taking care of ESOL things, IEP's, while doing all this classroom management stuff. It just wasn't working.

She added that she thought she would be "teaching students who may not always be interested to learn, but I thought I'd be engaging. I thought I was fresh and young and that I'd be interesting and make the content area interesting, and my concerns were on the math, that was my expectation." Math is the content in which Augusta excelled, an expertise she was excited to share. However, she did not expect these additional aspects of instruction in which she was much less proficient.

Augusta held misperceptions of what an honors class would look like, based on her experience as an honors student. She expressed her frustration in the following exchange:

Yes, I think it was a lot different from when I was in school, because when I was in school my classes were quiet, everyone had their pencils out, and no one asked the question, “Is this notes?” I got that question way too much this semester, “Is this notes? Do we have to write this down?” I hate that question, “Is this notes?” “It’s not for you, but for everybody else.” That’s what I tell them—“not for you. Everyone has to take notes, not for you. You can just, because you already understand this, it’s not notes for you.” I hate that question, “Is this notes?” When I was student it was assumed that you would have a pencil, a paper. You wouldn’t be like, “I don’t have one of those,” especially in an honors class. Maybe in a regular class, but not in an honors class.

Her use of sarcasm with her students demonstrates the level of frustration she reached in unsuccessfully trying to connect with her students and not clearly delivering instructions.

Augusta’s expectations of her students’ knowledge level were based on their labels of either “honors” or “regular.” She was surprised, and frustrated, by what she perceived to be students not performing at the level she believed they should, particularly the honors students. She articulated her university courses did not prepare her for this difference, “They should be abstractly thinking—no, not all of them, no.” Similarly, Augusta expected teaching honors students to be much easier than it turned out to be: “Yes, I’m teaching math, honors math at that. Honors math with honors kids; this should be a breeze. Honors kids, honors math kids, who are good at math; it’s what you think.” Augusta was expecting honors students who were like her, striving to meet their ideals, but she was disappointed that her students were far from her ideal.

She also stated her expectation that she would only be teaching one subject and grade level. Augusta believed, “Maybe I won’t have to be teaching one subject the whole time, because I really didn’t think about it. I don’t know why, but I didn’t. I always thought my teachers taught one subject for some reason.” This demonstrates a myopic view of teaching Augusta held, centered on her own self in her math classes and unaware of what her teachers were really doing. This led her to underestimate her assigned workload.

### **Collaborative planning**

Augusta perceived planning would be a group effort undertaken by multiple math teachers in a communal arrangement, “having time to come together and lesson plan.” She indicated that she thought planning would be collaborative and “not like a throwing-to-the-wolves experience, but more like a let’s-hold-hands and go-together type thing.” When collaboration did not occur the way she expected, she perceived herself to be “completely alone.” despite being assigned a mentor math teacher at her school and a University Supervisor. Augusta’s mentor teacher taught different math courses than she did, increasing her sense of not being able to seek help or collaborate in planning for her preparations.

She looked for commonalities with her mentor teacher that would have let them plan lessons exactly alike: “If we taught the same subjects then I would have been there all the time, and she’d help me with the planning.” Instead, Augusta perceived she could not ask for help with those plans because she and her mentor taught “completely different subjects.” She also perceived she could not plan with her mentor because they were in different hallways and had different planning periods; she did not seek out common time with her mentor: “I never got to see her and . . . talk to her much about how she could help me with my planning and pacing and what chapter is she on and how can I deal with teaching this subject.”

She expressed concern about feeling isolated: “You’re kind of by yourself. You don’t see other people at all. It was scary. . . . I realized I don’t get to see other adults, so it’s hard to

sit down and plan together and let's do this together, because I don't see anybody." Augusta expected her colleagues to initiate collaborative lesson planning with her. Additionally, she did not seek assistance from her colleagues, which further isolated her from her own self.

### **Fun and engaging instruction**

The concept of fun and engaging lesson plans was introduced during a methods course: "I was thinking especially in like Dr. Torres' class, she's always like 'we are going to make it fun and engaging. We are going to read books and do all this' so that's what I'm thinking the education system is supposed to be going towards, so I'm thinking everything has to be fun and engaging." This was the standard for quality she expected would permeate her lessons the most and would set them apart from "just regular lesson plans." "You go in expecting to be this amazing teacher. I love math. It's going to be amazing."

Augusta perceived that her age would be an asset, "I thought I was fresh and young and that I'd be interesting and make the content area interesting." She believed that her proximity to the ages of her students would make her appealing: "I'm fun. I think I'm fun. You know the kids are going to love it." However, she also contrarily noted that, "the kids wouldn't take me seriously because I'm young."

Additionally, she perceived that if she put the right amount of creativity into lesson planning, she would fashion instruction that was engaging. "The kids are going to love it if you plan all these great lessons," and "they are going to understand, and it is going to be wonderful." One of her first instructional concepts included a new civilization with an undiscovered counting system, and the ideas of exploration and wonder were fused into a math lesson that, she believed, encompassed both *fun* and *engaging*. This lesson did not produce the desired learning outcomes; "it just flopped. The kids weren't interested. They were disengaged. You have little Johnny over there sword fighting. The other one over there you think is paying attention, but they are failing."

She went back to the drawing board and planned even more elaborate lessons, "...it's not fun and engaging to most, it makes me sad, but the next day you're like 'I'm going to try harder.' I'm going to make it fun and engaging and they are going to understand and it's going to be wonderful. I'm going to use candy; they are going to love it." Consequently, she spent hours each night planning lessons that infused innovative teaching practices with her concepts of fun and engagement. "I wanted to make everything elaborate. I wanted activities. I wanted this. I wanted all the great things they showed us . . . while I was here at (university). I want to make everything fun and engaging. The pressure to create fun and engaging lessons for multiple preps on a day-to-day basis proved overwhelming. She was stymied by the pressure to be elaborate: "I couldn't think of anything to do. . . I started thinking of all these things. I was just trying to make it too wonderful, or what I thought was wonderful." Augusta's prior successes before teaching had been built on working hard to achieve her goals, and so she believed working harder at planning meant she would be able to hit her ideal.

At the same time, she began to see a disconnect between the most elaborate (and time-consuming) lesson plans and student learning outcomes. "It would never really work. Sometimes it would for a couple of students but it would never work for the whole group." Those initial elaborate plans consisted of "all these great ideas, what I thought was great ideas and engaging activities, but it was going over their heads. They were not understanding the math behind it because I was trying to make it too fun and engaging." After a particularly elaborate lesson on correlation involving dynamic interaction, candy, and hands-on experimentation, the final question at the end of instruction revealed the math concept had been lost on the students. Augusta recounted the conversation with her students when asking the students if they knew the concept of correlation after completing the lesson, "What's that,

miss?’ I’m like but we just did all this. You just asked great questions . . . and then you ask the final question, what’s this all about? What’s that Miss? Can we eat the Airheads?’” This lesson, meant to embody Augusta’s ideal self, did not produce the desired learning outcome, with students more focused on the candy than the mathematical concept.

Because she insisted on fun and engaging as the barometer against which all lesson plans would be measured, she rejected those suggestions that offered explicit instruction, practice, and drill. Again, the collaborative efforts of her colleagues centered on this type of “regular lesson” to which she did not subscribe or expect to fulfill any learning objectives. “I was trying to make not just regular lesson plans. ‘Oh, we are just going to do this page in the book.’” However, on the occasion where she was too exhausted to plan anything fun and engaging, she drifted into textbook work, explanation, and practice. She admitted that students actually got the concepts, even though it was boring. Instead of “not making everything fun and engaging . . . sometimes it is just going to be boring, and I don’t want it to be boring.” She realized fun and engaging did not always equate to mastery and desired learning outcomes, and she slowly began to opt for more days of textbook exercises and practice. “I had to figure out” how to “give them a chance to practice even though it was going to be a boring day.” As Augusta realized her colleagues produced results using less exciting strategies, she began to embrace the standards of the ought self over those of the ideal self.

She did not accept this shift lightly, however, and bargained with herself in order to get through this first year with boring methods so that she could concentrate on just teaching: “It’s not the funnest,” but “I can’t be fun right now. I have to figure out how to teach.” She admitted, “It was hard to drop and let it go, but I did it.” However, she reasoned that she could return next year once again to uphold the “fun and engaging” gold standard which she expected to employ on a regular basis. “Next year I’m going to knock it out of the park.” Augusta indicated several times that she recognized her missteps but is actively making plans to improve her instruction in the future. These words go to show how Augusta settled for the time being but continued to reach for the ideal.

### **Classroom management**

Augusta came into her first teaching position with defined expectations of how high school honors students would behave. She thought teaching honors classes would be “a breeze,” since she would be teaching “kids who are good at math.” “I came in expecting them to behave like the honors students that I remembered.” She reflected on her own student experience: “When the teacher start[ed] teaching and writing, you would write it down, and there wasn’t all this craziness going on, but that’s when I was in school. It was a lot different . . . when I was in school: my classes were quiet, everyone had their pencils out, and no one asked the question ‘do we have to write this down?’” What August perceived as “craziness” in the behavior of her students didn’t match her expectation for what teaching honors students would be like. Of one class, which she noted was comprised of “actual, real, honors kids,” Augusta admitted, “I love starting my day off [with them first period]. They act like the honors classes I’m used to having and ones I grew up with that understand that we are going to work.” However, the other four classes didn’t align with her expectation of honors’ student behavior, causing her to doubt whether certain students were accurately tracked for her honors courses: “Three of them are probably really honors kids, the rest of them are regular kids who want the extra half credit.”

She initially expected to be able to treat the students, honors and regular alike, like “older kids” utilizing what she termed a “non-referral, non-detention system” that included classroom meetings instead of individual student punishments. She recalled that in her “worst class,” she could barely get through the teaching of the math because of student interruptions

and questions. She recalled telling those students, “I can’t slow down for you guys.” On one occasion, she admits having lost control. Separating the class into two groups, she told the students: “the kids that want to learn, come with me, and I’ll talk to you about what we are learning; and you guys (the others) can just go over there and...talk about what you did last night.” She decided to hold a class meeting to address the students’ behavior, during which she tried to impress upon them the importance of doing well in their futures:

Raise your hand if you want to go to college. What do you think the percentage of students who fail their first semester are, and what do you think the behaviors are that attribute to them failing? Look around you. This percentage is probably not going to do well because of these behaviors. It starts now, and you can’t get into college if you don’t do well now.

Her effort to motivate her students on the basis of their future success in college backfired. “They didn’t care,” she recalled: “You’re honors students. How do you not care about your grade?” Augusta was very disappointed with honors students who didn’t match her ideal.

Unable to motivate her students with notions of college success, and pointing to their lack of maturity, Augusta expressed disappointment she could not uphold her classroom management philosophy. “I told them, ‘you guys can’t handle being treated like...mature individuals,...so, since you can’t handle that, it means all you understand is referrals and discipline and parents getting called.’” She determined that a more structured discipline plan was in order, which would include “strictness and referrals and detentions, because that’s all they respond to; but if that’s what it takes to make them learn, then I decided that is just what I’m going to have to do...as much as I don’t really agree with that teaching style.” She added, “Now... I’m gaining that power back because they only respond to referrals and detentions.”

Augusta expressed her disappointment in feeling she must let go of her original plan:

It’s sad because I have to do it. They come in and they are quiet. I hate quiet classrooms. I want my classroom to be an enjoyable place where we get to learn things but still enjoy our time, but... if I ask you a question and you don’t know [the answer], you can’t just say, “I don’t know.” That’s a lunch detention because they literally won’t do [the assignment] if I don’t have an immediate consequence for them not doing...something as simple as being on task.

She had not expected for these punishments to be effective, but remained firm: “‘If I call on you, and you don’t have the answer, be prepared for a lunch detention,’ and that got them on-task.” Even after seeing an improvement in students’ behavior overall as a result of a stricter classroom environment that included detentions and referrals, Augusta still had doubts about the method. “Can I really write everyone a referral? Is that the answer? I think that for that longest time, I just didn’t want that to be the answer...at all, but...that should have been the answer in the beginning.” She also expressed regret the punitive environment was preventing some of her capable students from getting good grades; some students even wanted to leave her class because they couldn’t focus. “I feel so bad because...it’s my responsibility to make sure it’s not that way, but there are just so many off-task behaviors.” The punitive referral system was not in line with Augusta’s ideal self that should use class discussion and reasoning, not punishment, to reach students.

## **Expectations of her Education Program**

Augusta had expectations about what her teacher education program would prepare her for. She stated, “I thought my education would be a good resource and other teachers having time to, you know, come together and lesson plan with them. Things like that.” For example, she felt that the program should have prepared her better to plan day to day. In coursework:

You get a lesson that you know about two weeks in advance and you have all day to plan for this 50 minutes. It’s not as hard as, Oh, tomorrow [I have] three preps, the next day [another] three preps, the next day three preps. What are they [students] going to do, how are you going to pace it.

She continued, “It [planning] was hard to manage for me because for one, I don’t know how to plan because I never [planned] in my practicum, you really don’t plan.” She suggests, “...the practicum should be more experience as opposed to writing. I appreciate that you have to write the 10 page formal lesson plans, but writing 10 page formal lesson plans has nothing on writing a whole unit for back-to-back instruction. I’d never done that.”

Augusta was expecting one course to be a mirror of adolescent behavior, but the behavior she encountered in her classroom was quite different:

Teenagers are a lot different now. ... I think for that class you just need to hang out with kids, like require you to just hang out with teenagers or maybe have it go out and, not hang out with kids, but go out and just observe. Instead of observing a teacher, go out and observe the kids and their behavior and see how the adolescents behave...

Augusta’s experiences during her first semester highlighted aspects of her program that contributed to expectations that were not met.

## **Discussion**

The original aim of this study was to investigate the reactions of a cohort of students enrolled in an accelerated M.A.T. program. Augusta’s negative affect became the impetus for this study as her University Supervisor and Field Experience Coordinator were alerted to her anxiety, poor health, and crying. We began wanting to examine her concerns about teaching, but quickly realized her concerns bore from her expectations about teaching and learning. The following questions guided our investigation:

- 1) What are the expectations about teaching of a student in an accelerated M.A.T. program who is also a first-year teacher completing a paid internship?
- 2) In what ways are those expectations addressed?

As a result of analysis, the researchers found Augusta had expectations regarding personal success, teacher responsibilities, instruction, classroom management, and her teacher education program. These expectations led to a mismatch between her actual self and her self-guide, consisting of her ought and ideal selves (Higgins, 1987).

Augusta described her anxiety with metaphors like being thrown to the wolves and swimming among sharks. The burden of responsibility weighed heavily, “a personal charge” that was “daunting” and “scary.” She described the “dark cloud that surrounds you” which

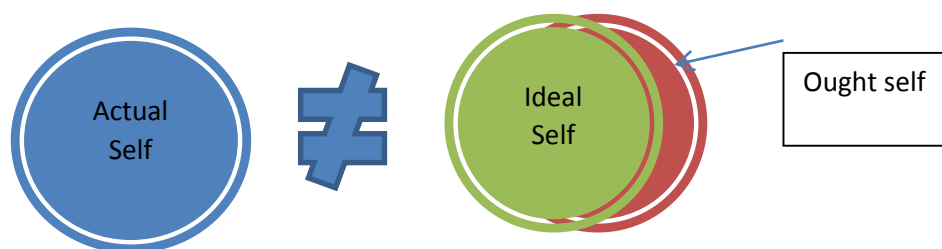


brought her repeatedly to tears. There were physical manifestations of anxiety; “I had a nervous tick. I was messy.” She didn’t eat or sleep and described not taking care of herself, including ignoring very basic needs such as going to the bathroom or drinking. Discussion of the anxiety she experienced caused her to become emotional and cry, even during the interview.

But what caused her anxiety? We speculate certain aspects of teaching were factors with equations that did not add up for Augusta because of her expectations. For instance, the ratio of time spent planning for elaborate lessons did not equate to student engagement or understanding; “it flopped” and went over the heads of her students. Additionally, Augusta perseverated on the relentlessness of planning day to day for multiple preps. She fretted over unforeseen aspects of differentiated instruction and the legalities associated with serving various diverse populations. Furthermore, her youthfulness did not increase student engagement and motivation as she anticipated it would, resulting in frustration and worry. Augusta also had unmet expectations for both student and colleague behaviors that caused angst. The behaviors of students were so far removed from what she expected that she called it “craziness” and “bizarre;” dealing with it resulted in meting out punishment and using sarcasm, which ran contrary to the management plan she envisioned. Her colleagues also proved a source of disappointment; instead of the “holding hands, go[ing] together type thing,” Augusta felt isolated and alone, which was “scary.”

Supporting existing research, Augusta’s expectations seem to have stemmed from her experiences as a student (Lortie, 1975) and her teacher preparation program (Richardson, 1996). Her recollection of her own student experiences was the basis for many of the expectations she held for her students, particularly in her honors classes. Because she had been an honors student herself, her expectations about student knowledge, behavior, and motivation were based on her own high-achieving, well-behaved, and highly-motivated student-hood. Here again, she expected other honors students would also be actively pursuing their ideal selves as she had, which also meshed with expectations of the ought self for standards of typical high-achieving students (see Figure 2). These student experiences were also factors in fusing her ought and ideal selves.

**Figure 2.** The Fusing of Augusta’s Self Guide



Augusta pointed to her teacher preparation program as a source for her expectations of what strategies would work to teach her students. The expectations from the program spoke to her ought self, but Augusta may have perceived she would exceed the standards of the program and would engage in only the highest and most coveted forms of teaching, as we noted occurred in her relentless pursuit of the perfect lesson. As a result, in retrospect, she felt her program did not prepare her for the students she would encounter in her classroom.

Augusta recognized her personality influenced her expectations as well, “You can’t be the best the first year, but my personality, and I have to be the best.” No studies were found on the influence of personality on teacher expectations. Her personality as a high-achiever and her overwhelming desire to be the best seemed to generate similarly high expectations for herself as a teacher, even in her first year. Clearly, she expected to continue in her prior, pre-teaching

ability to achieve her ideal self. Her personality played a role in fusing the ideal and ought - selves, though as such, she had fewer criteria upon which to evaluate herself. Augusta developed expectations from her program that fused her ideal and ought selves into one-and-the-same.

Additionally, Augusta's desire not to appear weak seemed to influence her decisions not to seek help through more traditional outlets (i.e. peers, mentors, etc.). When she did seek advice, it was through online sources or persons not directly involved with her teaching duties. This way she could remain anonymous. When she finally sought, and implemented, the advice of her supervisor, mentor, and peers near the end of the semester, she was able to reconcile some of the issues and move forward; she temporarily let go of the ideal self and embraced, however minimally, the expectations for her ought self. However, Augusta seemed to attribute this progress to a compromising of her ideals, which manifested in negative affect.

Augusta may have entered the teaching profession with expectations in which her ideal and ought selves were one and the same, meshed seamlessly to create a strong and fused self-guide through which she evaluated herself. The realities of teaching were incongruent with her expectations, and she began to realize she could not maintain her ideal self in light of the failure she perceived she was facing. Additionally, she did not respect the ought self when it no longer matched the ideal of her previous experiences, and she attempted to ignore it in favor of pursuing the now elusive ideal. The standards of the ought she was forced to consider were now beneath the standards of her ideal; the worksheets of her colleagues did not measure up to the fun and engaging lessons she espoused, and her honors students were never going to be like her. As a result, Augusta's identity was fractured, and she grappled with a new identity in which the ideal and ought were no longer fused. Anxiety and negative affect resulted as she recognized she would have to let go of the ideal, and she slowly began to embrace the ought as the only part of her self-guide to which she could turn. Eventually, the ought solely formed her self-guide, and she reluctantly turned to some of the standards and suggestions of her mentors in order to remain afloat and survive.

Augusta had a difficult time reconciling the realities of her first semester classroom teaching with her expectations about teaching. Through the first few months of her beginning teaching experience she held fast to her beliefs of who she should be and how her students should behave, all rooted in her ideal self. Rather than accepting the students as they were, she remained fixated on an ideal that created an incongruous state in her mind, and she struggled to engage them in meaningful and productive ways.

Furthermore, she was awarded a scholarship to complete the program, which included a pay-back contingency: Augusta was required to teach two of the four years following her program, or she would have to repay the award money. When combined with her high-achieving personality and her past successes as a student, these features of the program may have directly addressed her ideal self and solidified her perception that she is the ideal. Augusta felt pressure to be the best her first year, which likewise exacerbated her responses to the problems she encountered.

## **Conclusion**

Despite being only one case and limited to data gathered after the subject's first semester of teaching, there are important implications from our findings regarding teacher preparation. Individuals who enter M.A.T. programs have been previously influenced and shaped by experiences related to their preparation for careers other than education. For example, Augusta's expectations and beliefs about teaching and learning were influenced by her preparation as a mathematician. As such, her professional trajectory was oriented toward working with numbers and not with people. This may suggest that others who come from

natural science backgrounds may have trouble acclimating with the human science of education.

Furthermore, Augusta's struggles and expectations raise questions about whether or not accelerated/alternative programs are unintentionally giving students unrealistic expectations of teaching and learning, setting them up for more issues dealing with the theory/practice divide. Augusta's case seems to suggest more than a year is needed to adequately prepare for the complexities of teaching. More time in preparation programs may be needed to help pre-service teachers fracture their fused ideal and ought selves helping them to form a self-guide more aligned with the realities of the classroom. Alternative/accelerated programs may be well served explicitly addressing pre-service teacher's expectations and beliefs and giving pre-service teachers the time to develop self-guides to help minimize negative affect, thus possibly helping to bridge the theory/practice divide.

Her struggles also raised concerns about support post-graduation. While Augusta had support from the university during her first semester teaching, she has had little to no contact with the university since. This raises questions about the role of teacher education programs post-graduation. Further, Augusta's personality of trying to be the best was a large part of the struggle with her mismatched selves. This raises questions about the role of personality in teacher preparation. Do these personalities of perfection and getting it "right" make becoming a teacher more difficult? What role does personality play in the acceptance of information or formation of beliefs about teaching and learning?

More research is needed to understand accelerated M.A.T. programs, especially research investigating the expectations and beliefs of students prepared in these programs. Further longitudinal research is needed to understand these expectations throughout the first years of teaching.

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