Journal of College Literacy and Learning

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From the Guest Editors

Conceptions of Work in the College Literacy Classroom: Building our Collective Capacity for Reflective Professional Practice

Connie Kendall Theado

University of Cincinnati

Samantha NeCamp

University of Cincinnati

Our work is what unites those of us who read this journal: we are connected by our shared interest in and commitment to literacy learning in the college classroom. How we imagine that work, though— its scope and its boundaries—is as varied as the institutions in which we work and the students with whom we share our classrooms. As we explained in our initial Call for Proposals, this special issue focuses on how our conceptions of "work" in the college literacy classroom impact the people, the labor(ing), the documents, the physical space, and the imagined future workplaces that are present within it, as well as the administrative structure and larger college environment within which such work operates.

While the meaning of work has long been a focus of composition scholarship—the author of our Afterword, Bruce Horner, published his foundational book on the subject, *Terms of Work for Composition: A Materialist Critique*, in 2000—we joined this conversation relatively recently, inspired by seeing our students imagine their future work as they make their way through our courses at the University of Cincinnati. For the past five years, we have been teaching together in the Postsecondary Literacy Instruction (PLI) Certificate Program, where we work with graduate students—most of whom are already successful practicing teachers in this and other fields—who want to build their capacity to teach adult literacy learners in a variety of postsecondary contexts (e.g., two- and four-year colleges, community adult literacy programs, technical schools, and so forth). As we watch our students bring their experiences as educators to bear on the fundamental questions of literacy learning, we are struck by

the ways in which their beliefs about the work they do now shape the ways in which they imagine their future as college writing and reading teachers. In comparing our notes about how students interact with the PLI program's curriculum, we also found ourselves examining our own work as collaborators in developing that curriculum; in particular, we were eager to explore how our work in composing assignments affected the kinds of reflective work students carried out in the classroom. This exploration, in turn, has led us to more consciously consider our differing ways of working as we pursue extracurricular collaborative writing projects together. In short, we found our ideas about work spinning webs that seemed to entangle all aspects of our lives as teachers and scholars. In framing our Call around the concept of work, then, we hoped that our respondents would help us tap into these multiple lines of inquiry and the connections among them.

The result has been even more productive than we had hoped. The six articles featured in this special issue consider work with both student and teacher perspectives in mind—from a tight focus on instructional practices used with college readers and writers to the broader lenses of programmatic administration, faculty collaboration and co-mentoring, and issues surrounding assessment. For instance, Rebecca A. Powell and Joyce Olewski Inman's article, "Resisting Meritocracy: Students' Conceptions of Work at a Regional University," as well as Kelly Blewett's contribution, "Conceptions of Work in First-Year Writing: A Case Study," speak directly to our initial question about how students conceive of their work as literacy learners and the impact those conceptions have on the work that we (can) do as teachers. In his article, "Illuminating Reading as Intellectual Labor: Cultivating Readerly Behaviors in the Writing

Classroom," Zack K. De Piero examines how first-year writing TAs envision their work as literacy educators and how those understandings impact their pedagogical choices. Logan Bearden's piece, "Transformative Programs, Transformed Practice: Multiliteracies and the Work of the Composition Program," addresses how our beliefs about what the work of the composition classroom should be influences our programmatic decision-making and frameworks, while Sonya L. Armstrong and Concetta A. Williams call for a broad shift in how the field conceptualizes reading assessment and evaluation in their essay, "Reconceptualizing the Work of Assessment: Toward a Culture of Inquiry." For their part, M. Amanda Moulder and Sophie Bell consider the implications of how sustained collaborative work with fellow teachers enriches pedagogical practice and builds coherence across writing programs in their article, "Collaborative Co-Mentoring: Building Horizontal Alliances through Faculty Development." In each article, the authors focus intently on how we conceive of our work as literacy teachers and scholars; yet, each approaches the concept from a very different set of foundational understandings and beliefs.

Taking our cue from the efforts of these scholars, we return to the initial scene that inspired the focus of this issue. Below, we provide a brief case study of our own experiences that we see as uniting, in many ways, the disparate threads taken up by the articles featured here. We share a story of a co-mentoring relationship akin to the support system Moulder and Bell describe. We share a story of deliberate and reflective program development that speaks to the kinds of unified programmatic action Bearden heralds. We share a story of asking both our students and ourselves to reflect on our beliefs about writing, teaching, and

assessment, engaging in the kinds of self-aware praxis for which De Piero, Blewett, Armstrong and Williams, and Powell and Inman advocate. While this test case is perhaps an unconventional introduction to a special issue such as this, we hope this example of our work in the PLI classroom will serve as a jumping-off point for both disciplinary and individual reflections on the meaning of work in the college literacy classroom.

Creating a Common Assignment: The "Declaration of Principles" as a Test Case

The Postsecondary Literacy Instruction (PLI) Certificate Program consists of a six-course sequence. One course in the program is Writing Methods, which focuses on current and foundational texts in basic writing studies and helps students conceptualize their own classroom practices as writing teachers. Connie directs the PLI Program and initially designed the curriculum for this class; Samantha now teaches the Writing Methods course annually. While instructors within the PLI Program do not have a structured shared curriculum, the integrated nature of the six courses relies to some extent on a consistent set of assignments. Thus, Samantha uses many of Connie's existing assignments to ensure unity across the program.

The first and last assignments of the Writing Methods course are a two-part reflection assignment called "A Declaration of Principles" (See Appendix). For their initial foray into this two-part writing project, students are asked to use John Dewey's (1897) essay, "My Pedagogic Creed," as a model for crafting five statements of belief about the project and promise of higher education, in general, and about the teaching of writing within these contexts, more particularly. In the final course assignment, students are asked to

revisit their early statements of belief in light of the readings and classroom conversations across the full stretch of the semester and to reflect on the extent to which their beliefs have been challenged, changed, refined, or reinforced along the way.

When she originally developed the assignment, Connie was guided by the pedagogical lessons gleaned from her study of first-generation American pragmatist philosophers—C.S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey—who rejected the idea of a theory/practice split to assert instead the necessity of squaring our beliefs about the world with our actions in the world in order to effect transformative social change. She was also mindful of Ann Berthoff's (1979/1981) cautionary advice to English teachers everywhere that learning to write and, by extension, learning to teach writing are rhetorical practices that call for "theoretical consideration, not just recipe swapping" (p. 68). Connie also drew inspiration from the scholarship of her own teaching mentors and models—notably Kate Ronald and Hephzibah Roskelly—whose observation that "when teachers are able to name their own beliefs, they are able to act on them effectively and confidently" (Roskelly & Ronald, 1998, p. 162) makes explicit the critical link between the theory and practice of teaching writing: reflection. In creating this two-part assignment, then, Connie sought to provide students with a writing activity that could cultivate this teacherly capacity for reflection, the cornerstone of what Paulo Freire (1970) called "praxis."

When Samantha began teaching the course, she kept the essentials of the assignment the same to preserve the continuity among the program's courses: students were still required to compose "I believe" statements using Dewey as a model. The beauty of Connie's assignment

description, Samantha reasoned, was that even as it asked students to identify their own beliefs, the assignment spoke directly to Connie's beliefs and how those beliefs were shaped; in particular, Connie's experience with her mentors shaped both her approach to teaching and her assignment frame. It would have been disingenuous of Samantha to try to frame the assignment in the same way. To make the assignment her own, then, Samantha first completed the assignment. In other words, she crafted her own statements of belief about teaching, writing, and the work of the composition classroom. What she found was that her beliefs about teaching and writing weren't very specific to teaching and writing *per se*. Instead, Samantha's approach in the classroom is informed by the set of beliefs and values that govern all her actions. She needed an external frame, then, which emphasized that teaching and writing can't be neatly separated from who we are as people, even as the core of the assignment remained the same. After all, she thought, in the end, it's just a job: an important, meaningful job, but still a job. This led Samantha to Mike Rowe, the host of the television program *Dirty Jobs*—and perhaps one of the most distinctive voices addressing what it means to work in the U.S. Notably, one of Rowe's most-shared statements on work emphasizes the role of belief in making our work meaningful—"Happiness does not come from a job. It comes from knowing what you truly value and behaving in a way that's consistent with those beliefs" (2014, para. 19)—which connected well with the values Samantha intended to tap into via the assignment. Samantha also felt that choosing Rowe would illustrate to students that high-culture influences are not required; everything that we do, all our cultural sources, may positively influence how we experience our world and our work.

Building Capacity for Action: The Benefits of Reflective Practice for Students and Teachers

Like all learning, finding our place as teachers in the college writing classroom is a process: uneven, evolving, ongoing. And like all learning, success depends on our commitment to engage intentionally with this process. On this point, Wendy Bishop's (2003) observations are especially useful:

> I do not believe I can have a smorgasbord pedagogy, but I do feel entitled to range widely, as a teaching generalist, as a writing specialist. Then I'm obliged to think systematically about my practice. . . . I'm obliged to define, refine, name, and explain my practice and to build new knowledge from which to set out again. It is the building and the appreciating and the setting out strongly that matter to me. (p. 75)

Encouraging teachers to recognize reflection as a deliberate, active, and iterative process rooted in, as Bishop suggests, a felt obligation to "think systematically"—that is, theorize—about our practice lies at the heart of the Declaration of Principles writing assignment. Inviting our PLI Program students to more fully account for who they are as teachers in the writing classroom by way of articulating—or, as Roskelly and Ronald (1998) put it, "knowing and naming"—what they believe builds capacity for action.

On the whole, our graduate students—who are themselves already experienced teachers—responded enthusiastically to the assignment. To be sure, many took the opportunity to voice their frustrations with teaching, but these were not framed simply as complaints but rather as beliefs about how we—as a field and as individual educators—can do better. In this sense, the assignment worked to elicit reflection on

both a personal, practitioner level and on a much broader level including the discipline as a whole. They reflected on their past and current teaching experiences, and they identified the kinds of practices that were working and not working in their classrooms. Because these were statements of belief, students were required to take these critiques and frame them in proactive terms: what, then, did they believe needed to be done to improve the situation? In their explanations, they shared the experiences that led them to see that changes were needed and drew on their beliefs to reframe solutions to these dilemmas.

In particular, the Declaration of Principles assignment elicited two commonly held beliefs shared by students in both Connie's and Samantha's sections. First, these teachers expressed the belief that writing assignments need to have clear relevance to their students' lives and interests. Secondly, many expressed the belief that writing is a way of finding one's voice, both for themselves as they worked to complete in their graduate coursework, and for the students whom they were teaching. By first naming their beliefs about writing and writing instruction, and then exploring how those beliefs might be more fully squared with their practice, these students also began to imagine new ways in which they could both claim their own voice as teachers and model voice for their students as well.

The Declaration of Principles assignment also succeeded in creating a classroom environment conducive to sustained reflective activity, providing a touchstone against which students could read the various competing texts and theories presented throughout the semester. In revisiting the initial assignment at the end of the course, few students noted dramatic changes in their beliefs—after all, as experienced teachers, their beliefs already had a firm foundation in practice. Instead and, we would argue, more importantly, students were better able to explain why they believed what they believed and articulate more precisely how these beliefs could be enacted in a classroom context with the limitations it entails.

The benefits of this work for us, as classroom teachers, are also worth noting. By working within the framework of Connie's assignment but revising to reflect her own beliefs, Samantha gained a deeper understanding of the principles informing her teaching and how these are enacted in her assignment design. In comparing notes with each other regarding our students' written products, we both reflected on the ways in which our assignment design affected—and did not affect—the kind of responses students provided. For instance, Samantha's design tended to invite calls for changes to how teachers can exercise their agency within the classroom, both in terms of freedom of course design and freedom of expression within the classroom. When reminded that this is a job, a choice of profession, Samantha noticed that her students focused intently on what might drive them away from choosing to perform it and then sought to alter those conditions. In contrast, Connie's assignment tended to invite calls for change in teacher preparation programs, like disrupting the familiar theory into practice sequencing of learning objectives and coursework to include a more explicit practice into theory perspective, where innovative instructional practices are viewed as able to reinvent staid educational theory and the teaching-learning transaction is valued as both experiential and experimental. In both cases, we received careful, frank reflections regarding why students and teachers do what they do in the writing classroom, and these reflections inspired a continuous conversation in which students challenged and encouraged one

another to use those reflections to create positive change in their home institutions.

We believe that a Declaration of Principles writing assignment like the one we describe here is useful because it provides a concrete opportunity for teachers and students to engage in reflection throughout the term and incorporate new learning into their existing frameworks in a deliberate and careful way. Just as importantly, we found the process of examining how each of us constructed this shared writing assignment instructive for improving our own teaching, as it allowed us to trace the impacts of our beliefs and the instantiation of those beliefs in our course documents—to see, quite directly, the role our framing choices played in the kinds of responses we received. This form of collaboration is an opportunity that is perhaps too little recognized in programs utilizing shared curricula: when teachers compare notes and engage in reflective conversations around the responses to common assignments, we can better understand how our individual voices shape our classrooms and how curricular constraints succeed—or not—in creating similar, and similarly effective, learning experiences for students.

In its ability to reorient us to our practice, to render the beliefs underwriting our actions in the classroom both more open to examination and, thus, more available to revision, reflection is an always already forward-facing enterprise. And if what matters most in a teaching life is finally, as Bishop (2003) suggests, an ability to "define, refine, name, and explain" our practice in order to "build new knowledge from which to set out again" (p.75), then cultivating our capacity for reflection is the critical first step.

Conceptions of Work in the College Literacy Classroom: A Quick Preview

We believe that each one of the 25 contributors to this special issue of the *Journal of College Literacy and Learning* (*JCLL*) are playing an important role in building the field's collective capacity for reflective professional practice. In addition to the six featured articles described earlier, this issue also includes a forum titled "Views from the Field" that brings together seven short essays showcasing the wide range and diversity of perspectives about the issue's theme. These essays—from Michael Blancato, Gavin P. Johnson, Beverly J. Moss, and Sara Wilder; Ed Nagelhout; Laurie Bauer; Joanne Rose Andres Castillo, Claudia Itzel Sauz Mendoza, Romeo García, and Christie Toth; Alice Horning; Deborah Kellner; and Brenda Helmbrecht and Dan Reno—offer a set of diverse yet connected discussions on what it means to do work in our field, providing both classroom and programmatic perspectives on the work that takes place in college reading and writing classrooms and encouraging us to align our work in the classroom with our beliefs about what is most just, ethical, and fruitful for our students' learning. Following the forum, Vanessa Kraemer Sohan's book review of Patrick Sullivan, Howard Tinberg, and Sheridan Blau's (2017) *Deep Reading: Teaching Reading in the Writing Classroom* presents an assortment of standpoints on the work reading performs in our classrooms. To close the issue, Bruce Horner's Afterword asks us to reimagine what the work of college literacy and learning should be.

Finally, we want to thank *JCLL* Editors, Deborah Kellner and Laurie Bauer, for offering us this wonderful opportunity to serve as guest editors and providing helpful advice along the way, and *JCLL* Associate Editor, Lou Ann Sears, for keeping us organized and managing the submission and review processes so deftly. Their generous guidance and support truly made this special issue possible.

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Appendix

A Declaration of Principles: A Writing Assignment in Two Parts

Connie's Assignment
Writing Project 1: A Declaration of Principles
Focus text: Dewey, J. (1897). My pedagogic creed. *The School Journal*, 54(3), 77-80.

A story and some opening comments:
In 1872, a group of New England philosophers sat around a table discussing a question that had long troubled their field: What is the definition of belief? The story goes that a member of the group offered up Alexander Bain's definition for consideration: A belief, he suggested, is something upon which one is prepared to act. And it was this single, simple sounding definition, a statement that established a clear link between belief and action, between knowing and doing, that would form the basis for a new tradition in American philosophy—pragmatism—and join together a disparate group of thinkers—C.S. Peirce, William James, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and John Dewey—who were, according to social historian Louis Menand, "more responsible than any other group for moving North American thought into the modern world" (*The Metaphysical Club*, p. xi).

I have always liked this story. It reminds me of the power that inheres in communities of thinkers, and so it reminds me of the importance of the journey we're about to undertake together as we begin thinking through the methods for and meanings of basic writing instruction on college campuses. But it's not just the story that I like so well. Instead, I confess that I'm drawn more deeply to the force of their ideas about this link between belief and action, between what (we think) we know *about* the world—our theories, our propositions of what's true or false, right or wrong, good or bad—and what we actually *do* in the world. Certainly, there is a lesson here for us; that is, a lesson for teachers. *How do our ideas, our beliefs, about the project and promise of higher education matter to our practice, our pedagogies, our daily work with students? What difference do our ideas or beliefs about language and literacy and the teaching of writing make in the world? And always more importantly, what difference do these ideas make in any one of our student's actual life?* These are the kinds of questions I'm asking you to consider as you compose this first writing project.

Near the end of their book, *Reason to Believe*, composition theorists Hephzibah Roskelly and Kate Ronald suggest that "when teachers are able to name their own beliefs, they are able to act on them effectively and confidently" (p. 162). Roskelly and Ronald know a lot about pragmatism and rhetoric. They also know a lot about teaching. The stress they lay upon knowing and naming our pedagogical beliefs arises out of their years of studying figures like Peirce and James and Dewey—teachers, all. In asking each of you to compose your own "Declaration of Principles," I'm clearly taking my lead from Roskelly and Ronald, who took their lead from pragmatist philosophers like Dewey and his famous pronouncement of principles, "My Pedagogic Creed." We should begin this journey together, I think, by taking a moment to articulate—to know and to name—our beliefs about the meaning of higher education in its multiple and often fraught connections with our theories about language and literacy (the two are not the same), identity and community, so that we may in fact and indeed act on our beliefs effectively and confidently in our classrooms.

The assignment in more definite terms:

- Read Dewey's "My Pedagogic Creed." If you can, read it in advance of the first week of classes and just let his words linger in your mind as you get on with the rest of your life, your daily routine. Dewey didn't write his "Creed" in a day; he drew upon years of thinking and teaching and believing in the scope of his daily life well before he ever put pen to paper.
- When you are ready to begin composing, revisit "My Pedagogic Creed" and notice again those ideas or perspectives or attitudes that seem to resonate with your own. Dewey's text focuses primarily on schools, while our focus is trained on postsecondary classrooms, but don't let that throw you – ideas, perspectives, and attitudes about the project of education, in general, easily cross the structural boundary between K-12 and postsecondary classrooms. In addition, notice again the cadence of Dewey's language, the way he begins each statement with the phrase "I believe," and consider the rhetorical force that using that sort of bold, clear phrasing has for his audience.
- Start by simply jotting some notes about what you believe about higher education (the concept and the institution), about students generally and about basic writing students more particularly, about language and literacy in relation to self, community and society at large, about teaching and classrooms and what goes on (or doesn't go on but should?) in colleges. In other words, generate a list of thoughts and beliefs that speak to the concerns of writing teachers in postsecondary settings. Commit to your ideas. Use Dewey's phrasing: Begin each statement with "I believe." Think about the force of those words for your readers.
- Compose your Declaration of Principles. Create a list of *5 statements of belief* – more if you want to, but not less. State your belief ("I believe…") and then expand on it, elaborate it, develop it, complicate it, interpret it. In other words, know it. Express your belief in such a way that your readers will understand or come to know it, too. There is no pre-determined page limit for this writing project. For those of you who want more direction, however, a good rule of thumb is this: Follow-up each of your 5 statements of belief with 1 solid paragraph of discussion.
- *Post one statement of belief – and the commentary that surrounds it – to our discussion forum by Tuesday of Week 1.* We'll use these as a way of introducing ourselves to each other, of announcing ourselves to each other, really, and of inviting others to notice who we are by way of what we believe.
- *Submit a final version of your Declaration of Principles as an attachment by email sent to me by the due date (the end of Week 1).* Please remember to keep a copy for yourselves. We'll revisit and revise these early statements of belief at the end of the course as part of the final writing project.

Samantha's Assignment
A Declaration of Principles: Or, What I Believe about Writing and Its Teaching

Happiness does not come from a job. It comes from knowing what you truly value, and behaving in a way that's consistent with those beliefs. –Mike Rowe

On the one hand, I wish I could start with a quotation that carries a bit more cultural capital. On the other hand, there are few people in the world more qualified to speak to how we work in the U.S. than Mike Rowe, former host of the Discovery Channel's *Dirty Jobs*. I think it's important to start my

own declaration of principles regarding teaching and writing with this quotation, as it highlights two important features of those acts for me. First, that it *is a job*. No matter how many teacher recruitment efforts may paint teaching as a calling, and no matter how many moments we have in the classroom that feel truly transcendent, the in-between times are still work; like any other job, there will be moments filled with compromises minor and major, petty annoyances (the darn printer is acting up again, and I have 25 syllabi to print out in the next 10 minutes!), and difficult working relationships. There will be times when we question why it is that we're in this classroom. As Mike Rowe suggests, it's not the myth that our job should bring us happiness that will get us through those moments—indeed, such a myth is part of what makes those moments so difficult to bear. Instead, the second important feature that this quotation emphasizes is the importance of having a clear sense of what it is we intend to do here and what it is we hope to accomplish. That clarity of goals, intentions, and ethical commitments can guide us through those difficult moments, and just as importantly, can give us a concrete point of return with which to consider the successes and failures of our teaching and learning. Are we enacting pedagogies that reflect our beliefs?

As such, you might begin this assignment by asking why it is that you're here in this class. What are your short-term and long-term goals, and how do those inform your beliefs about what it means to teach, to write, and to teach writing, particularly at the college level?

This assignment is modeled on John Dewey's declaration of principles, *My Pedagogic Creed.* You can find it at the following link, and I strongly urge you to skim through, at least, before embarking on your own declaration. No need to read every word: I want you to look for structure moreso than ideas (although Dewey certainly has some excellent ideas!)

https://books.google.com/books?id=Kpcr2_bXIa0C&printsec=frontcover&dq=my+pedagogic+c reed&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjktuXJgajJAhWCwiYKHXkiDpAQ6AEIMDAA#v=onepage &q=my%20pedagogic%20creed&f=false

As you'll see, Dewey outlines a series of beliefs and then explicates how he came to hold that belief, its underlying assumptions and observations. For this project, I ask that you compose at least five "I believe" statements that identify your own beliefs about teaching and writing, followed by the kind of brief explication Dewey provides.

I would anticipate that this project would result in a document of roughly two pages, double spaced. No need for research—this is a statement that reflects where you are now, and it is about your values. We will share these beliefs on the discussion board, but we will not judge one another. Instead, we'll all carefully examine our own beliefs in light of the readings for this course, and, at the end of the term, return to this document to see what has changed and what hasn't in light of those readings.

This project will be due at the end of Week 1. Please submit to me via email. You're also asked to post some preliminary statements of belief to our week one discussion board.

Collaborative Co-Mentoring:
Building Horizontal Alliances through Faculty Development

M. Amanda Moulder

University of San Diego

Sophie Bell

St. John's University (Queens)

ABSTRACT

This article presents a method for faculty development called collaborative co-mentoring, which can alleviate some of the pressures created by the neoliberalization of university teaching often felt especially strongly in university writing programs. The authors draw on examples from their own multi-year collaboration to illustrate the practices of collaborative co-mentoring and show how collaborators navigate resistances between them to build a mutual appreciation of their different approaches. The examples show the benefits of unpaid, voluntary collaboration. Still, the authors suggest that institutionalizing and incentivizing the practice could benefit writing programs and the faculty who teach in them. Collaborative co-mentoring between experienced colleagues, especially those whose approaches to First Year Writing vary, can bring faculty together across intellectual divides to sustain reflective pedagogy and has the potential to build coherence in a writing program.

First Year Writing (FYW) makes visible many of the labor problems that are manifested throughout departments and programs in universities. Because traditional university reward systems do not value the labor required to teach the FYW course, tenure-stream faculty often refuse to teach it, leaving it to be taught by casualized labor, a mainstay of the contemporary neoliberal university (see Bousquet, 2008; Lamos, 2016; Schell & Stock, 2001; Scott, 2009). In turn, as the course is associated with graduate student and adjunct faculty, it obtains a stigma of low status and becomes the focus of negative feeling. Many contingent FYW faculty members are highly qualified but isolated from one another because of the under-resourced nature of their positions. Often, they have low pay, little-to-no office space, and job insecurity. Finally, because the course is frequently taught by temporary labor, administrators may feel the need to standardize the curriculum to make

courses more coherent, especially given higher education's over-reliance on outcomes assessment.

Curricular standardization can leave FYW faculty feeling both marginalized within their institutions and as though their institutions do not respect their expertise. In other words, Writing Program Administrators (WPAs) or other university leaders might standardize the FYW student experience by imposing a set of priorities, designing and mandating a set of assignments, and enforcing faculty compliance through learning outcomes assessment, but doing this is dangerous. It may leave faculty feeling alienated and drive away talented faculty. The program as a whole may lose the chance to benefit from important perspectives and voices. Contingent faculty often have had many years—and experiences at multiple institutions—to develop sophisticated ideas about the role FYW should play in students' academic lives. Yet, without opportunities to talk over an extended period of time about their pedagogical priorities and come to mutual understandings with one another, faculty may feel isolated and the writing programs they serve may not be able to benefit from their experience.

While this article does not propose a global solution to the multidimensional problems stemming from the employment of contingent faculty, we present a method for faculty development called collaborative co-mentoring which can alleviate the pressures of some problems. We offer strategies to reduce the isolation and competition that faculty feel in the neoliberal regime of academic scarcity, typified by increasing insecurity and defunding of university instruction (Duggan, 2003; Harvey, 2005). We illustrate collaborative co-mentoring with examples drawn from our own multi-year, teaching-focused collaboration on FYW curricula in the context of a writing program where all faculty—contingent and tenure stream—had curricular autonomy but also suffered from isolation.

While we were not compelled into this rich professional development practice, our experiences suggest that incentivizing collaborative curricular and pedagogical development may facilitate mutual admiration for different approaches to FYW, encourage faculty to ally with one another, and create space to sustain reflective teaching practice. This article does not focus on how to incentivize collaborative co-mentoring at a programmatic level. However, we propose that by encouraging faculty to develop their own teaching-focused projects, writing program leaders may resist the increasing yet misguided attempts to standardize and quantify the FYW classroom experience into an easily measurable set of learning outcomes. Based on our own experiences with this model of faculty development, we propose that teaching-focused collaborative co-mentoring facilitates openness towards unexpected possibilities and contributes to making the important but often invisible labor of teaching writing more visible and more satisfying. Our experiences have taught us that pedagogy-focused collaborations between experienced faculty exist informally but are not often valued or well documented and have not received enough attention in the world of higher education.

In the first part of this article, we articulate the scholarly and theoretical foundations of our argument and put our experiences into conversation with scholars who theorize the effects of collaboration and the dynamics of working both within and against institutions. Next, we offer our own case study—a description of our experiences with collaborative co-mentoring—in which we discuss our university's context and the exigencies that led us to develop a multi-year collaboration around teaching and curriculum development. Then, we discuss the politics and pitfalls of institutionalizing collaborative co-mentoring as a form of faculty development. Finally, our essay argues that

the potential benefits of institutionalizing and incentivizing collaborative co-mentoring outweigh potential problems.

Scholarly Conversations on the Dynamics of Collaboration

The discipline of rhetoric and writing has a long tradition of studying collaboration. Scholars have investigated topics such as collaborative learning techniques that encourage student interdependence (Bruffee, 1993); interdisciplinary collaboration and interdisciplinary team teaching (Dinitz, Drake, Gedeon, Kiedaisch, & Mehrtens, 1997); collaborative learning practices in pedagogy practicum courses for new FYW instructors (Ebest, 2002); collaboration in the context of community partnerships (Flower, 2008; Kimball & Dubord, 2016); writing together for scholarly purposes (Duffy & Pell, 2013; Lunsford & Ede, 2012); rhetoric-informed Writing Across the Curriculum programs collaborating with other disciplines (Tarabochia, 2013; Zawacki & Cox, 2014); and faculty collaboration with students (Kerschbaum, 2014; Toth, Reber, & Clark, 2015).

Rhetoric and writing studies scholars have also studied how to use collaboration for faculty development. In "Faculty Development through Professional Collaboration," Lyons (1980) outlines how WPAs might use faculty reading groups to develop in literature faculty "a serious professional interest in composition" (p. 15). While this sort of collaboration may prove useful to many faculty, reading composition scholarship together is just one small facet of the type of collaboration we advocate. Furthermore, Lyons' centering of WPA authority—"faculty participants in the group obviously should not usurp any of the policy making functions of the writing program administrator" (p. 15)—runs counter to the aims of collaborative co-mentoring, as well as

the collective values embraced by the contemporary discipline of rhetoric and composition. Obermark, Brewer, and Halasek (2015) encourage sustained collaborative professional development among TAs in the graduate school years that follow the pedagogy practicum course. They argue that collaboration among graduate TAs can help bridge the gap between those individuals who "had previous teaching experience from MA programs or from working as classroom teachers in secondary school contexts, and . . . Others [who] still felt like novices, particularly because they had never been asked to develop their own syllabi" (p. 35). We agree with Obermark, Brewer, and Halasek that continued collaboration is key. Yet, our central concern is with a different group of faculty: experienced teaching-track or contingent faculty, who may not need collaboration to help bridge experience gaps, but would benefit from continued collaboration to help reduce the isolation that so often hinders ongoing faculty growth and development. Furthermore, continued collaboration between experienced colleagues can bring faculty together across intellectual divides, create curricular coherence, and sustain reflective pedagogical practices.

The process of collaboration creates space for this reflective practice. Certainly, collaboration in a simple sense—creating something together—will reduce faculty isolation. However, disagreement or resistance between collaborators and the way collaborators navigate through their resistance creates potential for fruitful faculty development. Duffy (2014) helps us theorize how our own collaboration fought both isolation and the negative affect that sometimes circulated around our FYW teaching work. Building on the work of Bruffee (1984), Ede and Lunsford (2012), and Goggin (2012), Duffy moves from a social constructionist model of collaboration to a model that is rhetorically-based. He outlines

what makes collaboration possible and, as we show, what makes it ultimately satisfying. Duffy contends that collaboration should not merely be "conceptualized as conversation that aims for consensus" (p. 419). He explains that "collaborators do not just 'converse'; they deliberately engage and interact with objects of discourse" (p. 422). This model helps us "shift how we talk about the benefits of collaboration, away from whatever textual products it might yield, to the kinds of enhanced perception collaborations foster . . . we must recognize that what collaborators share with one another is an enhanced capacity to triangulate meanings" (p. 423-425).

With an attention to "enhanced perception," triangulation, and negotiation, Duffy's (2014) theory of collaboration aligns nicely with other rhetoric scholars' theories of understanding difference. Triangulation as the aim of collaboration resonates with Ratcliffe's (2005) rhetorical listening, defined as "a stance of openness" (p. 17) toward difference in which listeners co-create meaning with speakers; Kerschbaum's (2014) theory of difference as "dynamic, relational and emergent" (p. 56); and Leonard's (2014) rhetorical attunement, or "an ear for, or a tuning toward, difference or multiplicity. . . . a literate understanding that assumes multiplicity and invites the negotiation of meaning across difference" (p. 228). Rhetoric and composition, after all, has historically been concerned with finding common ground and shared meanings, all while figuring out how to listen carefully for the values that undergird differing views. Accordingly, Duffy points out that "the talk collaborators foster requires more than the dialogic back-and-forth we often imagine conversation to entail" (p. 423) and that "there is value in paying attention to the resistances that affect the discourse [collaborators] are able to produce together" (p. 426).

In our own collaboration, we found value in the tensions that derived from our discussions of teaching and curricular texts. In coming to understand the sources of our resistance, we benefitted from one another's approaches and grew as teachers. The resistances we encountered in our collaboration were just as important as the support we offered one another. Because triangulation is productively gratifying, collaborative co-mentoring can serve to increase what Lamos (2016) calls "good feeling" among contingent or teaching-track faculty. Lamos argues that cultivating perceptions of "good feeling" about the work of an academic program correlates with better working conditions, more respect, and more resources.

The term "good feeling" is therefore a strategic one. Building on work that calls for efforts to improve the labor conditions for contingent faculty, Lamos (2016) argues that we need to address the "bad feelings" associated with teaching-track and contingent university work. As we will describe in our case study below, the labor of collaboration-as-triangulation—of coming to understand the work and values of another composition instructor—was both immensely satisfying and highly strategic. The "enhanced perception" fostered by our collaboration prompted us to continuously change and adapt our own stories about what was possible and productive in the FYW classroom. Collaboration helped us combat our perceptions of lower status within our institution and the "negative affect that circulates around such work" (Lamos, 2016, p. 363). Both of these had the potential to reduce our expectations of the importance and possibilities of our work.

Our different disciplinary backgrounds in literature and rhetoric made us want to collaborate, but there were points in our process where the slightly different disciplinary communities we belonged to and our differing values obstructed our ability to find shared meanings. The parallel nature of

our interests in race, language, and social justice made us a natural fit, but we taught very different courses before our collaboration began. Pre-collaboration, Sophie emphasized blending personal narrative and critical inquiry in her FYW course, and Amanda emphasized rhetorical analysis and public argumentation. Eventually, after several years of collaboration, we came to approach FYW as a cultural rhetorics course in race and language with an emphasis on public engagement. Through collaborative co-mentoring, we recursively honed our syllabi for nine consecutive semesters. We eventually taught curricula that were more similar than any other two instructors in the program, yet our priorities, backgrounds, and research interests—Amanda's in cultural and indigenous rhetorics, civic literacy, and rhetorical history; Sophie's in critical race theory, American literature, and critical pedagogy—did lead us in different directions.

While difference may not be as important for sheer collaboration, our differing values for the teaching of writing were a critical factor in making our co-mentoring relationship fruitful. We were collaborating to learn from one another, to get better at triangulating meaning with others, and to come to a broader, deeper understanding of what was possible within and outside of the FYW classroom. However difficult it was to triangulate meaning, difficulty was actually the point.

The Institutional Context of Our Collaboration

For five years, we collaborated on the curriculum of a required FYW course in the university core curriculum at a large Catholic institution in an urban area on the east coast. FYW was not located in a university department, but a free-standing program. FYW courses were part of the general education curriculum, which included two other courses designed to help first-year

students transition to university-level study. During the years we collaborated, our writing program consisted of ten full-time, tenure-stream faculty and a fluctuating number of adjunct and graduate student faculty, all of whom taught FYW almost exclusively.

There were several adjunct faculty for whom part-time teaching was ideal, but three groups of us were concerned with our job security: adjuncts who would have been open to full-time work, graduate students who were hoping for tenure-track appointments, and those of us on the tenure track. The job security concern was exacerbated by the form of tenure that existed in the program. Elements of contingency were built into the FYW tenure-track positions. We—the authors—were both tenure-stream faculty in our program, but we did not have the same type of tenure-stream positions that faculty in departments at our university had. People on the tenure-track in our writing program had higher teaching loads than people in departments. We were also working towards "programmatic tenure," a type of tenure that our university invented, which was tied to the continued existence of the university's FYW program. We were often told by university leaders that our tenure could be dissolved if the FYW program were disbanded. Our writing program never seemed to be in true danger; however, our different status and purported lack of permanence was demoralizing at times. Indeed, the contractual language that described these positions was opaque to any reader looking to understand the job security the positions provided.

In spite of these job security concerns, the FYW program was designed to give faculty freedom to choose their course themes, syllabi, and curricula. Beyond a set of explicitly evolving FYW learning outcomes, assignments were not standardized, which allowed for a maximum amount of freedom. There was no common FYW syllabus or textbook. The program, in fact, eschewed textbooks. Our program exemplified the great

diversity of approaches that exist in FYW teaching. Philosophies and beliefs about best practices varied widely: some faculty took a writing about writing approach, others a rhetorical studies approach, others an expressivist approach, and still others a genre studies approach.

For much of the time we collaborated, our program also had institutionalized de facto FYW faculty development, which came in the form of required learning outcomes assessment. This occurred at the end of each semester when all tenure-line faculty and some adjunct and graduate student faculty gathered to read samples of students' ePortfolios, which contained student-authored texts and students' metacognitive reflections about their writing processes and products. Through this assessment, we gained a rough idea of what other instructors were doing in their classrooms. The assessment served to make us curious about other faculty members' approaches, but we had little time to learn from one another about the values or theories behind our different curricula.

While we appreciated curricular autonomy, it meant that our program sometimes lacked curricular coherence and made the two of us feel isolated. This freedom inspired a desire to create something in common with another faculty member and, given how our training and intellectual backgrounds differed, to learn from one another. We started by collaboratively building one curricular unit together, which gave us the chance to experiment with each other's approaches in small doses. For example, Amanda offered Sophie lesson plans that taught rhetorical analysis of texts and supplied context for the lesson plans with composition and rhetoric scholarship. In turn, Sophie guided Amanda through lesson plans that initiated discussions of Critical Race Theory among FYW students and provided writing assignments that asked students to write about their racialized identities.

As our interests in each other's approaches grew, we began taking full-day retreats at the beginning of each semester to plan our syllabi. We initiated each of these meetings with goals we wanted to achieve during the subsequent semester—usually small changes to assignments—and we worked at Sophie's kitchen table to think through ways to assist each other. Throughout the semester, we met on a weekly basis. After about six semesters of consecutive collaboration, we were teaching more or less the same assignments throughout the semester. Over the span of five years, our curricula became more aligned and more coherent. In this time, we also grew to trust one another deeply. Even after we were no longer working at the same University—Amanda left to take a WPA position at a smaller Catholic university on the west coast—we have maintained contact, co-mentoring each other about professional, scholarly, and pedagogical matters.

At multiple points each semester, we helped each other troubleshoot assignments and students' responses to them. We alternated taking the lead as we mentored each other through the processes of some difficult teaching challenges. Because we were teaching in one of the more racially, ethnically, and economically diverse schools in the nation, we were eager to focus our students' attention on issues that disproportionately affect people of color and of lower economic status. But, as white, middle class women our experiences had not necessarily prepared us to ask students to think about their own experiences with racism or classism. In early 2012, at the height of the Occupy movement, we asked students to begin the semester with an investigation of college student debt, including, at times, their own debt. While this unit of study yielded rich opportunities for students and teachers to exercise their "sociological imaginations" (Mills, 1959), the complex and personal writing students

generated on this topic called for us both to think quickly and do a lot of mutual debriefing. Amanda took the lead, as our own levels of comfort and experiences paying for college and graduate study came into play in our responses. Sophie realized that although she was comfortable talking about class and debt culture in principle, she had little experience doing so in concrete, personal terms. Amanda's experience with her own college debt and her savvy in this area helped her lead us through student projects. This early experience with collaboration increased our capacity to navigate the important and loaded topics we had brought into class.

Our teaching about student debt allowed us to explore the connections among students' immediate experiences as college students and sociological questions, critical consciousness, and current activism. Sophie presented the data she gathered during this unit at a conference later that year, and we considered developing our teaching and scholarship in this area. Yet, we shifted our focus the following summer because we each independently began studying an area of inquiry that encouraged students to engage their "sociological imaginations," while also residing more deeply in the questions inherent to the field of composition studies: translingual and multilingual rhetorics. That summer, Sophie began investigating the history of the "Students' Right to Their Own Language" movement and, at the same time, Amanda participated in a Rhetoric Society of America Institute entitled "Shifting the Paradigm: Towards a Translingual Rhetoric of Writing."

Our collaboration allowed us to pay attention to this unique coincidence. Had we not been involved in teaching-focused collaboration, we may not have seen the curricular potential contained in these parallel lines of inquiry. As we developed a series of lessons related to the history of language rights in composition studies and the emergence of a language resource approach,

our collaboration enabled us to change our curriculum and shift our research. Sophie began writing a book about the student writing we assigned during this unit, while Amanda gave a conference presentation about the resonances between her archival work on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Cherokee rhetorics and contemporary translingual practices and questions.

Developing curriculum collaboratively was a satisfying learning experience, yet we also learned by "trying on" each other's activities, thereby partially inhabiting each other's teaching lives. As we did so, we resisted one another, but also freed ourselves from the potential rigidity of our own philosophies and learned to value the differences between our approaches. Collaborative co-mentoring helped catalyze major shifts in our assumptions about what was possible or appropriate inside and outside of the classroom. For example, Amanda initially resisted adopting one in-class activity that Sophie used in her classroom called "One-Minute Stories," drawn from Bell, Love, and Roberts (2007). The activity presents questions that prompt pairs or groups of students to tell one-minute stories about their racialized identities, such as "When were you first aware of yourself as a part of a particular racial/ethnic group?" and "When have you witnessed or experienced someone (or yourself) being treated differently because of his or her racial group?" The activity closes by asking students to reflect on how telling their one-minute stories made them feel. At first, Amanda could not see the value of asking students to volunteer stories that might be traumatic to them and worried that they might not be able to gain critical distance from their personal narratives. Yet, following several semesters of being impressed with the self-aware, actualized work that Sophie's students produced after this activity—and after failing to get students to produce similarly self-aware work—Amanda decided it was time to try Sophie's pedagogical techniques.

The resulting in-class conversations surprised and inspired Amanda: students were braver than they had been before. Many students described memories that were important to their personal development but that they had suppressed because of the negative affect that surrounded the experiences, such as memories of racist microaggressions that they had witnessed, endured, or even committed. Amanda realized that the activity functioned as a rhetorical invention exercise, helping to strengthen the writing that students produced following this activity. Sophie's lesson plan showed Amanda a way to invoke and value students' deeply personal experiences in her FYW classes. Moreover, Amanda's fear that students would not critically engage their personal experiences was allayed quickly, since the activity prepared students with critical race theory vocabulary terms—marginalization, privilege, intersectionality—that functioned as a lens through which to view their experiences.

Sophie gained parallel insights into the resonances between her teaching and scholarship by borrowing and trying on Amanda's rhetorical analysis and methods activities. Like many full and part-time faculty who teach composition, Sophie came to the university without a grounding in composition or rhetoric. She was a life-long teacher with a literature Ph.D. and a Master's in teaching. She was committed broadly to teaching as a means for social and personal transformation, but that commitment was not rooted in the particular orientations and histories of rhetoric and composition studies. Through working with Amanda, she began to see how her priorities and concerns mapped onto specific disciplinary histories and debates within composition and rhetoric: the discipline's origins in Black and Latinx Freedom Movements, "Students' Rights" history and debate, translingualism and global Englishes, patterns of migration and neoliberalism, and how those histories play out in universities. Previously, she had seen

writing studies work as related only to her teaching, and she resisted seeing this work as related to her scholarship on race in nineteenth-century American literature. In working with Amanda, she began to see composition and rhetoric studies as a space for those two strands to come together. It initiated new scholarship on her students' writing, and her research around this is now turning into a book.

By drawing on each other's co-mentorship, we were better able to pay attention to the interesting idiosyncrasies of our students' writing. This was significant because, as Gallagher (2012) argues, higher education's over-zealous focus on learning outcomes leads to "separation of ends and means . . . diversion of attention away from the existing conditions for teaching and learning; narrow fixation on singular results rather than openness to emergent consequences" (p. 45). While our entire program would focus on learning outcomes at the close of each semester, the two of us had access to each other's mentorship throughout the semester. We mentored one another through activities we created together or separately and we talked through difficult or problematic student responses. Because we were able to draw on the benefits of having a co-mentor as a sounding board, we avoided closing ourselves "off from what [was] surprising or excessive or eccentric" (Gallagher, 2012 p. 46) about our students' responses. When a student responded to an assignment in a way that one of us did not expect, we were able to talk through that response, thereby recognizing consequences or potential consequences of our pedagogies.[i]

We also challenged one another to articulate the foundations of or values behind our curricular choices, especially when one of us resisted adopting an assignment or activity. As such, we were able to reflect deeply on the nature and purposes of the assignments we created. And, through all of this labor, we were learning to understand each other's

teaching values and, consequently, value each other's teaching more than we did when we started our collaboration.

The Pitfalls of Institutionalizing Collaborative Co-Mentoring

Although our collaboration has been crucial to our development as teachers and scholars, we see that institutionalizing collaborative co-mentoring in a program with a dependence on contingent labor has pitfalls. First, as tenure-stream faculty, we had resources that made our voluntary collaboration possible. While we were told by administrative authorities that our tenure-able status was tied to the continued existence of our program, and that it could be revoked were the FYW program terminated, our positions at the university were not as tenuous as ones occupied by part-time, contingent faculty. We had time, office space, the ability to request our teaching schedules, and other protections that many contingent faculty do not have.

The second related pitfall has to do with the nature of our collaboration: it was completely voluntary. The danger in institutionalizing and incentivizing this kind of collaborative work is that doing so may kill the spirit that made it so valuable to us. Because our collaboration was voluntary, it took the shape we wanted and needed. No one from the outside imposed arbitrary requirements on the products we had to produce, which made it personally and professionally valuable. In other words, because these sorts of relationships are non-hierarchical, they may flourish best outside the structures of academic competition as a practice based on the desire of individuals to do unpaid, unrecognized work. However, we don't think that we would have been upset to have been offered stipends for the work we were doing, so long as the stipend was not also attached to some sort of mandate that

made it difficult to tailor our collaboration to our needs.

The Benefits of Incentivizing Collaborative Co-Mentoring

We contend, however, that the benefits of incentivizing collaborative co-mentoring outweigh the pitfalls. Firstly, while our own collaboration was in part facilitated by a set of resources not always available to adjuncts, we argue that contingent faculty members' disparate schedules and lack of office space may exacerbate the isolation we experienced. Therefore, funding this collaborative faculty development may be even more necessary with a contingent labor force because it will offer this group of qualified faculty resources they need to fight isolation and allow them more support than what a single WPA is able to offer on a one-on-one basis. Furthermore, as Horning (2016) argues, all faculty should be financially compensated for any faculty development they do.

It is important to note, however, that an institutionalized collaborative co-mentoring program should maintain the spirit of freedom by remaining optional, if incentivized. Much like the Writing Fellows programs[ii] that many writing-across-the-curriculum programs institutionalize, a collaborative co-mentoring program would offer funding for faculty proposals that use collaboration to explore a question or solve a pedagogical issue important to several faculty in the program. Co-mentors should be encouraged to present or publicize their aims and any results of their work together, if only within the program in a lesson plan archive, program blog, or presentation for program faculty. Doing so could initiate program-wide conversations about the shape and purposes of FYW at the institution, and as such, collaborative co-mentoring would feed back into institutional practice.

We also contend that faculty participation

in collaborative co-mentoring may help writing programs resist some of the most disturbing effects of neoliberal adjunctification: curricular standardization and the over-reliance on outcomes assessment. Lamos (2016) argues that one major reason for the negative affect surrounding teaching-track work is that "effective teaching is increasingly perceived not in terms of creating specific and unique spaces, but rather in terms of creating standardized spaces that can purportedly provide universal, acontextual, and easily assessable skills and competencies" (p. 367). Gallagher (2012) echoes Lamos' concern, maintaining that the neoliberal university's focus on outcomes assessment creates "the pernicious separation of ends and means, the rigidity of fixed ends, the narrow focus on predetermined results, and the imposition of external ends on faculty and students" (p. 49). As our own examples show, collaboration can create coherence among syllabi that faculty teach and the values that undergird pedagogical choices while allowing faculty to follow their own development as professionals in the field.

Our own syllabi grew together organically because we were motivated to fight isolation and open to the possibilities of another faculty member's ideas. Co-mentoring one another through the processes of implementing our curricula allowed us opportunities to conduct research into our own teaching and still come together, as the process requires that the collaborators triangulate meaning. As we triangulated meaning with one another, we became more aware of what worked and of what we should value.

Ultimately, building pedagogical knowledge together without the explicit supervision or overdetermined direction of our program's leaders gave us freedom to build a coherent curriculum and grow to value what our co-mentor brought to the collaboration. The horizontal alliances that faculty create through collaboration are beneficial to the group as a whole. By incentivizing these horizontal alliances between faculty, program leaders will show that they honor faculty members' distinct abilities and remain open to the diverse ideas that faculty bring to the teaching of writing. Finally, we agree with the consensus among leaders in the field that we should be working for greater job security for all writing faculty, or more specifically, that all faculty should have available the necessary means to achieve their desired working conditions. Our experiences with collaboration have taught us that valuing faculty expertise can support the goal of better working conditions for writing faculty.

The huge growth in contingent positions represents a dire set of problems for universities in general and for FYW programs in particular. This is of particular concern because, as Ahmed (2012) warns, when forms of work garner less institutional "value," "then to become responsible for this work can mean to inhabit institutional spaces that are also less valued" (p. 4). However, as Lamos (2016) argues, improvement in job security and labor conditions can come in many forms, such as multi-year contracts, better salaries, and better access to office space. We should, therefore:

> make teaching-track affective and material lives better until such time that the full protections of tenure might be realized. Thus, while our ultimate strategy should remain the achievement of tenure, our near-term tactics can and should include the achievement of other lesser forms of job security. (Lamos, 2016, p. 380)

The two goals—making incremental improvements in teaching-track working conditions and holding out for teaching-track tenure—don't conflict.

Conclusion

Collaborative co-mentoring is a structure for faculty development that aligns with current values in rhetoric and composition. As

Detweiler, LaWare, and Wojahn (2017) argue, rhetoric and composition scholars should seek to work both within and against traditional university leadership structures, and to lead "in ways that align with who we are and how we want to make a difference" (p. 452). In the same journal issue, Jackson (2017) and Villanueva (2017) develop models that exemplify what this leadership looks like. Jackson argues for "collaborative models of service where the objective is not to be out in front of others but rather to work with others for collective goals" (p. 497). She advocates for decolonial leadership models that make "academic institutions more accountable to their own cultural locations as institutions of public learning that honor multiple ways of knowing, doing, and leading" (p. 497). Villanueva contends academia imagines academic labor happening in a mythical isolation that never really existed:

> We must abandon the "lone academic" recognizing that we all tend to be too busy to be that old-style intellectual—if he ever existed (invariably a "he")—who could sip brandy and puff his pipe while talking with professors of other departments in the dark, wood-paneled, leather-chaired lounge. (p. 491)

He argues for conceiving of academic work carried out by "collective subjects" who are "subject to collective causalities" (p. 491). In line with Jackson's and Villanueva's ideas of what makes good leadership, we advocate putting people in collective, collaborative contexts to do better work than they could while going it alone. Moreover, the horizontal alliances that grow from collaborations can encourage faculty to build the kind of organic curricular coherence that raises the profile of writing programs within universities and, subsequently, to grow louder in their collective voice against unjust institutional policies.

Collaborative co-mentoring turns disagreement or misalignment into productive tension. This model of faculty development taught us about the different priorities really wonderful teachers have when they approach First Year Writing courses. This was an important lesson, since both of us went on to perform writing program administrator roles later. One central question for writing program leaders is how to use our power as administrators to partner with teaching-track and/or adjunct laborers to build a platform of support for them. One answer to this question has to be to encourage these faculty members to ally with one another, not only to share experiences, but also to build mutual appreciation for their different approaches. By offering faculty positive incentives to collaborate and co-mentor one another through their approaches, writing program leaders facilitate the proliferation of different successful approaches. After all, learning to honor multiple approaches and valuing disagreement is the lifeblood of writing program work.

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Notes

[i] When we shared our students' responses, we anonymized them. Also, we were each conducting IRB-approved studies of our students' work, so we had obtained permission from students to share what they wrote.

[ii] At many universities, a faculty member teaching a writing-enriched course can apply for funding to have a Writing Fellow embedded in the faculty member's course. The Writing Fellow is usually an advanced undergraduate who functions not as a teaching assistant, but as a trained writing consultant. The student audits the class and meets with students to assist them with the discipline-specific writing in the course. In these programs, the faculty member and the student collaborate closely to improve writing instruction in the course. Sometimes, the programs also require that all faculty members in the program meet as a group with a writing program administrator throughout the semester to discuss best practices in teaching writing. Thus, funded collaboration occurs between a faculty member and the student consultant and can also occur among faculty participants in the program.

Illuminating Reading as Intellectual Labor: Cultivating Readerly Behaviors in the Writing Classroom

Zack K. De Piero

Pennsylvania State University, Abington

ABSTRACT

Composition scholar-practitioners have theorized numerous roles for reading in the writing classroom, suggesting that this tacit intellectual labor shapes students' writing development in consequential ways. A mixed-methods inquiry into novice writing instructors' reading pedagogies offered further insights into the omnipresence of students' reading activity in first-year composition. Via surveys and follow-up interviews, participants revealed a wide range of readerly behaviors—an all-encompassing term used to describe what readers think, feel, or do before, during, or after the act of reading—that were perceived to play pivotal roles in students' writing development. These findings suggest a need to reconceptualize pedagogies that predominantly focus on students' writing by also explicitly guiding students' reading. The piece concludes with practical strategies for more proactively teaching reading by integrating reader-response pedagogies.

Throughout the ten, twelve, or sixteen weeks of a given first-year composition (FYC) course, students typically compose source-based written assignments—what have been casually, and perhaps controversially, referred to as "research papers" (Brent, 2013), along with more nuanced characterizations that attempt to account for a wider range of research-based genres with the term "researched writing" (Howard, Serviss, & Rodrigue, 2010). Though the focus of each FYC course can shift quite dramatically, from writing about racism and socioeconomic identity (Villanueva, 2014) to writing about social media (Reid, 2014) to writing about

writing (Wardle & Downs, 2014), all FYC courses require students to write. Typically, students must demonstrate a commitment to the writing process by crafting multiple drafts of each major assignment, and most likely, these major writing assignments—along with a cumulative portfolio of revised written work—comprise the vast majority of each student's grade.

So where does that leave reading? In order to complete their written assignments, students likely undertake a considerable amount of reading that requires deceivingly complex cognitive dexterity, especially for first-year students. While the assigned

readings typically lay the conceptual foundation for course content, the assignment prompts tacitly shape how students are expected to engage with those assigned readings.

Scholarly texts, for instance—a feature of many approaches to FYC—place considerable demands on novice academic readers, from grappling with theory and methodology, to gaining an awareness of how and why scholars communicate with another. In effect, students become tasked with comprehending texts that were intended for an academic audience with expertise in a disciplinary field. When students are required to integrate scholarly texts into their own written work, more challenges abound: navigating the search engines of library databases, using disciplinary keywords to locate appropriate sources, and determining which configuration of sources might yield the strongest paper. These subtle actions become consequential steps in students' emerging development as academic readers.

Reading and responding to classmates' writing places yet another set of demands on students' reading processes. Sophisticated participation in peer review workshops requires privileging higher-order concerns for early drafts which oftentimes presents challenges for FYC students whose prior educational experiences encouraged surface-level edits of classmates' work. What typically accounts for the majority of each student's grade, though, is their own writing, so learning how to effectively revise and edit become indispensable, high-stakes reading tools.

The aforementioned texts—from assignment prompts, to scholarly pieces, to classmates' first drafts, to students' own work—range quite considerably in terms of genre, complexity, intended audience, length, and draft iteration, further complicating notions of reading as a one-size-fits-all activity. Suffice it to say, in order to write successfully in FYC, students need to read successfully. Still, this complex work becomes easily overlooked by instructors when we fail

to explicitly account for it in our teaching and assessment practices.

In his contribution to *First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice* (Coxwell-Teague & Lunsford, 2014), Inoue addresses the importance of theorizing the role of labor in FYC courses, contending that, oftentimes, "when teachers grade documents or provide feedback, [they] neglect the labor and effort that produced those documents" (p. 73). Consequently, Inoue proposes valuing the "work of the mind," thereby framing his assessment of students' labor with a wider-angle view that accounts for their holistic literate activity. "A productive way to design and teach a first-year writing course," he states, "is to conceive of it as labor: to calculate course grades by labor completed and dispense almost completely with judgments of quality when producing course grades" (p. 71). Essentially, Inoue envisions a more inclusive valuation of labor by implementing a contract grading approach that systematically integrates students' behind-the-scenes work into the course framework. In that light, the semantic nuances that differentiate "labor" from "work" draw parallels to pedagogies that disentangle process from product.

Inoue's aspirations offer an opportunity to extend Salvatori's (1996) crucial call to make students' reading activity more visible. This tacit intellectual labor can, and should, be brought to light for two primary reasons: ethical principle and prudent pedagogy. First, compensating students for their hard and necessary labor associated with reading creates fairer assessment practices—particularly for historically disadvantaged students (Inoue, 2014)—by more accurately redistributing the piecemeal valuation of students' holistic labor. Second, because reading and writing are reciprocal and mutually-reinforcing activities (Tierney & Pearson, 1983; Horning & Kraemer, 2013), when instructors illuminate reading—that is, when they foreground the reading process with reader-centric

assignments and in-class activities—they can more proactively guide each student's individual reading practices and, in turn, strengthen their writing development.

Due to its expansive presence within the academy and its prospects for leveraging transfer across the disciplines, FYC offers a productive research site for exploring the relationship between reading and labor in the writing classroom. According to recent estimates by the National Census of Writing (2013), 96% of four-year colleges required students to complete FYC. While students' academic experiences in any single course cannot possibly embody the wide range of literate activity that students will encounter throughout their college careers, it is reasonable to claim that students' labor in FYC, to some extent, reflects academic activity across the university, particularly in general education courses. Consequently, studying the range of reading activity required to achieve success in FYC offers insights into students' labor well beyond the course.

Expansive Possibilities for Reading Pedagogies

Pointing to historical trends in the composition field, Salvatori and Donahue (2012) and Carillo (2015) have acknowledged a lack of research on reading in the writing classroom. Despite this pronounced gap, some composition scholar-practitioners have taken up Salvatori's (1996) call to make reading more visible, thereby extending Rosenblatt's (1978) influential work on reader-response. Compositionists have introduced a range of reading pedagogies—attempts to shape reader-text interactions—towards various ends, including cognition, self-regulation, reader-response, social learning, reading-writing connections, stance, and emotion.

Cognition and self-regulation have been targeted through procedural techniques that prescribe step-by-step reading strategies—

and, more generally, skills-based study strategies—such as Armstrong and Lampi's (2017) use of PILLAR: preview, identify, list, look, attempt, and read. Oftentimes, such acronymed strategies prime students' pre-reading awareness of the content or context of a particular text before they begin reading, although other strategies include mid- and post-reading steps. For instance, the "N" and final "R" in S-RUN-R (Bailey, 1998) stand for note-taking and reviewing those notes. Despite their simplistic allure for cultivating fundamental skills, acronymed strategies have drawn criticism. Fisher-Ari and Ari (2017), for instance, claim that they tend to "positio[n] the purpose of reading, writing, and learning as directed by and for others—i.e., teachers or those placed in positions of authority—rather than positioning learning, as it is—an active, personal, self-constructed, and ongoing project" (p. 20). Furthermore, it is unclear whether their sequential nature authentically reflects the reading processes of real readers, particularly advanced and expert-level readers.

Other reading pedagogies—and the intellectual labor that they require—move readers' attention beyond the text towards creating knowledge about the author, the context, or other circumstances surrounding the production of the text. Downs (2010), for instance, asks his students to situate texts within discourse communities or communities of practice. "Reading and writing," he asserts, "should be taught as reading and writing the particular genres of particular activity systems, through an apprenticeship process that sees not 'right or wrong' but 'more or less expert'" (p. 26). Downs finds it especially problematic when "texts and readers seem to come 'out of nowhere,' with no histories, backgrounds, or reasons for being" (p. 23).

Other reader-response pedagogies strive to uncover each reader's unique experience. Annotations, which Goldschmidt (2010) refers to as "marginalia," are one such example. Her comparison of faculty and students' marginalia revealed insights for

understanding the differences between novice's and expert's reading practices; faculty annotations focused on four categories—comprehension, evaluation, extension, and rhetorical analysis—while students' were primarily limited to comprehension.

Asking questions—about the text, the author, or the content—is one type of marginalia that transcends each of Goldschmidt's (2010) four expert-level categories which suggests that it likely holds considerable value for transfer-oriented pedagogies. In fact, Wardle and Downs (2014) contend that "questions are the most stable, 'universal' aspect of [understanding] writing" (p. 278). Considered alongside Goldschmidt's findings, it appears that advanced readers annotate their texts with wide-ranging intent. Such actions embody Inoue's (2014) intellectual labor and, therefore, merit valuation in the writing classroom.

As a means of extracting and enhancing an individual student's reading experience, other reading pedagogies, paradoxically, attempt to leverage social learning. Blau's (2003) literature workshops repurpose traditional peer review workshops by cultivating a process-centered, collaborative approach to constructing meaning in literary texts. As they read, students track their reactions, particularly moments of difficulty, then bring these points of confusion forward for small group discussion. In a similar way, Goldschmidt (2010) facilitates activities for teaching marginalia that focus on discussion, revision, and refinement as a way of "teaching texts, teaching readers, and teaching writers simultaneously" (p. 64). Yet another way to guide students' reading in social settings is through technology; Miller's (2016) employs social bookmarking technologies (e.g., Diigo) to cultivate curiosity and encourage exploration.

Reader-text interactions are also shaped by the unique stance that readers bring to any given reading engagement. Theorists frequently associate stance with writers, such as when Soliday (2011) notes, "No content is free floating but must be governed by someone's angle of vision, or stance […] writers do more than present information: they perceive and judge it in some way" (p. 36). However, this notion of stance also holds important implications for understanding readers' meaning-making processes. For example, Tierney and Pearson (1983) offer the following account of how stance can impact recall and retention: Before reading a description of a house, two groups of readers were asked to assume different identities—those of prospective homeowners and burglars—which primed what particular information each group was better able to recall. In FYC, specifically, reading rhetorically and reading critically are perhaps the two most valued readerly stances, as evidenced by their extensive presence in programmatic learning outcomes.

Reading researchers have also noted how emotions impact the reading experience, which dovetails with stance. Bunn (2013) contends that writing instructors can enhance students' motivation to read by explicitly teaching reading-writing connections, especially those that are essential for upcoming assignments. Lockhart and Soliday (2016) suggest that integrated reading and writing FYC curriculum can lead to gains in students' confidence and self-efficacy associated with postsecondary literacy.

To build upon these scholars' efforts to explicitly guide students' reading—and, in turn, to expand traditional notions of what constitutes intellectual labor in the writing classroom—I offer findings from a study that examined instructors' perceptions of the role of reading in their FYC courses. To account for the wide range of reading activity I have outlined, I use the term *readerly behaviors* as a way to capture the cognitive, affective, behavioral, and social outcomes of any reader-text transaction. Conceptually, readerly behaviors characterizes what student-readers think, feel, or do before, during, or after the

act of reading. Using this expansive term, I examined the question: "What readerly behaviors do writing instructors hope to cultivate in their FYC courses?"

Methods

Participants and Research Site

To expand my exploratory inquiry in productive ways, I located a research site where writing instructors hold a multi-disciplinary enculturation to postsecondary literacy. In one writing program, FYC Teaching Assistants (TAs) are exposed to contemporary composition theories and scholarship during their training practicum such as teaching for transfer (Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2015), writing about writing (Downs & Wardle, 2007, 2014), and the threshold concepts of Writing Studies (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015). These TAs, however, were also pursuing doctoral degrees in humanities disciplines, thereby lending particular humanities-based "ways of thinking and practicing" (Kreber, 2009; Donald, 2009) to their FYC teaching appointments. For example, when humanities scholars engage with texts—as I learned from TAs' interview responses—they tend to conduct close readings, translate foreign languages to English, and repurpose texts into research-based arguments. With these dual enculturations, then, I hoped that participants' reflections on their reading pedagogies would offer expansive insights into a wider array of readerly behaviors.

At this research site, TAs had agency to design their FYC courses in accordance with the course's stated learning outcomes. A typical course juxtaposed the study of mainstream and scholarly texts with attention to composition ideas such as genre, rhetoric, and discourse community.

Survey and Interview Construction

This mixed methods study was based on surveys and follow-up interviews that,

together, paint a broad portrait of reading as intellectual labor in the writing classroom. Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2001) informed my research design, coding, and data analysis, and I embraced Spradley's (1979) claim that "ethnographers must deal with at least two languages—their own and the one spoken by informants" (p. 17) by taking two steps. First, I administered a pilot survey to capture TAs' existing language about their reading pedagogies and coded their responses to generate a preliminary list of readerly behaviors to include in my final survey. Annotating texts and reading rhetorically, for example, emerged via in vivo coding (Saldaña, 2009), while initial coding led to codes that I paraphrased from TAs' pilot survey responses such as comprehending content ("what they have actually learned about genre"), deconstructing genres ("analyz[ing] genres"), and using sources in papers ("weaving evidence seamlessly and citing properly").

Next, I expanded this list to include existing terminology used by composition scholars to characterize reading pedagogies. I attempted to ensure that a broad range of reading activity was represented in the survey. Examples of readerly behaviors that I added include being motivated to read (Bunn, 2013) and summarizing and paraphrasing (Bazerman, 1980; Adler-Kassner & Estrem, 2007; Jameison & Howard, 2012). The decision to revise my survey with TAs' language, coupled with field-wide terminology, helped me strike a balance between embarking upon a purely open-ended inquiry and, conversely, establishing some degree of standardization that could enable me to detect comparative trends across TAs' perceptions and practices.

The following fourteen readerly behaviors anchored my survey: being motivated to read, skimming and scanning, annotating texts, comprehending content, conducting a close reading, reading rhetorically, applying visual literacy, deconstructing genres, reading critically, reading like a writer, summarizing

and paraphrasing, using sources in papers, analyzing samples, and discussing a text with classmates. To gauge TAs' perceptions about the role that each one played in their reading pedagogy—and thus, to better understand the nuances of intellectual labor required in their FYC courses—I asked TAs the extent to which they agreed with the following Likert scale statements:

- I believe that _____ is a readerly behavior that's important for students' success in FYC.
- I explicitly address _____ in my FYC teaching practices.
- _____ is an important readerly behavior for students to be successful in introductory-level courses in my home department.

Following the suggestion of Singleton and Strait (2010), I expanded the traditional five-point continuum to seven points so that I could conduct follow-up interviews with TAs who held definitive attitudes about a particular readerly behavior that I wanted to learn more about.

My interview questionnaire focused TAs' attention on FYC course design, in-class reading pedagogies, and perceptions of reading bottlenecks. Similar to Middendorf and Pace's (2004) decoding the disciplines approach to interviewing that facilitates faculty's ability to articulate their expert-level tacit literate activity, I used follow-up probes during interviews to elicit penetrative depth. Interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. The ensuing results are based on data collected from 24 survey responses (89% response rate) and 11 follow-up interviews.

Results

TAs' responses illuminated the omnipresence of reading in writing classroom.

The survey data revealed noteworthy patterns in the perceived value that these fourteen readerly behaviors held for students' FYC performance and TAs' FYC pedagogy. The qualitative data indicated the extent to which reading was embedded in the writing process, opening up considerations for reconceptualizing labor in and beyond the FYC classroom.

Quantitative Results: A Broad Portrait of Readerly Behaviors as Intellectual Labor

The percentages offered in this section reflect the overall percentage of the 24 TAs who definitively agreed with each Likert scale statement—that is, those who agreed or strongly agreed, omitting tepid attitudes (somewhat agreed, neutral) and expressed disagreement (somewhat disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree). The results indicated that the ability to adopt a wide range of readerly behaviors is an essential component for achieving success in the writing classroom. At least 75% of the TAs definitively agreed that 8 of 14 readerly behaviors were important for success in FYC. This sizable threshold suggests that reading, broadly, holds considerable value in the writing classroom and merits pedagogical attention as intellectual labor.

Four readerly behaviors were perceived to be especially vital at this site: An overwhelming 88% or more of TAs definitively agreed that comprehending content, reading rhetorically, reading like a writer, and using sources in papers were important for success in FYC. With the lone exception of applying visual literacy, at least 40% of TAs definitively agreed that each of the 14 readerly behaviors was important for students' success. Table 1, below, depicts an overview of these perceptions. Readerly behaviors are listed in the approximate sequence of how student-readers adopt them before, during, and after the act of reading.

Table 1. *TAs' Perceptions of Readerly Behaviors*

Readerly Behavior	Percentage of TAs who definitively agreed with statements about each readerly behavior	
	Important for students' success in FYC	Explicitly address in FYC teaching practices
Being motivated to read	67%	38%
Skimming and scanning	42%	50%
Annotating texts	55%	42%
Comprehending content	88%	50%
Conducting a close reading	50%	38%
Reading rhetorically	88%	79%
Applying visual literacy	29%	29%
Deconstructing genres	79%	92%
Reading critically	78%	67%
Reading like a writer	96%	92%
Summarizing and paraphrasing	44%	47%
Using sources in papers	88%	84%
Analyzing samples (of genres that students will be writing)	83%	84%
Discussing a text(s) with classmates	75%	79%

The decisive quantitative trends across this survey data suggest that students undertake a considerable amount of reading-based labor in their writing courses, and it also indicated that this labor holds substantial intellectual value. Of course, these survey results are limited; they only offer an impressionistic portrait of the relative value of different—and admittedly, overlapping—readerly behaviors in one curricular context. Nonetheless, this comparative snapshot of TAs' perceptions attests to the multi-faceted role that reading plays in the writing classroom. A closer look at TAs' articulations of their reading pedagogies further illuminates the complexity of reading activity, providing a stronger case that, within the writing classroom, reading requires considerable intellectual labor.

Qualitative Results: Nuanced Readerly Behaviors, Nested Reading Activity
The qualitative data from TAs' interviews and open-ended survey responses added depth to the amount, complexity, and importance of reading in students' FYC labor. Upwards of forty readerly behaviors emerged from TAs' FYC reading pedagogies, aligning with the range of reading activity that can shape reader-text interactions: cognition, reading-writing connections, reader-response, modes, self-regulation, and stances.

When students were required to integrate

others' written work into their own, TAs facilitated students' source selection and usage with four readerly behaviors: using disciplinary keywords in search engines, cherry-picking sources from the Works Cited/References section, gauging source-assignment chemistry, and refining source selection. Once students found a promising source, TAs' reading pedagogies addressed compiling insightful quotes into a pre-drafting document, quoting sources, and applying the mechanics of citation attribution.

Cultivating readerly behaviors more directly associated with generating meaning through reader-response—that is, those that encourage readers to act on texts by bringing forth their uniquely individual reading experiences—was a paramount feature of TAs' reading pedagogies. Taking notes while reading and making real-world connections emerged as two specific ways of strengthening students' comprehension. Exploring personal opinion, considering curious or interesting language, and formulating insights and observations were three readerly behaviors intended to spark invention. Asking questions about a text/author, interrogating claims/points, and evaluating textual qualities tended to be taught in conjunction with participation in peer review workshops.

TAs' reading pedagogies addressed four different modes of reading: reading aloud, reading silently, re-reading, and slowing down. When students read their own work, revising, editing, and reverse outlining were identified as ways of enhancing a student's ability to self-regulate their own work. Stance-oriented readerly behaviors included avoiding autopilot reading, distancing the self from the text, harnessing selective attention, maintaining direct textual engagement, and reading with the writer/text, which is similar to Elbow's (1998) "believing game" (p. 147).

Finally, TAs pinpointed numerous textual features—from a text's lower-order surface-level inscriptions (e.g., punctuation, syntax) to the higher-order ideas (e.g., argument, organization) within it—that they wanted students to focus on. The textual features that factored into TAs' reading pedagogies included argument, claims/points, conclusions, evidence/examples, grammar, intertextuality, introductions, metadiscourse/signposts, methodology, narrative-based "I" language, organization/structure, punctuation/mechanics, style, syntax, transitions/flow, and word choice. Such textual features play a unique role in reading inquiries. Since encoded language embodies the foundation of alphanumeric texts, reading requires engaging with a wide array of textual features. By necessity, then, many of the readerly behaviors outlined in this study require readers to also process various textual features. For example, when readers evaluate textual qualities—a reader-response-oriented behavior—they ultimately make determinations about specific textual features (e.g., introductions, transitions, paragraphs) and their interactions, leading to readerly judgments such as a compelling introduction or a tight transition between paragraphs. Readerly behaviors, in other words, are oftentimes inextricably bound to a reader's ability to process various textual features.

This overlap extends across many other readerly behaviors as well. A reader could enact a particular mode (e.g., reading aloud, slowing down) and strike a distinct stance (e.g., reading with the writer/text, reading critically) during the act of reading, so multiple readerly behaviors can—and in all likelihood, frequently do—govern any given reading experience. If that sounds complicated, it is: The interconnectedness across readerly behaviors reflects the complexity of reading activity. This tacit labor requires considerable intellectual dexterity, even for advanced readers. By guiding students' reading with purposeful goals, however, FYC instructors can take thoughtful strides towards shaping students' writing development in productive ways.

Discussion: Illuminating Reading in the Writing Classroom

The quantitative and qualitative data point to the omnipresence of reading in the writing classroom. It is clear that the act of reading is not a reductive, one-size-fits-all activity. Nevertheless, even once we realize that reading requires intensive intellectual labor and shapes students' writing development in consequential ways, difficult questions remain: How can writing instructors make this oftentimes tacit labor visible in their day-to-day teaching practices?; which particular readerly behaviors should instructors foreground, when, and why?; and what assessment methods might most effectively capture the complexity of students' reading activity?

The data I have presented offer a starting point for addressing these questions. While 88% of TAs definitively agreed that comprehending content was an important readerly behavior for students' success in FYC, only 50% of TAs definitively agreed that they explicitly addressed this readerly behavior in their teaching practices. A similar divide existed for being motivated to read; 67% of TAs perceived it to be important, while only 38% of TAs addressed it in class. Such gaps expose opportunities for re-aligning instructors' goals and practices.

Other data indicated that reading, overall, is not comprehensively addressed in these 24 TAs' teaching practices. Only 50% of TAs definitively agreed that they explicitly addressed skimming and scanning and comprehending content. Less than 50% of TAs definitively agreed that they explicitly addressed being motivated to read (38%), conducting a close reading (38%), applying visual literacy (29%), and summarizing and paraphrasing (47%). Put another way, according to TAs' self-reported perceptions, a majority of TAs did not explicitly address half of the fourteen readerly behaviors that anchored this study.

On the one hand, these findings could be attributed to the still-untapped reading pedagogies of one particular group of novice writing instructors. However, their thoughtful responses throughout the qualitative portion of the study, coupled with their exposure to contemporary composition theories during their TA training practicum—including scholarship on guiding students' reading (Bunn, 2011; Rosenberg, 2011)—would suggest otherwise. Instead, I interpret these findings as a glimpse into the complexity of reading in FYC. While it is expansive, it is tacit. Though it might seem simplistic, it is likely very messy. And although it is perceived to be valuable, it appears to get overlooked in instructors' reading pedagogies.

From an opportunity cost perspective where value is conceptualized as a trade-off of resource allocation—that is, devoting resources to one area means that those same resources cannot be committed elsewhere— guiding and assessing reading in the writing classroom might seem like a misallocation of pedagogical resources. Any time directed towards teaching reading, in other words, is time spent away from teaching writing. The findings from this study, however, indicated that readerly behaviors, collectively, comprise the tacit intellectual labor that is necessary for students to successfully write their assignments. Correspondingly, how students read is a consequential aspect of students' writing development. The range of readerly behaviors that emerged from this study further reinforces the notion that reading encompasses a considerable amount of labor that students must undertake in the writing classroom. In light of these findings, instructors can cultivate reading pedagogies that adequately treat reading as intellectual labor by slowing down the curricular pace, leveraging social learning, and foregrounding the reading-writing process.

To these ends, I draw upon the survey data to offer assignments and activities for more robust reader-response pedagogies that

target a wide range of readerly behaviors. With each suggestion, I reference scholarly work that can help instructors further theorize the relationship between reading and labor in their writing courses. These suggestions are organized according to how they might sequentially unfold throughout a semester.

Scaffolding Learning and Cultivating Metacognition with Weekly Reading Process Logs

Cover letters are a popular accompaniment for major writing assignments because of their ability to reveal students' behind-the-scenes literate activity. Oftentimes, though, the primary purpose of these metacognitive reflections is to showcase students' writing process—not necessarily their reading process—further reinforcing writing as the nearly exclusive determining factor in evaluating students' collective labor. Instead, instructors can foreground the need to consistently practice reading in increasingly sophisticated ways by assigning weekly reading logs.

Each week, instructors could use reading logs as an opportunity to scaffold students' learning by illuminating a particular readerly behavior with attention to the trajectory of the course. Annotating texts, for example—a readerly behavior that a majority of TAs definitely agreed was important for success in FYC—is likely best leveraged at the beginning of a course so that students can continue annotating texts throughout the duration of the course with, presumably, greater facility. Weeks later, when students begin taking decisive steps towards shaping an upcoming paper, they can provide insight into their thought process as it pertains to the readerly behaviors required to successfully work with texts: locating sources, using disciplinary keywords, and gauging source-assignment chemistry. By seeing the "mental moves" (Salvatori, 1996, p. 447) that students have made before, during, and after the act of

reading, instructors can reward, respond to, and recalibrate students' reading processes.

Taking the next step of articulating metacognition, however, can present considerable challenges for students. Instructors can support students by modeling how they complete a given literate task, thereby making their tacit expert knowledge available to students. Coiro (2011) reports employing a think-aloud approach to modeling her reading practices for conducting online library research, from outlining how she approaches a specific task to how she evaluates the credibility of the sources she finds. When instructors like Coiro engage in think-alouds to model their metacognitive reflective work, they solidify the act of reading as intellectual labor.

Providing structured prompts with specific directives—especially during the first few weeks of a course—further scaffolds students' ability to create reading logs. Later, as students gain greater facility with engaging in metacognitive reflection, instructors can offer looser parameters. Stylistically, these logs can embrace the spirit of first-order thinking (Elbow, 1983) while maintaining the intellectual rigor of academic labor.

Moving Toward the Conversational Model with Annotated Bibliographies

Burke (1973) and Bazerman (1980) liken postsecondary literate activity to an ongoing conversation. The delayed dialogic exchange—of, first, listening, and then speaking—parallels that of reading and writing. The reader who wants to contribute to the conversation in sophisticated ways must, first, digest a writer's ideas. This type of "[i]ntelligent response," Bazerman contends, "begins with accurate understanding of prior comments, not just of the facts and ideas stated, but of what the other writer was trying to achieve" (p. 658). Instructors can scaffold the initial stage of this process by assigning annotated bibliographies, which call upon students to demonstrate numerous readerly

behaviors. Some of the discrete literate activity embedded within this unique genre are locating sources, using disciplinary keywords, comprehending content, summarizing, and paraphrasing.

Since summarizing and paraphrasing can each strengthen students' comprehension of content, annotated bibliographies offer a way of practicing pivotal readerly behaviors that can enhance students' participation in scholarly conversations. The survey data, however, suggested that this group of TAs did not collectively foreground these readerly behaviors in their FYC pedagogies: Only 50% of TAs definitively agreed that comprehending content was an explicit component of their FYC reading pedagogy, while slightly less, 47%, held the same attitude towards summarizing and paraphrasing. Such tepid responses could be attributed to the seemingly foundational role these readerly behaviors play in postsecondary literacy. As Adams (2016) has noted, "comprehension" may be associated with "remedial reading skills" (p. 81), so well-intentioned writing instructors might resist what they perceive to be reductive pedagogies.

In pointing to the tacit demands of paraphrasing and summarizing, Bazerman (1980) also highlights the value of these readerly behaviors, stating that:

> Paraphrase encourages precise understanding of individual terms and statements; the act of translating thoughts from one set of words to another makes the student consider exactly what was said and what was not […] Summary reveals the structure of arguments and the continuity of thought; the student must ferret out the important claims and those elements that unify the entire piece of writing. (p. 658)

Of course, asking students to assume a purely reportorial stance in their annotated bibliographies limits their agency to some degree. Instead, instructors can extend purely content-based annotated bibliographies by asking students to read critically or rhetorically, then exhibit those readerly behaviors within their entries for each source. In this way, annotated bibliographies—like any assigned genre—can be adapted to meet the demands of an upcoming writing assignment.

Facilitating Reading-Writing Connections by Analyzing "Moves"

Of the fourteen readerly behaviors that anchored my survey, reading like a writer received nearly universal support as a prominent feature of TAs' collective reading pedagogy at this FYC site: 96% of the 24 TAs definitively agreed that reading like a writer was important for students' success in FYC, and 92% definitively agreed that they explicitly addressed this readerly behavior in their teaching practices. By teaching students to read like a writer, instructors guide students towards "identify[ing] some of the choices [an] author made so that you can better understand how such choices might arise in [their] own writing" and "looking at the writerly techniques in the text in order to decide if [they] might want to adopt similar (or the same) techniques" (Bunn, 2011, p. 72).

"Moves" is a term that compositionists have used to characterize writers' choices and techniques. Harris (2006), for instance, outlines five broad moves that reflect how academics use texts when contributing to scholarly conversations: coming to terms, forwarding, countering, taking an approach, and revising. Graff and Birkenstein (2010) propose a more concrete application of moves in their popular *They Say, I Say* text—subtitled "The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing"—as a way of describing how scholars deploy signposts and transitions to guide readers through their work. By becoming more familiar with some of the common moves of academic discourse, students can gain greater fluency with more clearly distinguishing between different writers' perspectives on a given topic and

inserting their own voices into the conversation. In this way, Graff and Birkenstein teach moves so students can make reading-writing connections between what they read (i.e., other writers' moves) and what they write (i.e., similar moves they can make in their own writing).

In my teaching practices, I use moves more expansively as a way to invite readers to speculate about any possible writerly decision. Instead of exclusively reading for content, moves becomes a conceptual tool for reading for construction. When students begin to see what I call the "architexture" of texts, they can detect reading-writing connections, then apply those connections in their own written work.

I scaffold these ideas with a three-tiered activity. I return to an assigned text that we have already read, and I ask students to (1) name a move, (2) describe that move, and then (3) evaluate that move's effectiveness. Consider the "Hook and Sinker" as one hypothetical example, where an author uses the same move to open a piece (i.e., the "Hook") as they do to finish it (i.e., the "Sinker"). Another student could call this move the "Full Circle"; the name itself is immaterial. What matters is that students are gaining practice with analyzing texts through an architextural lens and adapting moves to enhance their writing development.

Yet another iteration of moves manifests from the following passage in which Downs (2010) articulates a highly sophisticated reading pedagogy. He does not cast this practice as teaching moves, per se, but he clearly leverages aspects of reading like a writer as a means of empowering students' ability to disentangle logical structures—an activity that also appears to cultivate two readerly stances, reading critically and reading rhetorically. Downs states:

> Discussions of claims, argument, and partiality usually start with the problem of objectivity and language. A class can proceed by picking words out of an article

and having students list synonyms, and then asking: 'Why did the author choose *this* word and not *that* one? How did it shape the text?' When students see language as inevitably selective and partial, it becomes possible to question objectivity, and from there to help students see scholarly texts as *more* and *less* objective but always claim-based, not fact-based. (p. 38, emphasis in original)

Based on their survey responses, the TAs who participated in this study would seem to embrace Downs' "claims, argument, and partiality" method. In fact, 78% and 88% of TAs, respectively, definitively agreed that reading critically and reading rhetorically were important for students' success. A slightly smaller percentage, however, explicitly addressed these two readerly behaviors in their teaching practices. Writing instructors in search of ways to integrate these readerly behaviors into their pedagogies might consider adapting Downs' approach.

Cultivating Process-Sensitive Readerly Metastances During Peer Review Workshops

A readerly metastance emerged from TAs' interviews: harnessing selective attention of textual criteria. This readerly behavior suggests that readers, depending on their particular purpose(s) for reading, can benefit by limiting their focus to particular textual features and textual qualities—a distinction Broad (2003) brings to conceptualizing assessment. Instructors can fine-tune this metastance by setting process-sensitive goals. For example, when facilitating peer review workshops, instructors can guide students' reading by asking them to prioritize higher-order concerns for early drafts. Striking such a process-sensitive balance may enhance the likelihood that students will embrace some of Writing Studies' most transformative threshold concepts for reading and writing development: writing is a social and rhetorical activity, all writers have more to learn, text is

an object outside of oneself that can be improved and developed, and revision is central to developing writing (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015).

Peer review workshops afford the prospect of cultivating, perhaps, two of the most prized readerly behaviors in FYC: revising and editing. In pursuit of these goals—before students begin reading and responding to each other's work—instructors can calibrate students' selective attention of textual criteria by, first, foregrounding particular textual features and qualities. Once they have been established, the class can practice those readerly behaviors together using a sample text. The results of this study affirm the perceived importance of this method. At least 75% of the 24 TAs, for instance, definitively agreed that analyzing samples, discussing a text with classmates, and using sources in papers were important for students' success in FYC and were explicitly addressed in their teaching practices. During peer review workshops, students' selective attention can be directed towards a range of other readerly behaviors: determining authorial intent, disentangling logical structures, evaluating points/claims, asking questions about a text/author, reverse outlining, and gauging source-assignment chemistry.

Conclusion

In surveys and follow-up interviews, 24 FYC TAs articulated the roles that reading played within their courses. Out of fourteen readerly behaviors—an all-encompassing term used to describe what readers think, feel, or do before, during, or after the act of reading—TAs perceived four to be especially important for students' success in FYC: comprehending content, reading rhetorically, reading like a writer, and using sources in papers. These findings position the act of reading as significant intellectual labor within FYC and, likely, across the disciplines. An array of additional readerly behaviors emerged from the qualitative data, suggesting that the act of reading plays a complex and nearly omnipresent role across instructors' reading pedagogies, thereby extending direct implications for students' writing development. By illuminating readerly behaviors, particularly through reader-response pedagogies, instructors can find ways to systematically scaffold and value students' tacit labor. Such efforts send two clear signals to students, faculty colleagues, and administrators: (1) the quality of students' reading matters and (2) good reading requires more than manual labor—it requires intellectual labor.

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Conceptions of Work in First-Year Writing:
A Case Study

Kelly Blewett

Indiana University East

ABSTRACT

This qualitative case study examines the work of the composition classroom through the perceptions of two first-year students majoring in Advanced Medical Imaging Technology and their teacher, a masters-level graduate teaching assistant specializing in creative writing. While the national conversation around first-year composition suggests its ideal work is to disrupt student misconceptions about writing, a close look at the perceptions of the students and their teacher suggests other concerns to be more salient, due in part to their own anticipated professional trajectories. The essay explores why the national conversation around first-year composition should more closely attend to local conditions as well as how a threshold concept framework can engender productive reflection about the work of the composition classroom for both researchers and practitioners.

In an interview with first-year student Cailey, which took place the Spring after she completed her freshman writing requirement, I shared a story about working through a writing problem in graduate school:

> I remember being in the middle of a paper and knowing I had to change its direction. Like, the paper was going one way, but I needed to get it to go another way, to this totally different location. It was like redirecting a ship. The ship was going one direction and I was desperately at the wheel, trying to turn it, but I couldn't figure out how. So, what I kept saying to my friends was, "I don't know how to turn the ship." [*pause*] Okay, so that's a story about a writing problem that I had. I'm wondering if you relate to that problem or have had writing problems?

Cailey responded, "I wouldn't say that I've encountered any problems like that. And I like not having writing problems!" We laughed, and she continued, "Most of my problems are external, like how to please the teacher, how to get the paper long enough, stuff like that. I don't really have any turning-the-ship kind of problems. I don't know how to explain it. You seem to love writing. But it's not as important to me as anatomy or something like that." For Cailey, writing problems were hard to imagine; for me, writing problems are an unavoidable part of writing.

In the exchange with Cailey, my difficulty managing an essay's unwieldy structure seems linked to threshold concepts in writing studies. Threshold concepts refer to disciplinary ideas that act as portals, opening new ways of thinking about the subject

(Meyer & Land, 2003). Reviewing *Naming What We Know* (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015), which gathers a provisional list of threshold concepts in the writing studies, I might connect my experience to concepts such as "Writing is Not Natural" (pp. 27-28) and "Revision is Central to Developing Writers" (pp. 66-67). I might notice that, as I struggled to "turn the ship" of my paper through painful reorganization of transition sentences, I was engaging with *troublesome knowledge,* defined by Jan H. F. Meyer and Ray Land (2006) as a kind of bottleneck that happens when old ways of engaging subject matter don't accommodate new circumstances. Troublesomeness was not desirable to Cailey. A member of a learning community in the College of Allied Health Sciences, Cailey regarded her real problems as "anatomy problems," which were, of course, connected to her anticipated career.

Yet, first-year composition (FYC) has been theorized as a space for students to encounter writing problems by composition researchers (Downs & Robertson, 2015; Yancey, Taczac & Robertson, 2014). For example, Doug Downs and Liane Robertson collaborated on a chapter in *Naming What We Know* (2015) that details connections between threshold concepts and FYC curriculum. They argue that one central goal of FYC is for "students to examine and ideally reconsider prior knowledge about writing" (p. 105) and go on to explain that "early knowledge of writing is likely to be built on incomplete and inaccurate ideas about writing" (p. 105). These misconceptions tend to fall into certain domains, including: epistemology, or how knowledge is made; writing processes, or how writing is produced; writing as human interaction, or rhetoric; and textuality, or how texts should be read in relation to other texts. As students engage in the intended work of the composition classroom, misconceptions will be challenged, perhaps even corrected. Or will they?

A close look at how two students and a teacher engaged in a first-year writing class suggests alternative perceptions of the salient work of the composition classroom. Tracing the discrepancy between curricular and lived FYC work is one way to measure the distance between composition theory and practice, as Lisa Ede (2004) points out. Ede's review of the literature on the relationship between theory and practice concludes that "the hegemony of theory leads to the suppression of difference as it manifested in practice" (p. 123). Continuing to examine the everyday composition classroom, then, remains significant. A kind of dialectical movement between theory and praxis enables the refinement of each.

Threshold concepts are useful lenses for this analysis. As R. Mark Hall, Mikael Romo, and Elizabeth Wardle (2018) have noted, "we know very little about what it looks like for students to grapple with threshold concepts in writing studies" (para. 1). Likewise, we know little about engagement with threshold concepts in first-year writing, especially when the students and teacher are not particularly devoted to writing studies. Threshold concepts, as Julie Timmerans (2010) has written, "capture the inherently developmental nature of the trajectories of learning" (p. 4). As my story with writing problems suggests, engaging with threshold concepts involves negotiating a liminal space and, perhaps, being transformed. But is getting students to engage in troublesomeness a reasonable expectation for first-year writing?

The purpose of this essay, then, is to discuss how the work envisioned by the curriculum and popular conceptual frameworks circulating about composition work align with the work experienced and valued by participants in the classroom. The following sections will introduce the research site and study participants and describe how they engaged the curriculum and subsequently evaluated the class. Finally, I'll discuss how

teachers and researchers might use threshold concepts to bring theory and practice closer together in their own contexts.

Introducing the Research Site

The data shared here were collected as part of a larger IRB-approved study that explored the feedback cycle in two face-to-face first-year writing classrooms at the University of Cincinnati, an urban research university whose composition program serves nearly six thousand students annually (Carter & Malek, 2016). This essay relies on data from the interview transcripts of two students, Cailey and Nicole, and their graduate instructor, Sarah (all pseudonyms).

Curriculum is detailed in the biannual in-house publication *Student Guide to English Composition 1001* (Malek, Carter, Shivener, & Blewett, 2016). Course goals indicate that following completion of English Composition 1001, students should be able to:

1. Understand the complexity of different kinds of arguments and issues.
2. Recognize that different writing situations call for different strategies.
3. Recognize that texts are in conversation with other texts.
4. Understand and demonstrate the ethical responsibility of the writer to explore multiple perspectives on a topic.
5. Understand and demonstrate the ethical responsibility of the writer to cite sources and report findings accurately. (p. 5)

What is evident is that textuality, writing processes, and epistemology inform most of these goals—the same domains targeted by Downs and Robertson (2015). Thus, one could argue that while not explicitly referenced, threshold concepts underlie this FYC course. In fact, Downs and Robertson argue that learning outcomes can reveal the "implicit presence" of threshold concepts in a course (p. 115). This is an important point because it connects the curriculum of the focal classroom to the larger scholarly conversation around FYC.

Introducing Students Cailey and Nicole

Cailey and Nicole took FYC the first semester of their freshman year. Both were white, cis-gendered, and able-bodied eighteen-year-old women from Ohio. As previously mentioned, both were part of the Advanced Medical Imaging Technology (AMIT) learning community. Participation in learning communities is a required element of any major in the College of Allied Health Sciences and has been since 2008 (K. Metzer, personal correspondence, July 1, 2018).

When Nicole was asked about how she regarded herself as a student, she responded: "I'd consider myself a serious student, because I know what my long-term goal is and I know that I need to stay focused." Her long-term goal, to be a non-invasive cardiologist, informs her immediate perception of herself as a student. Similarly, Cailey indicated that she wanted to be in the medical field and that everything else, which I take to include her non-major courses, was "just what needed to be done" to get there.

For both students, primary social connections at the university were established through their learning community, due in part to proximity. "We have the exact same schedule," Nicole said. By the end of the term, the women she sat near in composition "ended up being, like, my best friends." Such social connections are meaningful not just for those in the group but also for university administrators, who have found that participation in a learning community improves retention and overall college satisfaction (ASHE-ERIC, 1999; Bonet & Walters, 2016; Tinto, 1999; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). In addition to taking classes together, students enroll in a one-credit course titled "Success Skills in Health Sciences," which is peer-led by a sophomore in the major and

introduces students to a senior professor in the department. Cailey perceived the primary work of the success skills to be social cohesion: "It was just an easy class . . . just to get to know our future professor, all the people in my major, it was basically just to get closer to them."

From the perspective of writing studies, a learning community enculturates students into what John Swales (1990) has called a discourse community. It includes a mix of novices and experts, curriculum tied to advancement within the community, both informal and formal feedback mechanisms, and so forth. As Paul Prior (1997) has pointed out, students' literate trajectories are "multiple," "laminated" and "fundamentally heterogenous" (p. 20). Nonetheless, the establishment of pre-professional learning communities are likely impacting the reception of composition curriculum, as well as other general education classes, in ways that merit further investigation.

Similar investigations have been undertaken in the past. Russel Durst (1999) argued that teachers and students in composition were on a "collision course" (p. 2). While most first-year composition students were "career-oriented pragmatists" who would prefer to "learn a way of writing that is simple, quick, and efficient" (p. 2), teachers wished to "complicate rather than simplify students' lives" by stressing "much more complex and demanding notions of critical literacy" (p. 3). Although the cultural studies-based curriculum popular during the nineties has shifted, the tensions highlighted by Durst are, I argue, only increased when students engage general education courses with groups of career-oriented peers. Ray Land (2016) has recently made a similar point, arguing that increasingly "consumerist" minded students will resist the "pedagogies of uncertainty" represented by threshold concepts, which he sees as offering a "counter-discourse" to the pedagogies which are more "formulaic and comfortable" (p. 12).

In all, then, Cailey and Nicole represent a growing segment of the student body both nationally and locally. Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (2018) indicates that majors in Health Sciences increased by about 100% over the last eight years, which is higher than most other majors in terms of growth. At the local level, enrollment in the College of Allied Health Sciences has been steadily increasing over the last ten years, with around 240 undergraduate students in 2016 (K. Metzer, personal correspondence, July 1, 2018). Just as Cailey and Nicole's undergraduate efforts were funneled toward distant visions of themselves as professionals in the field of AMIT, so also their instructor was focused on her own career trajectory in the field of creative writing.

Introducing Graduate Assistant Sarah

Sarah, a second-year master's student studying creative writing, was teaching FYC for the third time in the Fall of 2016. She preferred to draw from her creative writing background when possible, especially when offering feedback:

> I've had a lot of practice responding to peers' work in workshops. It translates [to composition] mostly pretty well. So I annotate [students' writing] as I go and read with a pen in my hand and then I will just write a summation of what I did. Since composition students could be really easily overwhelmed, I give a short summation, like "do these two things and then we'll talk," and I think that goes a little easier.

Although she enjoyed teaching composition, she had a hard time understanding the curriculum that she inherited, noting "I feel like when I walk into the classroom, I am also learning what composition is at the same time that my students are because I'm such a new teacher." In order to incorporate creative writing into the composition classroom, she

added an assignment to FYC course titled "The Rhetoric of Creative Writing," which scaffolded toward the first major essay. She began the term unaware that she was teaching students in an AMIT learning community.

In all, Sarah was a type of teacher that has often been studied in composition programs (Bishop, 1990; Ebest, 2005; Estrem & Reid, 2012; Rankin, 1994; Reid, Estrem & Belchier, 2012; Restaino, 2012). While she acknowledged a lack of connection with the field of composition studies, that is not unusual. Further, her conception of the course resonated with the course goals. She said:

> One of the things I try to press on my students because I feel it so strongly is . . . that composition is relevant, and that the first draft is never the final draft. I also try to connect the course to real-world events . . . I'm trying to make them see that composition isn't something you do for one semester and then you stop. I think the most important thing is for students to realize they use rhetoric and rhetorical analysis every day of their lives and that they already had these skills before they got into the classroom.

Sarah perceived communication as rhetorical, writing as an iterative process, and composition as having broad relevance for other writing situations. While Sarah's vision for the course connected to the course goals—and, one might extrapolate, to threshold concepts—she had difficulty translating the curriculum in the classroom.

The Ups and Downs of Engaging the Curriculum

The first two times Sarah taught the course, she didn't fully understand what a rhetorical analysis was, and therefore she graded the essays leniently. When Cailey and Nicole were in her class, however, she introduced the aforementioned "Rhetoric of Creative Writing" assignment, which asked

students to apply rhetorical appeals to a peer-authored commercial script before analyzing a professionally produced commercial. Sarah found the resulting analysis drafts to be "the best batch" she'd seen. As her confidence grew, she found herself holding the students to a higher standard. She elaborated:

> In the past I've been, I still think I am, a pretty easy grader. In the past I was an extra easy grader I think, where some of these students that got B's would get A's if they had me last year. Because I'm more confident in my teaching and I'm more confident that they have actually received what I have been trying to convey, I'm grading a little bit harsher I think. Before I was like, "Well it's not your fault. Here's a B when you deserve a C," or something. I thought it was a reflection of me. Now I don't think that as much.

After students turned drafts, they conferenced with Sarah about their work. From my perspective, these conferences marked a particularly effective moment in the term.

Sarah began each 20-minute conference by asking if there was anything the student wanted to talk about. Then she read the student's paper and offered immediate feedback. Cailey and Nicole were impressed. Cailey said: "I'm amazed at how fast she went through this [draft]. She got a lot [of feedback] in there. She had a lot of comments, in the two seconds that she read it. I was like, 'oh, okay.' A little shocked." She felt buoyed by Sarah's comments on her paper, particularly when Sarah expressed what she liked about Cailey's work. "I can see her response in her face," she said. "She got super excited about it . . . and I was going with her. She made me pumped up. She kept checking [parts she liked], and I was like 'You keep checking, I like that.'" Nicole, who'd had difficulty during the writing process, also appreciated the conference. "I really enjoyed that she met with us individually," she said. "I think I hear more voice-to-voice than I do [with written feedback] just on my paper. She

complimented me on some things, which I thought was really cool. She helped me fix things. She encouraged me to move things to different spots." In these exchanges, Cailey and Nicole watched their writing impact a reader. Through these conferences, then, Sarah strongly reinforced the conception of writing as human interaction.

When the units shifted to the research paper, however, Sarah felt less certain. In a sense, she felt the genre was easy to teach because, unlike a rhetorical analysis, she'd written a research paper before. However, she wasn't sure exactly how to implement the scaffolding steps, including the proposal. "I don't grade the proposal in the way I feel I should," she said. "I'm just sort of checking it off, not grading it in a nuanced way." She elaborated on her approach to the proposal:

> The proposal is sort of me looking at their stuff and being like, "looks good." Like, "You're actually writing an argument. Have a nice day." Versus something that I spend a lot of time writing on or giving back to them. It's like a check-in basically before they start writing because I find sometimes they're not actually arguing anything. They're just sort of exploring an issue, which is not the kind of paper they're meant to be writing.

To efficiently move through the line of students, Sarah would confirm that the students had a debatable topic, that they had identified their side, that they'd found at least five relevant resources, and that they knew at least one counter-argument.

Sarah's implementation of the assignment undercuts its design, which emphasizes that research topics are not simply two-sided issues. Sarah's students, however, followed her lead. In fact, Cailey and Nicole decided to write about the same topic, the impact of social media on relationships of college students, and both argued for the same broad position: that students should put down their phones. Both picked the topic because they felt it would be "easy." Both found sources and developed similar theses. After their respective proposal conferences, both received a check. Nicole said:

> Obviously, I decided that I was against social media in interpersonal relationships. I think it breaks the relationships. [I found] my three main points. Then, luckily, my last main point was found in one of the articles. It was that social media engages in communication with other people across space and time. I decided that was going to be my counterargument. I really lucked out because I had three points for my side and then luckily I had one thing that could be my counterargument. That just happened like that, I didn't try to find a counterargument at all.

Nicole is offering an account of slotting research into paragraphs to usher the paper to tidy completion. She later said that she planned to "dedicate an entire page" to each main point "consuming roughly three pages total." When asked how she planned to write the paper, she said, "I feel like I'm going to include too many quotes and not describe them and talk about them as much. I just have to remind myself to talk about them in between the quotes." In essence, her anticipated drafting process was akin to *patchwriting,* a compositional approach that involves pasting together quotations and that can be vulnerable to plagiarism (Howard, 1995).

This is the part of the class where I see negative misconceptions about writing being reinforced. Nicole, as evidenced through her interview comments, perceived writing as an act of systematic organization of information, into which her own angle of vision was irrelevant. Neither student was deeply invested in the project. When I met with Cailey the following semester, she couldn't remember her topic. Her forgetfulness contrasted sharply with our first interview, during which she easily recalled writing assignments from high school. The idea

writing would involve troublesomeness did not emerge, at least not in our interviews. Instead, students sought to meet the assignment goals as painlessly as possible, seeking what I regard as "pedagogies of certainty" (Land, 2016).

When interviewed about their actual social media practices, both indicated that their own engagement with social media was more complex than their research essays would have suggested. Cailey said she subscribed to five social media accounts, each for particular reasons, and Nicole indicated that she used many so-called social media platforms for not terribly social purposes. For instance, she used Pinterest to find recipes, not to make connections; another social media site, Instagram, provided a way that she and her roommates kept in touch, called a "streak." In this instance, social media benefited face-to-face friendships. Neither Nicole nor Cailey felt that they would change the way they engaged social media as a result of exploring the topic for the research essay, or that their personal experiences were relevant to their essays.

What kinds of problematic misconceptions of writing are being confirmed here? First, there's an impoverished understanding of writing as a way of creating new knowledge. Rather than writing papers that reflected their own grounded understandings of online sociality, Cailey and Nicole reported the research of authorities. Second, their processes for composing were generally linear, driven by quotations from the sources more than their own syntheses. And, ultimately, they were unchanged by engaging in the assignment. In the remaining weeks, their engagement with composition became more sporadic, with both focusing more heavily on their major-related courses. Other members of the AMIT learning community reinforced these attitudes. Cailey and a friend enjoyed what they dubbed "The Procrastinator's Lunch" while Nicole and her friends made videos for their composition class's final assignment in a single day.

After the term ended, Cailey and Nicole expressed positive feelings about FYC. They particularly enjoyed having their writing read by Sarah. Both said they would take a course from her again. Yet neither Cailey nor Nicole felt that there was a link between the writing they produced for FYC and their other courses. "I'm not going to write a rhetorical analysis in a science class," said Cailey.

Sarah was also distracted throughout the final third of the semester, as she was submitting application for MFA programs and completing three seminar papers for her own classes. As she reflected on her teaching, Sarah felt conflicted. On the one hand, she felt that writing produced for FYC shouldn't be formulaic. On the other hand, she couldn't seem to find a way to assess the writing that didn't rely on formulas. She was taken aback when a student wrote in his final reflection that he'd learned that writing didn't require much individual creativity. "If he learned that, then I failed him," she said. The following semester, when we met for our final interview, she shared that she was shifting the way she taught the research essay, particularly the proposal. She was taking more time with the drafts. She regarded the previous term's class as the best she'd taught yet. She thought her current class might turn out to be even better.

Alternative Conception of Work in the Composition Classroom

Despite what I, as an outside researcher, perceived as the problems with the implementation of the research unit, the students and the teacher regarded this class as a success. It might be tempting to dismiss their evaluations of the course, particularly the student evaluations. But, of course, student evaluations are significant at a local level despite persistent concerns about their biases. By all external markers, then, this was a successful course. If the writing partly

sidestepped the intended work of the composition class, why did the students and teacher regard the course so highly?

One reason, I contend, is that the teacher had an alternative idea of the work of the composition classroom. As Durst (1999) points out, whatever the approved curriculum says, "the people teaching writing are individuals with their own understandings about the nature of writing . . . and their own styles of interacting with students" (p. 18). These goals did not have as much to do with writing as with the kind of classroom Sarah wanted to establish. She explained:

> I dress a little bit more casually, not super casually, but I dress more casually. . . . I do toe the line to be an approachable presence as opposed to an authoritative presence. . . . They're entering a world of scholarship where their opinions and voices matter and they're not expected to just digest and return. It's hard though, whenever we meet and they still say, "what do you want?" But I hope that by making my approach different than teachers in the past, [I communicate] "this is for you, not for me."

Sarah was attentive to the way she dressed, talked, moved in the class, and presented her syllabus. These performances, she hoped, added up to someone who was distinct from high school teachers, and who was interested in students authentically engaging the course material.

These goals were partially achieved. Students did see her as someone who was fundamentally like them. "She talks like us," said Nicole. "She feels older, but not that much older," said Cailey. Both felt that Sarah was, in fact, more interested in their ideas than their high school teachers had been. They responded to her persona. Put differently, Sarah successfully deployed grounding behaviors to build rapport with her students, as is common in both instructional and consumerist settings (Webb & Barrett, 2014). Sarah's goal of using grounding

behaviors was not met in its second part, however, in that she wanted students to do more than to "digest and return" scholarly sources. In fact, as discussed, Cailey and Nicole did just that.

If the curriculum's intended work was to correct commonly held misconceptions about writing, the teacher and students seemed to offer a different conception of the work: to connect with each other, to meet each other's informal expectations for writing, and to establish rapport that would facilitate productive interaction. College students, as work from psychology underscores, "are attuned to the relationships they have with their professors" and ratings of "instructional effectiveness reliably identify rapport as an important and discrete dimension of college teaching" (Meyers, 2010, p. 205). I suspect that because these unstated relational goals were met, the students and teacher regarded the class as a success, even though certain elements of the class fell short of the goals of the formal curriculum.

Discussion

Classroom practices are often privatized, perhaps because, as Ede (2004) has noted, "teaching has an in-your-face immediacy that is simultaneously powerful and difficult to capture" (p. 148). For teachers, Ede writes, the good lies "primarily in interpersonal relationships," while for scholars the good lies in "textual objects" (p. 149). It might be tempting to say that Sarah's goals for relational connection and the curriculum's goals for student learning have little to say to each other, or that Sarah's goals establishing a productive classroom environment makes way for the curriculum's goals to be achieved. Yet, that's not how Sarah experienced the classroom. Teaching all happened at once for her; she figured out the curriculum as she established rapport with the students. Students, too, perceived the classroom relationships as intertwined with their

learning. Sarah herself was also changing. While more formal studies of graduate teaching assistants have found little changes between the first and third year of teaching (Reid, Estrem, & Belcheir, 2012), my interviews with Sarah and her students enables me to articulate several ways Sarah was growing as a teacher:

- She was getting clearer on what she wants from the assignments, such as the rhetorical analysis.
- She was adding scaffolding steps that help make her expectations clearer to students, such as the Rhetoric for Creative Writing assignment.
- She was experimenting with when to hold conferences for maximum positive effect.

I notice that many of the positive ways Sarah was growing as a teacher were linked to her ability to connect the curriculum of FYC to her own professional interests in creative writing, not to her understanding of threshold concepts in writing studies.

Nonetheless, the reinforcement of commonly held misconceptions about writing was disappointing. As a researcher I found myself wondering, "What went wrong here?" Perhaps Sarah's inexperience with the curriculum was a problem. Other teachers, with the benefit of more experience, added scaffolding steps that required students to view their controversial issue from multiple sides. Or perhaps her lack of investment was a problem, although Sarah seems like an unusually invested teacher. She participated in the study, for instance, in order to improve her practice.

On the other hand, perhaps the problems relate more to the shifting expectations of Sarah's students. The presence of learning communities such as AMIT creates thicker social bonds and earlier-established professional identities. Examining how this phenomenon impacts FYC makes sense. In the case of this course, it seems clear that

composition papers were competing with major-related tests for students' time.

In fact, both the teacher and the students were more focused on activities linked to their own professional trajectories than the writing classroom—for Sarah, applying to MFA programs, for the students, passing their final exams. These competing interests may have led to a kind of mutually agreed upon disengagement from the course, something George D. Kuh (2003), using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement, argues is increasingly common in higher education.

As I look back to the question with which I opened this study—Did Cailey have a writing problem?—I have to admit that I still don't know. As long as Cailey perceives writing problems to lie primarily in the domain of those who "love writing," perhaps she will opt out of the kind of question-seeking approach that would enable meaningful engagement with writing problems as I described them. Or perhaps Cailey's desire to please the teacher does represent a kind of writing problem. As she seeks to meet a concrete reader's expectations for a text, Cailey is doing rhetorical work linked to threshold concepts, even though she doesn't recognize it as such. While I cannot offer a definitive answer to that question, I do think asking the question itself offers a useful way to think about what is going on in FYC. As Timmermans (2010) has indicated of threshold concepts, they are best used to consider the developmental aspect of learning; that is, to pose questions about what it is teachers want students to be learning and to chart the journeys students take as they move through that process. This is work for the long-haul and, as this case study demonstrates, it sits somewhat uneasily in a first-year general education course.

Conclusion

Who gets to define and evaluate the work of

the composition classroom? Researchers and curriculum designers and writing program administrators? Expert teachers or novice teachers or students themselves? Though such a question may seem slippery and difficult, participants in the project of first-year composition from any location must answer the questions "What are we supposed to be doing here?" and "How do we know if we're doing it well?" While we already know that learning to teach, like learning to write, is a developmental process and that Sarah will continue to change her approaches to teaching, I argue that considering the interconnections between the curricular and lived work of FYC is useful. Perhaps Sarah would be aided in her immediate work of solving teaching problems via threshold concepts, especially her desire to discuss why writing formulas and creativity go together, and perhaps researchers would be pressed into addressing different questions related to the conceptual frameworks that currently inform conversations about FYC.

Both teaching and researching in rhetoric and composition require renewal, as well as continual reflection. In her study of beginning writing teachers, Wendy Bishop (1990) writes,

> What becomes clear is that "theory" or "orientation" or "attitude" means one thing to the theorist who is positing an "ideal" model . . . And it means another thing entirely to the practicing teacher who filters a theory through his or her reality and identity. (p. 139)

One might argue that the actual work of the composition classroom is being more carefully attended by to Sarah than by researchers who study declarative knowledge about writing. Yet researching composition, too, is a practice, as Ede (2004) points out. A danger of participating in the writing studies research community is that our growing body of research and conceptual frameworks is disconnected from the daily classroom work of teachers and students. In the face of these kinds of disciplinary divides, it is incumbent

on the research community to be attentive to everyday classrooms of teachers from a variety of positions in the field.

Threshold concepts offer a way to frame conversations about writing that matter with people situated differently in the composition discipline. Their emphasis on student learning, particularly the developmental trajectories students take as they move from novice to experts in disciplinary fields, opens the door for renewed investigation into the work of FYC. With their emphasis on troublesomeness and disruption, threshold concepts might not seem like an appealing addition to first-year writing. In fact, though, they offer a framework for communicating knowledge about writing that is broadly relevant to students and can foster productive reflection for both teachers and researchers. Further, their relationship with pedagogies of uncertainty, as Land has put it (2016), makes them especially relevant for investigating the particular dynamics of FYC today. If in many classrooms, as in the one featured here, teachers and students seem more interested in pedagogies of certainty than uncertainty, it may be that researchers should return to the threshold concept literature to ask how generalized thresholds for first-year courses can lead to the kind of productive troublesomeness that the thresholds promise. This research is increasingly relevant to the modern university, where there is increased pressure to treat students as consumers and teachers as solicitous providers—roles that developed into unexamined normalcy and should be disrupted in the interest of keeping more engaged and humanistic work central to the composition classroom. Examining composition classrooms through the lenses of threshold concepts, then, offers an opportunity to reflect on Composition with a capital C which, as Bruce Horner (2000) has written, designates a "historically situated institution, activity, and object of that activity" whose subject entails "the continual negotiation and value of the meaning of work

of writing, understood not simply as an
activity nor as a product but as a material and
social practice" (p. 255).

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Reconceptualizing the Work of Assessment: Toward a Culture of Inquiry

Sonya L. Armstrong

Texas State University

Concetta A. Williams

Chicago State University

ABSTRACT

This article is an examination of the 'not-so-new' in developmental reading, including ages-old critiques of placement-testing processes in college reading contexts. Also included are solutions-oriented calls for a shift in how we in the field conceptualize reading assessment toward something much more than just placement testing. We argue, too, for a renewed focus on assessment for the purpose of inquiry. This renewed focus entails harnessing our professional curiosities toward asking questions about our students, their experiences and backgrounds, their needs, their goals, and the most effective ways to serve them. Toward such a reconceptualization of assessment, we take inspiration from Michele Simpson and Sherrie Nist's foundational piece, published in 1992, "Toward Defining a Comprehensive Assessment Model for College Reading." We have work to do in the field, particularly with how we think about assessment and evaluation, and we believe that moving toward a culture of inquiry will allow a productive space for this work to be initiated.

Within the context of current education reform efforts focused on college readiness, the need for developmental education coursework is being questioned. Finger-pointing debates abound, asking who is responsible for the supports needed to assist beginning college students deemed unready for the rigors of college. Assessment is at the heart of many of these debates and, in particular, placement testing is a major issue (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015; Belfield & Crosta, 2012; Fields & Parsad, 2012; Hughes & Scott-Clayton, 2011; Rodriguez, Bowden, Scott-Clayton, & Belfield, 2014). Indeed, both two- and four-year institutions continue to struggle to find ways to best place students in the scenario that will most likely lead to academic success.

According to Barnett and Reddy (2017), "an accurate placement mechanism will direct students who are college-ready into college-level coursework, while referring students who are academically underprepared to developmental coursework" (p. 3). In other words, the way placement testing is currently enacted limits its purpose to a tool for sorting

students into two categories: college-ready or not college-ready. A major complicating factor is that no single or universal definition of "college-ready" exists, making a simple or obvious approach to placement protocol unlikely (Flippo, Armstrong, & Schumm, 2018).

This discussion is particularly relevant in the case of college/developmental reading, an area currently struggling with continued practical improvements, despite major policy-driven reductions (Stahl & Armstrong, 2018). These concerns about placement testing are not new. In fact, although they are presently coming from those outside the field, they have historically come from experts within the field of college reading (Flippo & Schumm, 2009; Maxwell, 1997; Simpson & Nist, 1992). Indeed, as Simpson and Nist (1992) have lamented, "college reading programs have been slow or reluctant to examine traditional assessment methods" (p. 452). Their solution was a "comprehensive assessment model for college reading," which was a philosophically matched, multiple-measures, principled approach that drew upon sound assessment concepts (p. 452). Simpson and Nist did not stop at placement testing, but instead moved beyond toward a much broader understanding of "multidimensional" assessment, which yielded information to "be viewed as an integral part of the instructional process that informs and empowers students and instructors" (p. 453).

With these and other of the field's past efforts in mind, we take a critical perspective on current issues related to reading assessment in college, especially placement testing. Therefore, in this article, our aim is to present a brief overview of some of the existing arguments regarding developmental reading placement and assessment, and then move into a solutions-oriented discussion that focuses on the intersections between philosophy underlying developmental education and what is known about assessment in reading. In addition, we propose a rethinking of the purpose of assessment, including placement testing. We call instead for a culture of inquiry that entails using assessment as a means of supporting students' academic success through a combination of interventions that include academic and social supports. Because we are literacy professionals, not assessment generalists, our positionality will be of an exclusively literacy stance even though we recognize that many current conversations encompass all discipline/subject areas associated with developmental education. We begin with an overview of the present critiques of typical placement processes in order to situate our argument; however, our goal is to avoid any in-depth rehashing of these arguments because we feel this has been sufficiently published and discussed. Instead, our primary goal in this article is to turn attention toward thinking about solutions.

Criticisms of Placement Processes

Placement testing practices have been widely criticized for years, from field experts and external entities alike. Although concerns abound, in general the issues tend to involve three major critiques: an overreliance on single-measure test protocols, an exclusive focus on cognitive aspects, and a mismatched definition of reading. In the following sections, we introduce briefly each one of these critiques in turn, addressing both current and past discussions. Following this, we extend these three critiques to include our own major concern about the present state of college reading placement testing.

Critique 1: Overreliance on Single-Measure Protocols

With regard to placement testing for college reading, single-measure protocols remain the predominant approach. According to Fields and Parsad (2012), as recently as 2011, only 13% of institutions were using anything other than just a single reading

measure to place students. Although research suggests that a high school grade point average provides useful information for placement decisions and should be used as an additional measure, many colleges and universities still use a single standardized testing method for placing students (Belfield & Crosta, 2012; Burdman, 2012; Guha, Wagner, Darling-Hammond, Taylor, & Curtis, 2018; Hodara, Jaggars, & Karp, 2012; Noble & Sawyer, 2004). This critique is certainly not new, as field experts have noted the problems with using a single-measure placement protocol for reading for years (Maxwell, 1997; Simpson, Stahl, & Francis, 2004).

Critique 2: Exclusive Focus on Cognitive Aspects

It really should come as no surprise that calls from within the field of developmental education have emphasized the need for affective or non-cognitive influences (Bliss, 2001; Boylan, 2009; Maxwell, 1979; Roueche & Kirk, 1973; Saxon, Levine-Brown, & Boylan, 2008). Specific to reading, research across grade levels has identified affective characteristics as important correlates of reading (Guthrie, Klauda, & Ho, 2013; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Henk, Marinak, & Melnik, 2012; O'Brien & Dillon, 2008). More recent higher education research reveals that this need is especially important for underrepresented groups; for instance, in Ramsey's (2008) work with Gates Millennium Scholars, non-cognitive measures have shown promise in regard to student outcomes and in improving access and success. Non-cognitive influences include self-directed effort, ability to build and maintain healthy social relationships, and judgment and decision-making abilities (Duckworth & Yeager, 2015).

Critique 3: Mismatched Definition of Reading

In general, reading is difficult to define. For example, Afflerbach, Pearson, and Paris (2008) stated, "at different historical times,

reading has been defined by referring to specific skills such as reading the Bible, understanding, or answering questions about a text" (p. 347). Specific to postsecondary reading placement, a serious challenge is the lack of a consistent and concise definition of the very construct that standardized instruments purport to measure: reading comprehension. Beyond that, an additional problem of content validity arises when definitions of reading implicit in these instruments are not aligned with the way reading is enacted in college courses.

The College Board's description of what the ACCUPLACER™ aims to do serves here as an exemplar:

> Assesses the test-taker's ability to derive meaning from a range of texts and to determine   the meaning of words and phrases in short and extended contexts. Passages on the test cover a range of content areas, writing modes, and complexities. (College Board, 2018)

Based on this description of ACCUPLACER™, reading can be understood as text-bound. Missing is the students' opportunity to support their understanding of the text, which might reveal a rather sophisticated level of reasoning, comprehension, and vocabulary use—all skills that are beneficial and expected in a post-secondary setting (Bosley, 2016; Petrosky, 1982). Furthermore, in most college classes, students will rarely be expected to arrive at a single meaning of a text. Instead, multiple interpretations and critical reading, involving analysis and synthesis, are more commonly expected and encouraged.

In short, there is a mismatch between definitions of reading in practice and those implicit in testing instruments; a review of most postsecondary-specific reading test descriptions will likely yield such a realization (Flippo, Armstrong, & Schumm, 2018; Flippo & Schumm, 2009). The mismatching of definitions of reading that are implicit within many test instruments versus those enacted in

practice creates a wedge between the instruments used and how professionals match students with the best supports to help them succeed.

Critique 4: Beyond the Big Three

In addition to the three recurring critiques above, we present our own concern with the current state of placement testing for college reading, a concern not included in the present debates. Namely, placement testing exists presently as an entity completely separate from most college/developmental reading curriculum and instruction. Indeed, in many cases, assessment is not only conceptually divorced from instruction, but also geographically as well, as placement instruments are often housed in a testing center elsewhere on campus. In many cases, faculty are unable to access placement test results, which could give faculty a better understanding of students' strengths and needs for instruction. In other words, as Simpson and Nist (1992) described it, assessment in college reading has taken on a role of being "only an accountability issue—a means to an end—with the end being an improved score on a standardized reading test" (p. 452). However, as field professionals, we understand that "the end product of assessment in the content classroom, or any classroom for that matter, should be instructional decision making" (Bean, Readence, & Dunkerly-Bean, 2017, p. 96). Unfortunately, current placement testing procedures at the college level do not speak to instructional areas.

A Conceptual and Philosophical Shift

In sum, the first three critiques introduced in the previous section are widely known at this point, and our purpose in this article is not to merely catalogue the problems with placement testing. However, as evidenced by field experts' concerns across the years about these very same issues, these are not new issues. Indeed, these issues have been on the radar of developmental education and college reading scholars for years. The question is why hasn't there been movement toward solutions in practice? One way of responding may be as simple as tradition.

It seems likely that higher education—at least in areas related to college/developmental reading—may have adopted what some scholars refer to negatively as either a culture of testing or a culture of assessment. According to Fuller (2013), the latter term was "popularly theorized by noted assessment scholar, Trudy Banta (2002)" (p. 20). As Fuller relays, "a culture of assessment is the primary and often unexplored system undergirding assessment practice on a campus" (p. 20). Others have distinguished assessment culture from testing culture (Birenbaum, 2016). Indeed, an exhaustive review will reveal that there are multiple interpretations and usages of these and other related terms. However, the fundamental problems inherent are similar. When testing becomes engrained in an educational system, it becomes part of the culture that is simply accepted, not questioned, and is therefore legitimized. Calling on reproduction theorists such as Bourdieu, for instance, Moses and Nanna (2007) explained that:

> The legitimizing forces of expert approval and validation, societal acceptance, institutionalized testing policies, as well as the testing mechanisms themselves, work together within a culture to perpetuate existing symbolic connections between testing and knowledge in ways that are neither justified nor sound. Testing, once accepted within a culture, is reproduced as a legitimate and meaningful representation like any other culturally specific tradition. (p. 64)

Certainly, there have been attempts to reframe this approach to assessment, regardless of the term applied: Eisgruber (2012) talked about a "culture of engagement," for example. Despite pushback from theoreticians,

scholars, and researchers outside the field of developmental education, highly questionable placement testing practices and highly suspect and limiting conceptualizations about testing persist—stubbornly. It is generally a given that professionals from instructors and advisers to testing center managers and college administrators all acknowledge the problems with how college students are assessed for reading, yet few changes are made in practice. It seems that the field is trapped in a culture of testing that translates to a culture of sorting. We argue that, in part, this is because the field is so focused on placement testing as the primary need—an activity that must happen quickly, inexpensively, and for a great number of students each year.

Like Simpson and Nist (1992) and others who have pushed for solutions in the past, however, we aim toward a reconceptualization of the work of assessment related to college/developmental reading. Our focus on the work of assessment is deliberate, as it is clear that years and years of theorizing best practices have not yielded the kind of widespread change so badly needed. Instead, we suggest moving toward a culture of inquiry—a way of conceiving of assessment for college/developmental reading that is grounded in the guiding philosophies of developmental education, our professional and scholarly understanding of what reading is and is not, and our existing knowledge base about reading assessment. Such a shift in culture would necessarily entail harnessing our professional curiosities toward asking questions about our students, their experiences and backgrounds, their needs, their goals, and, the most effective ways to serve them. In other words, rather than simply positioning students into the dichotomous categorization of "college-ready" or "not college-ready," genuine questions—why? how? for how long? to what end? with what goals?—must be asked.

What we are proposing is not new. We are calling for a philosophical reconceptualization toward a comprehensive assessment and evaluation model that includes but is not limited to placement testing. We advocate for seeking to understand the whole learner, seeking to bridge assessment with curriculum and instruction, and seeking to inform a continued evaluation protocol. We urge professionals to be curious about where students are in their literacy learning, where they need to be, what types of supports are most appropriate, and how to ensure they have benefitted from those supports. In short, we encourage inquiry.

Toward a Culture of Inquiry in College Reading

We call upon Simpson and Nist (1992) to inform our suggested conceptual and philosophical shift. Although neither our recommendations—nor theirs—are exclusively tied to the big three critiques of current placement testing practices, we begin there. First, Simpson and Nist recognized the problem of a single-measure placement but extended it to acknowledge that one test score is often used "not only to place and diagnose incoming students but also to evaluate program effectiveness" (p. 452). Second, they acknowledged the need for a multiple-measures approach to account for "both affective and cognitive domains" (p. 455). And, third, they noted the critical need in a comprehensive model for a match to exist "between the philosophical base, the short- and long-term goals of the reading program, and the assessment instruments used" (p. 453). Their recommendations, still appropriate more than 25 years later, were driven by a need to understand, inform, and evaluate—not simply to categorize, label, and register students. In defining assessment to extend the operational definition beyond merely placement testing, and toward something far

more comprehensive, they drew upon Cross and Paris's (1987) triad of assessment purposes: sorting, diagnosing, and evaluating. Furthermore, they contended that these data be used not only to assess students, but also to inform instruction.

Although Simpson and Nist (1992) shared a specific working model in practice at that time at the University of Georgia, we do not advocate for any single, specific working model. Rather, we argue for a broader-level change that includes field-wide reconceptualization and reconsideration of the philosophies behind what college/developmental reading professionals do—including those that are merely traditions, with no real pedagogical rationale behind them. We believe that this shift in thinking—toward a culture of inquiry—is what is needed to initiate the kinds of conversations that can bring forth meaningful change in assessment.

Toward this end, in the next three sections, we contemplate the possibility for a culture of inquiry in the field. This possibility could become reality if the field as a whole stops relying exclusively on others, including corporate test publishers and state or institutional mandates, to define "college ready" for reading. Instead, the field must draw upon its own collective expertise. Specifically, we call upon expertise informed by the philosophical roots of developmental education, a theory- and experience-driven understanding of what reading is or is not, and key principles of reading assessment. All of this is situated in our call for a conceptual shift toward a culture of inquiry. In the next three sections, we offer resources to exemplify how we as a field might allow these three areas of extant knowledge in the field to guide thinking.

Drawing on Developmental Education Philosophies

Those of us in the field of developmental education tend to identify ourselves as being focused on the whole learner. Indeed, the roots of developmental education are in cognitive and developmental psychology and learning theory (Arendale, 2007; Boylan & Saxon, 1998; Maxwell, 1997; Spann & McCrimmon, 1998), and are learner-centered in nature. As Boylan and Saxon (1998) noted:

> The term 'developmental education' reflects a dramatic expansion in our knowledge of human growth and development in the 1960s and 1970s. As a result, we began to understand that poor academic performance involved far more complex factors than a student's being unable to solve for x in an algebraic equation or write a complete sentence using proper grammar. (p. 7)

Similarly, Maxwell (1997) commented on the field's "commitment to educate disadvantaged and ethnic groups that are underrepresented in academe" (p. 25). Especially given the philosophical roots of developmental education to aim for equity in access to college, concerns about the current approach to placement testing come to light, as Ramsey (2008) has noted: "traditional assessment methods overlook the challenges many students face in gaining access to college, thus perpetuating the cycle of inequality" (p. 12). Reimagining placement testing as more than a means of sorting students into and out of developmental education courses opens doors of opportunity for students to benefit from needed supports. At its core, then, this is an issue of access.

One specific suggestion for college/developmental reading professionals is to begin by drawing upon the student-centered philosophies and equity-focused and access-oriented aims of developmental education's rich history in reconceptualizing an assessment approach. Many resources exist within the field that can inform in this area (see edited volumes by Boylan & Bonham, 2014; Higbee, Lundell, & Arendale, 2005; Lundell & Higbee, 2001, 2002). This suggestion has implications for the field as a

whole, including curriculum and instruction, but specific to assessment, it involves rewriting the narrative that placement testing is an isolated area of assessment. Instead, field professionals need to conceive of something much larger that allows for understanding the whole learner via broader, multiple-measured protocols that encompass both cognitive and affective instruments.

Drawing on a Professional and Scholarly Understanding of What Reading Is and Is Not

Getting policy makers to accept the idea that reading development is not only contextually situated, but also lifelong in nature (Alexander, 2006) is a challenge that postsecondary literacy experts continue to face. Another challenge that further complicates this discussion is a view of reading as a set of visible skills, especially since most standardized, commercial reading test instruments currently in use tend toward assessing discrete skills. However, given that entire volumes have been devoted to theorizing reading over the years (e.g., Alvermann, Unrau, & Ruddell, 2013; Alvermann, Unrau, Sailors, & Ruddell, 2019; see also Tracey & Morrow, 2017), literacy professionals have an expansive body of scholarship from which to draw.

Reading comprehension scholarship specific to the postsecondary level emphasizes students' abilities to interact with or interpret a text through the use of cognitive, metacognitive, and self-regulatory strategies (Holschuh & Aultman, 2009; Holschuh & Lampi, 2018; Paulson & Holschuh, 2018). Further, college/developmental reading scholarship highlights both contextual and language-development factors that must be taken into account (Bean, Gregory, & Dunkerly-Bean, 2018; Francis & Simpson, 2018). Such theoretical work can be foundational for developing a guiding theory of reading for curriculum design and instructional implementation.

Drawing on Existing Knowledge about Reading Assessment

The overall discipline of literacy education has a tremendous amount of collective knowledge about assessment in general (Flippo, 2014; Guthrie & Lissitz, 1985; Haladyna, 2002; McKenna & Stahl, 2009). Although much of this work tends to be focused on PreK-12 contexts, general principles can certainly inform the work of assessment at the postsecondary level.

Translating what we know about what reading is or is not to placement-testing purposes, a meaningful conceptualization of reading would include a combination of what students already know to do with text and how they employ strategies connected to a particular purpose and context that resembles actual literacy practices students will face in their college-level courses. However, arriving at an informed understanding of what those practices look like may require a curriculum audit (Armstrong, Stahl, & Kantner, 2015, 2016). Only with an understanding of the local conceptions of reading, in terms of expectations and actual practices, can college/developmental reading professionals design curricula for key transitional experiences, such as developmental reading coursework, literacy tutoring, or reading labs. And only then, armed with sound literacy theory and an institutional definition of college-ready for reading, can purposeful placement testing be developed.

Beyond Sorting: Assessment for Multiple Inquiries

The near-exclusive focus on placement testing as assessment in college/ developmental reading, we contend, is an overly narrow and short-sighted one, particularly if one holds an inquiry perspective. Especially given the overwhelming attention being paid, over the last 15 years or so, to questioning the efficacy

of developmental education (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2006; Calcagno & Long, 2008; Complete College America 2011, 2012; Jenkins, Jaggars, & Roksa, 2009; Martorell & McFarlin, 2007; Vandal, 2010; Wirt, Choy, Rooney, Provasknik, Sen, & Tobin, 2004; Zachry Rutschow & Schneider, 2011), the need for evaluation of instruction becomes evident. Thus, our call is for a redefinition of assessment and evaluation that is inquiry-driven and guided by purpose, institutional mission, student needs, and available interventions.

To highlight our call, we offer Figure 1, which is a general model for assessment and evaluation based on a culture of inquiry. Our model for assessment and evaluation intentionally does not prescribe a means or tool for enactment, as it is clear that many

ways that guide instruction and support for students.

It is necessary to revisit Barnett and Reddy's (2017) definition of placement if the plan is to move beyond a sorting-focused system. First, although general definitions from the field are useful starting points, there is a need for institutional definitions that are aligned to research if the goal is to move toward an inquiry-based assessment system. Institutional or mission-driven definitions of placement testing allow for local input and the development of a system that considers the actual students who will be taking the placement test and attending the school. Furthermore, a local definition also serves as a system of checks and balances for institutions where the mission is to support underserved students who are more likely to be affected by

- What type of information is being gathered?
- For what purpose are students being assessed?

Purpose

Institutional Mission

- Who is being served?
- What is the institution committed to doing?

Student Needs

Available Intervention

- What are students' backgrounds and experiences?
- What are students' goals?

- What supports can the institution actually offer?
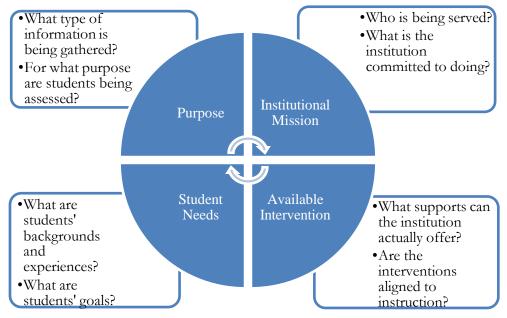- Are the interventions aligned to instruction?

Figure 1. Model for Inquiry-Based Assessment

institutions do not have the available resources or flexibility to develop assessment tools and must rely on existing tools. However, we call for institutions to at least imagine the ways student success can be impacted by simply shifting to a culture of inquiry and away from a culture of sorting. There are indeed possibilities for using existing assessment tools in more thoughtful

placement tests and developmental education.

Reiterated in Barnett, Bergman, Kopko, Reddy, Belfield, Roy, and Cullinan (2018), standardized assessment tools are not the most reliable when determining the likelihood of student success in college-level courses. Specifically, Barnett et. al. (2018) state, "Placement test scores are not highly correlated with success in initial college-level

courses: Doing poorly on a placement test does not reliably indicate that a student would be unsuccessful in a college-level course" (p. 5). We argue that much of the issue with a sorting-driven placement system is that it is limited in scope. The goal of the assessment tool is simply to provide a snapshot of students' skills at that point in time and on that particular set of questions. Not captured are epistemological beliefs, attitude, or self-regulatory behaviors, which are better indicators of success (Svanum & Bigatti, 2009).

An inquiry-driven assessment model would incorporate an examination of students' academic skills and knowledge, captured over time, and students' needs based on trends and a consideration of preparation based on what is known about where students come from and what they need for the next level. Such a model would also allow for faculty engagement in the placement process so that assessment data can inform what happens at the program and the classroom level. We urge field professionals to not only change placement protocols, but also to use the information gained through placement testing in new ways. Assessment for assessment's sake simply gives a bit of information about our students. However, if it does not translate into action or align to student outcomes, then we are not serving the students admitted to schools, but rather moving them through a system.

Unfortunately, as Boylan and Bonham (2009) have noted, most college reading professionals are not specifically trained to do these investigations; for that reason, the authors note, those in the field need to become familiar with this body of literature and standard practices (p. 403). As well, most research in this area has not accounted for what Simpson (2002) referred to as "a constellation of dependent variables" including issues of strategy-adaptation and transfer (Simpson, 2002, p. 2). Grubb (2001) has further noted that:

We need a more systematic collection of outcome measures, but these measures need to include more than test scores of basic skills. Such measures should include persistence in college and completion of degrees, writing portfolios, and completion of occupational courses. (p. 19)

For this and other reasons, program-level assessment and evaluation often get relegated to the realm of a necessary evil. The problem with such a conceptualization is that it will drive not only how the investigation is structured, but also the rigor with which it is undertaken, and the extent to which any findings are used for programmatic improvement. One commonly heard argument among college reading professionals is that such program evaluation is driven for and by administrators with little or no real impact on curricular matters. In practice, this is all too often the reality. However, done well and with a student-centered approach, program-level assessment is critical inquiry to inform continued curricular growth and improvement. Grubb (2001), for example, made a distinction between the metaphor of a "black box," which does not provide information on improvement, and a "Pandora's box," which reveals problems and reasons why these are problems as well as suggestions for improving. It is toward this goal of an abundance of information for answering and asking questions that we aim.

Conclusion

In the context of higher education, conversations questioning placement-testing practices are sometimes viewed as an attack on developmental education because the two are so intertwined. Because placement testing practices are currently viewed as methods for placing students—or not—into developmental education courses, when research or policy makers question placement-testing practices, it may be perceived as a

questioning of the integrity of the field of developmental education and its many dedicated professionals. The problem is that, more often than not, developmental education professionals have no input on placement practices.

We have work to do in the field, particularly with how we think about assessment and evaluation, and this is important work that we need to claim and initiate as professionals and experts in this field. As Grubb (2001) has noted, "dedication and student-centeredness, while necessary, may not be sufficient, so a program of evaluation and improvement is central to improving the performance of students" (p. 35). Here, Simpson and Nist's (1992) comprehensive assessment model offers us an entry point. However, in 2018, as in 1992, it can't take us all the way, as the real changes needed are to the way we conceive of the purpose, goals, and power of assessment.

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Transformative Programs, Transformed Practice: Multiliteracies and the Work of the Composition Program

Logan Bearden

Eastern Michigan University

ABSTRACT

In 1996, the New London Group made a call to transform the intellectual labor of education: to value texts that combine multiple modes and the multiliteracies that produce those texts. However, we currently have few models of entire composition programs that have revised their curricula to enact a pedagogy of multiliteracies and help students achieve transformed practice. In this article, I offer a model of such a program. I explore the processes by which the program's curriculum was revised and outline the new curriculum, which now requires that students exhibit three practices: 1) design, which gives students the theoretical knowledge to create multimodal texts; 2) material-rhetorical flexibility, which puts that knowledge into practice; and 3) the circulation of texts intended to effect change beyond the classroom. Scholars have discussed these practices separately, but this program presents a model of all three synthesized in one curriculum.

> Against this changing communicational landscape, which can be typified by diversity and plurality, the dominant view of literacy as a universal, autonomous, and monolithic entity is at best dated and in need of reconsideration. (Jewitt, 2008, p. 244)

> Our study suggests that students not only find multimodal projects to be engaging, meaningful, and relevant, but also that multimodal composition helps students have a stronger understanding of composition as a whole. (Kirchoff & Cook, 2016, p. 42)

In 1996, the New London Group (NLG) made a call to transform the intellectual labor of education, asking teachers to value texts that combine image, color, sound, gesture, and writing and the multiliteracies that produce those texts. These new programs and curricula would prepare students to be global citizens in a digital world by expanding students' meaning-making repertoires. In these programs, students would move in the direction of "transformed practice," which "engages students in the real world, the world

of social action in which they live and have to communicate in the contact zone of cultural differences" (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000, p. 237). Several scholars in Rhetoric and Composition and Literacy Studies have detailed how they have changed the work of their individual classrooms to engage students in the real world (Alexander, 2013; Ericsson et al., 2016; Lombardi, 2018; Seglem & Garcia, 2018; Shipka, 2011; Warren-Riley & Hurley, 2017). However, we currently have few models of entire composition programs that enact a pedagogy of multiliteracies and help students achieve transformed practice.[i] If we are to prepare students to participate in our global-digital world, then we must revise our programs to invite the work of transformed practice.

In this article, I offer a model of a composition program that has undergone such revisions. To detail this model, I draw on two data points: an interview with the director of the program and programmatic documents (e.g., outcomes statements, program guides, and course syllabi). In so doing, I offer insights and practices from the program that can be applied to other contexts and programs.

I begin with a contextualizing description of the program and the processes it underwent to revise its curriculum before detailing the revised curriculum. The program now requires students to research an issue that affects their communities, to create various multimodal texts (e.g., an advocacy website or a documentary PSA), and then to share those texts with their communities. This sequence of assignments reveals key elements integral to changing the work of the composition program to transformed practice. These elements that have been outlined separately in scholarship but synthesized by this program. They include: 1) design, which gives students the theoretical knowledge necessary to create multimodal texts; 2) material-rhetorical flexibility, which puts that knowledge into practice by allowing students to make informed choices among modes and media; and 3) circulation, which allows students to share the texts they make in spaces beyond the classroom. By integrating these three practices within one curriculum, this program moves students toward transformed practice. In so doing, it assists students in cultivating the rhetorical skills necessary to effect change within their own communities.

Other programs might include these elements should they wish to update their curricula to foster transformative practice. Such work is absolutely necessary, I believe, because it cultivates in the students a flexible literacy sensibility that can be used to communicate within and across various contexts. In updating the literacy work of the composition program in this way, we position ourselves as educators to make meaningful interventions in the literacy practices and work of the 21st century.

Defining Transformed Practice

Before moving into the description of the program, I want to briefly highlight what transformed practice is, what it asks of students, and why I see this concept as transformative to composition programs. Nicola Yelland, Bill Cope, and Mary Kalantzis (2008) define transformed practice simply as an act of "transfer in meaning-making practice that puts knowledge to work in new contexts or cultural sites" (p. 202). Carol Westby (2010) puts it another way, writing that in transformed practice "students are redesigning by taking a meaning out of one context and adapting it in such a way that it works well somewhere else" (p. 68). It is, essentially, a communicative practice of adaptation and circulation that helps students cultivate a metalanguage that they can use to theorize and thus adapt their composing processes to various situations. In this way, transformed practice anticipates and responds to globalization and technological advancement. In short, Cope and Kalantzis (2009) write that this pedagogy "is not about

skills and competence; it is aimed at creating a kind of person, an active designer of meaning, with a sensibility open to differences, change and innovation" (p. 175). That kind of person would be able to cross contexts, taking texts made for one purpose or audience and adapting them for a different set of circumstances.

This work is radically different than what currently takes place in many composition programs, which still focus on cultivating writing skills in and for the academy. Rather than writing traditional research papers, students in programs that work toward transformed practice are cultivating adaptive, flexible, transferable, and transformative ways of making meaning. Composition programs that embrace this work do more than teach students to participate in the academy; they help cultivate communicators that can participate in multiple contexts. With this in mind, I offer the following program profile, from which we can glean insights and practices that can be extrapolated to other contexts. Specifically, this includes programmatic structures, like collaborative conversations about program goals and curricular revision, and programmatic content, making design, material-rhetorical flexibility, and circulation vital parts of the composing practices students utilize in the program.

An Example Program

This program reveals three significant insights I will explore in the remainder of this article:

1. It is possible to craft entire programs that focus on cultivating transformed practice rather than relying on individual instructors to adopt this curriculum;
2. That process is more likely to be successful and sustainable if it is collaboratively undertaken; and
3. These revisions emerge from a program's commitment to a capacious understanding of rhetoric as making and sharing meaning

with the full available means of communication.

In this way, the program expands the kinds of texts that students can create rather than focusing on alphabetic writing skills only. To gain insight into the ways in which this program achieved these curricular revisions, I interviewed the director of this composition program. In the interview and programmatic data that I share here, I will keep the identity of the director and the program confidential in accordance with IRB protocol. The program is situated within a public research institution in the Southwest that has a student population around 23,000. The university identifies as a Hispanic-serving institution: a majority of its student population is Mexican-American. It also has a large population of first-time, first-generation students. While the program exists within a stand-alone professional writing department, it relies upon instructors from multiple programs—Creative Writing, Literature, and Writing Studies—and at various ranks. With this instructional diversity, the director emphasizes that there is consistency across sections in the delivery of the curriculum to students, stating "we like to say it's harmonized, not standardized." This programmatic, demographic information reveals that the program is not unlike other composition programs in terms of instructor and student population. However, this curriculum defines the content of the program as transformed practice rather than alphabetic writing skills.

This curriculum is the result of curricular revisions that took place in the 2008-2009 academic year. As a result of those revisions, the program now more fully commits itself to a capacious understanding of rhetoric and to multiliteracies, because those concepts allow and invite students to perform advocacy. The previous curriculum focused on argumentation. According to Emily Isaacs (2018), this is a fairly common focus for composition programs: 62% of schools analyzed in her study of over 100 four-year

institutions indicated that this was the focus of their composition curriculum (p. 117). In Isaacs's study, however, there is a difference between programs that emphasize instruction in argument and programs that emphasize instruction in rhetoric. Programs that emphasize rhetoric, she argues, treat writing as rhetorical, meaning "that it requires an awareness that individuals make choices…that writing is always situationally dependent" (p. 121). In these kinds of programs, students utilize their knowledge of writerly choices to make decisions that would make their own writing more effective. However, this program utilizes an even more capacious orientation. In the description of rhetorical instruction from Isaacs's study above, alphabetic writing is required; it is the only medium in which students in these programs may work. Within the composition program that is the focus of this article, though, alphabetic writing is one of many different kinds of semiotic resources that students utilize. The version of rhetoric adopted by this program requires that students be multiliterate.

In a discussion of the curriculum, the director described the program as presenting "an approach to communication that helps students determine the most effective strategies, arrangements, and media to use in different rhetorical contexts. It teaches students a systematic approach for analyzing situations." She went on to say that students use these multiliterate ways of communicating to research, think through, and write about an issue "within their community. They [students] conduct research, but it is more personalized, building upon their own knowledge." This personalized research is one of the central goals of the curriculum: students cultivate the rhetorical knowledge necessary to make effective communicative choices in various media to deliver a workable solution to the community issue they choose to address. Thus, the program emphasizes the importance of engaging with and influencing situations beyond the academy through a rhetoric-based curriculum that embraces multiliteracies.

The process of curricular revision began with a conversation about what the values of the program should be. That conversation included multiple voices: the director, the associate director, graduate teaching assistants, and full-time lecturers. According to the director, the group noticed the changes in literacy practices taking place outside the academy. She articulated that the program decided to focus on "digital literacy, because we felt like that's the environment that our students are in and that they will continue to be living in and working in." In the NLG's pedagogy of multiliteracies, this is the first step in moving students toward transformed practice, what they term "situated practice," a way of helping students increase their communicative abilities by validating and embracing the composing practices they already utilize (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; New London Group, 1996). In theorizing their current practices, students begin to understand their composing choices and develop a framework for cross-contextual practices. The director felt that building upon the digital multiliteracies that students already possessed would give the students who move(d) through the program an "edge." She described this edge as "having a better sense of how to adapt and how to deliver messages to various audiences, how to meet different rhetorical situations." These revisions, then, crafted a program focused on literacy and meaning-making in general rather than skills limited to alphabetic writing. Crossing contexts and cultures, making and sharing meaning and knowledge with a variety of audiences—these are the building blocks of transformed practice even if the program does not use the term to describe its curriculum.

There are two reasons this process is noteworthy. First, this is an example collaborative programmatic leadership, which Jeanne Gunner (2002) claims "emphasizes community, shared responsibility, and open exchange of information, ideas, and criticism"

(p. 254). From the beginning of the process, because of this collaborative leadership, there was buy-in to the process of curricular change from contingent faculty. In those conversations, the director realized that these instructors were eager to deliver a pedagogy more relevant to students. This is where the multiliterate approach to advocacy curriculum began to emerge. The director made use of this buy-in and invited those instructors to introduce the new curriculum to other instructors in professional development meetings.

This is the second noteworthy part of this process: using this distributed model of authority helped counter any resistance to the new curriculum. The director suggested this might be a good practice for other programs who might want to make these changes. She stated that it is important to find the instructors in the program "who are trusted, who are liked, who are engaging" and give them the opportunity to lead professional development, especially in times of curricular change. Scholarship regarding instructor resistance supports this theory. Sally Barr Ebest (2005), for example, writes that instructors within composition programs resist certain kinds of curricular content when that content "contradict[s] their personal constructs and threaten[s] their self-efficacy" (p. 65). By seeking input on the curricular changes from the instructional team and allowing them to introduce the new curriculum, the director validated the expertise and authority of the program's instructors. In this way, the director ensured the sustainability and success of the curricular revisions.

This distributed model of authority might be taken up by other composition programs who wish to make a similar programmatic shift. I argue this is especially necessary for programs that are considering taking up multiliteracies and the work of transformed practice, because instructors can be particularly resistant to this kind of curriculum. The reasons for this resistance

vary: some instructors might feel that the inclusion of multiliteracies challenges the scholarly integrity of their classrooms (Moerschell, 2009); others might be anxious about or fear changes to their pedagogies (Oreg, 2006); and still others might feel that they lack the technological expertise to teach such a curriculum (Berg and Muilenburg, 2001). In this program, the desire for a curriculum that engages multiliteracies and moves students toward transformed practice came from the majority of instructors. That collaboration helped to overcome or work around the typical sources of resistance.

These revisions are instantiated within programmatic documents, specifically the outcomes that guide the new curriculum and assignments that animate it. By the end of the program, students are expected to:

- understand discourse communities and genres;
- address specific rhetorical situations;
- develop technological literacies as they relate to composing processes;
- learn different methods for conducting research; and
- develop a composing process that is appropriate for the composing task.

These outcomes are careful not to prescribe alphabetic writing as the sole means of communication for the program. Instead, they focus on rhetorical awareness and the composing process.

The assignments that emerge from these outcomes help students cultivate these skills and achieve transformed practice. The harmonized curriculum requires that all students within the program complete the following:

- a report outlining a problem or issue specific to a certain community;
- a map outlining a conversation taking place within a discourse community;

- an annotated bibliography;
- a video sharing this research; and
- a website designed for advocacy purposes.

These assignments perform two important functions. First, in completing the assignments, students demonstrate multiliteracies and proficiency in multiple forms of communication beyond alphabetic writing. Second, the culmination of these assignments, the advocacy-based website, is intended to exist beyond the boundaries of the classroom, to circulate within and therefore affect the communities the students choose. Not only is this transformed practice—taking a text and adapting it for a different audience or context—it also positions advocacy as an integral part of the program's curriculum.

There are three salient points from this information about the program's context and curricular history that relate to transformed practice. The first point is the program's commitment to rhetoric. While this is not necessarily unique, the capacious version of rhetoric to which the program subscribes provides a fundamentally different foundation than other programs that might focus on correctness, style, or craft within alphabetic writing. Second, the ultimate goal of the program is for students to use their rhetorical knowledge to contribute to the solution of a problem affecting the communities to which they belong. This structure allows, invites, and requires students to cross the boundary between the academic and the personal. In this framework, the composition program is positioned well to make change in communities in and out of the classroom. Third, students make those community contributions through texts composed with multiliteracies, because those texts permit students to both speak to people who are outside of the academy. All three points overlap with the work that transformed practice aims to promote.

However, these curricular structures are but one part of the process. I argue that this program helps ensure that students achieve transformed practice because these structures ask students to exhibit three text-making practices: design, materially-rhetorical flexibility, and circulation. These three practices, I contend, present a workable set of curricular initiatives for other programs to think with should they wish to update the work of their composition programs as well. In the following section, I will detail and explain how students are encouraged to exhibit each of these.

Design

Design builds on the program's attention to rhetoric and moves students toward transformed practice by expanding students' knowledge of the available means of persuasion. Gunther Kress (2010) defines design succinctly as "the process of translating the rhetor's [meaning-maker's] politically oriented assessment of the environment of communication into semiotically oriented material" (p. 132). It is thus the materially-inflected process of realizing rhetorical interests/goals. The benefit of this process, per Mary P. Sheridan and Jennifer Rowsell (2010), is that it allows "students, and teachers for that matter, to develop a language and heuristic" for composing texts that are composed with more than just words on the page (p. 107). Design provides students with foundational, theoretical knowledge that will allow them to think through the process of crossing the boundary between the academy and their communities thus demonstrating transformed practice.

Design, as a curricular pillar, is a part of the NLG's pedagogy of multiliteracies, which includes Available Designs, Design, and Redesigned (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009). In this framework, texts—the things that meaning-makers create—are piecemeal assemblages put together in a process that is inflected by the

intersection of modal possibility and student interest. First, Available Designs are "found and findable resources for meaning making: culture, context and purpose-specific patterns and conventions of meaning making" (p. 176). Second, Design, as a metalanguage or vocabulary, helps students conceptualize the differences within those Available Designs as a part of the composing process. Finally, the Redesigned includes "the traces of transformation that are left in the social world...new resources for meaning in the open and dynamic play of subjectivities and meanings" (p. 12). Thus, the metalanguage of design gives students a way to make textual interventions in their lifeworlds by helping them theorize the composing process.

The program incorporates design by requiring that students create a discourse community map as part of the curriculum. The discourse community map asks students to visually represent the conversations taking place in and about the various discourse communities to which students belong. This map functions as an inventional text; it helps students situate themselves and their projects within a larger, scholarly context. This, in turn, cultivates more nuanced understanding of the research process. Students come to the project with certain "Available Designs." These include the modes of image and text, which have their own epistemological commitments or grammars, their own different ways of making meaning (Jewitt, 2008). While students assemble maps drawing on their own research and readings, they are doing so within these Available Designs. To be effective within those Available Designs, students must cultivate a knowledge of their influences on their composing processes. By combining the visual with the verbal, students make new meanings and help develop a metalanguage and understanding that will allow them to work with these different modes in the future.

Embracing this composing process changes our orientation to the work of the composition program, reinforcing the fact that meaning-making takes place at the intersection of multiple modes, media, and resources. Additionally, this approach and assignment have significant pedagogical implications and benefits for students. Sheridan and Rowsell (2010) suggest that implementing design as part of the composition curriculum makes students more adroit composers by fostering rhetorical dispositions in students. These dispositions are "redesigning available materials…in innovative and responsive ways; being creative, often when working in new participation structures and in ways elders could not have imagined in the past; communicating ideas persuasively to a variety of people; and materializing an idea through multiple modes" (p. 3-4). Thus, in moving the curriculum away from only one mode, the program helps students develop a theoretical understanding of the differences among modes, media, and resources, which they can use to make informed composing choices. These informed composing choices cultivate in students the knowledge necessary to compose in multiple contexts and for multiple audiences. They are a step toward preparing students to achieve transformed practice, but the next practice that students must cultivate is employing material-rhetorical flexibility.

Material-Rhetorical Flexibility

Material-rhetorical flexibility is the second curricular pillar included within this program that moves students toward transformed practice. This flexibility uses the theoretical knowledge cultivated by design and encourages students to develop a broad repertoire of meaning-making possibilities through practice and choice. Specifically, this program requires students to compose with a variety of different materials over the course of the semester, rather than limiting students to alphabetic writing only. According to research in Writing Studies, when students are allowed to make their own choices in the composing process, they develop proficiencies with/in a wider variety of semiotic resources.

According to Jody Shipka (2011), "students who are provided with tasks that do not specify what the final products must be and that ask them to imagine alternative contexts for their work come away from the course with a more expansive, richer repertoire of meaning-making and problem-solving strategies" (p. 101). I call this repertoire of strategies material-rhetorical flexibility because of the ways in which that term emerges from the concepts important to design—the potentialities of materials and their rhetorical effects.

A curriculum that encourages material-rhetorical flexibility asks students, as Anne Wysocki, Cynthia Selfe, Geoffrey Sirc, and Johndan Johnson-Eiola (2004) write, to "consider not only the potentialities of material choices for digital texts but for any text we make" (p. 10). In other programs, students might compose a series of papers, or they might even compose a low-stakes multimodal project at the end of the semester (Whithaus, 2005). In this program, though, students compose traditional writing assignments, like a community problem report and an annotated bibliography, alongside multiple multimodal texts: the discourse community map, a documentary video, a digital portfolio, and an advocacy website, just to name a few. Throughout the semester, students use these various texts to trace their chosen community problems. Each text focuses on addressing that problem: the same research is reshaped and re-contextualized across media and across contexts. In this process, students engage in a kind of dialectic, holding one mode, medium, technology, platform, audience, and/or context up against another to notice the various limitations and affordances of each. By using different means to address similar topics and research, students develop practical skills with a variety of different communicative resources. Including one assignment like this is a fairly common practice in classes that embrace multimodal composition. However, the practice of having students engage in multiple

iterations of this across the semester is a different programmatic approach, one that is extremely beneficial for students, because it increases their rhetorical possibilities.

Allowing students to demonstrate their material-rhetorical flexibilities is an approach that other programs might consider taking up should they want to update their curricula to move students in the direction of transformed practice. This has direct benefits for students. According to Shipka (2013), students who participate in these kinds of programs go on to exhibit a "nuanced awareness of the various choices they make throughout the process of accomplish that work and the effect those choices might have on others" (p. 76). If we design our programs and curricula in such a way that students will be able to make more informed composing choices, we help to make them more skilled meaning-makers. Prescribing the materials and methods of composing prescribes the kinds of knowledge students can make; conversely, through choices informed by material-rhetorical awareness and flexibility, students can make their own knowledge. This allows students the opportunity to develop composing strategies that can be used in multiple contexts. However, transformed practice requires the circulation of texts outside of the classroom to fully achieve, which is the third practice embraced by the curriculum of this program.

Circulation

Circulation engages the theoretical knowledge of design and the practical experience of material-rhetorical flexibility. As such, it is the culmination of this curriculum and ensures that students achieve transformed practice. The concept of circulation is not new to the work of composition programs. We have paid attention to the ways in which sharing texts shapes and reflects knowledge-making (Trimbur, 2000) and how texts participate in complex, living ecologies of other texts, technologies, and people (Brooke, 2009; Cooper, 1986). These understandings

can and do have curricular implications. For example, Nicole Mirra, Ernest Morrell, and Danielle Filipiak (2017) argue that considering how texts will exist outside of the classroom invites students to engage in "analyses of the audiences that various tools invite (and exclude) and consideration of the intent behind distribution" (p. 17). In the context of this article, I will define circulation simply as the distribution of texts to audiences beyond those in the classroom. Enacting this definition through curriculum, as this case study program has done, has three implications for composition programs, which other programs might consider if they wish to update their curricula to include transformed practice.

First, circulation foregrounds and reinvigorates student attention to rhetorical concepts that are integral to the composing process. When students compose more than print-based, alphabetic essays, and instead compose assignments that are meant to exist and move beyond the classroom, they consider timing and context more intentionally. They "*anticipate* reproduction and distribution [and] *involve themselves* in processes of reproduction and distribution" (Sheridan, Ridolfo, & Michel, 2012, p. xxvi, emphasis in original). Instead of students writing for the academy, they compose for themselves and for their lived experiences, thereby changing the work of the composition program from alphabetic writing skills to transformed practice. By choosing an issue that is important to them and exploring that issue across texts and time, students work toward the advocacy website. However, they also work toward conceiving of composing in ways that are not tied to the logic of print or to the confines of the classroom, in ways that utilize design and material-rhetorical flexibility. The advocacy website collects and synthesizes student texts and seeks to offer solutions to that community problem. These are rhetorical considerations that the program requires students take up and attend to in

their composing processes, and it does so at the curricular level, not just in individual classrooms. All instructors, all sections, and all students work toward this project, emphasizing the importance of these rhetorical concepts to composing.

Second, circulation as curricular content expands technologies and ways of composing that are not yet familiar to instructors or perhaps are not yet developed. According to David M. Sheridan, Jim Ridolfo, and Anthony J. Michel (2012), composition instructors are not able to "teach everything, especially in an era when new technologies continually make available new options" (p. 26). However, including circulation within the curriculum allows students to compose with the semiotic resources they find the most beneficial to their purposes, even and especially those not yet considered by composition curricula. In the program that is the focus of this article, students create an advocacy website that assembles the various texts they have composed over the semester. The goal of that website is to use those student-composed, student-researched texts to offer a solution to the community problem. The website assignment does not prescribe the technologies or platforms with which students compose. For example, students are not necessarily required to develop proficiency with Wix or Weebly. Some students might use iMovie to create and YouTube to then share their videos, but those technologies might be obsolete in a few years' time. The program only stipulates two requirements: 1) that those texts be shared on the website; and 2) that students utilize their rhetorical knowledge to speak to a public audience. The goal of this program, of a program that includes circulation, then, is not to teach students a particular kind of text or a rigid way of composing texts. Instead, by emphasizing the practice of circulation, the program emphasizes that there are several different ways to make and share meaning. By valuing those different ways, the curriculum is flexible

in ways that extend beyond the lifetime of specific technologies or platforms, ensuring that it continues to be relevant to students.

Third, circulation makes the boundaries between academic and non-academic contexts more porous for students. The advocacy website assignment is designed to be read by an audience of members of the community that the students selected as the focus of their research project, not only the instructor of the course. Within this framework, students move from research to activism. Sarah Warren-Riley and Elise Verzosa Hurey (2017) suggest that "teaching students to view themselves as always already advocates…allows [them] to understand that they have a significant role to play in public rhetorics and…in shaping the discourse of the communities that they engage with" (p. 38). In designing these texts for non-academic audiences, demonstrating material-rhetorical flexibility in the process, students achieve transformed practice. More than that, though, they understand that they can make meaningful contributions to real communities. Moving students toward this understanding is radically different than the work of most traditional composition programs. In this program, students are not just writing essays to demonstrate skills in alphabetic writing. Instead, they are becoming advocates for themselves and their communities by making texts for and sharing those texts with people outside of the classroom by achieving transformed practice.

Conclusion

This program has accomplished the important and necessary endeavor of radically changing the curriculum of the composition program. Rather than giving students training only in the literacy practices of academic writing, this curriculum cultivates multiliteracies, allowing students to use the full available means of persuasion. Thus, the program has moved toward an understanding of composition-as-transformed practice—the making and sharing of meaning and

knowledge in multiple contexts, even and especially those outside of the classroom.

There are two useful takeaways from the examination of this program. First, this kind of curricular transformation cannot be the responsibility of individual instructors or forced upon instructors by the decision of a single program director. This program reveals that the entire program should commit to and be involved in the process of curricular transformation. This insures that instructors feel valued and subsequently do not resist the changes. Second, we can craft programs that require students to demonstrate transformed practice if we change the curriculum to include the practices of design, material-rhetorical flexibility, and circulation. The combination of these three practices gives students the theory and practice necessary to share texts with people in multiple contexts. In a program that has included these practices, students labor to assemble 1) texts made of multiple modes and 2) multiple kinds of texts that then circulate beyond the classroom. The advocacy-based assignments in which this program asks students to engage are but one model. A different program might set students the task of simply communicating with an audience outside of the academy and then allow students to choose the kind(s) of text(s) that they create to achieve that task. Instead of an advocacy website, students might create Wikipedia entries, newsletters, social media accounts, etc. In so doing, students demonstrate their rhetorical flexibilities, making use of their composing knowledge to make contributions to communities outside of the classroom, which is the work of transformed practice.

This work, of course, is not easy. As I mentioned earlier in this article, certain composition instructors might feel that they might lack the resources or the expertise to teach such a curriculum. These same instructors could resist or resent the work of the program or the director who initiated such work. But this work is so very necessary. Alphabetic writing is but one in a long list of

communicative resources that students can engage to achieve their goals. If our programs teach writing and writing only, we limit our students' rhetorical possibilities. Conversely, if we encourage students to use multiliteracies, we give them the tools to effect real change in their technology-mediated lifeworlds. By changing the literacy work of the composition program, by changing the kinds of texts that students create, by changing the audiences for whom they create those texts, we position ourselves well to make our students not only better composers, but more active and engaged citizens in the world.

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Notes

[i] For a few published descriptions of entire programs that have achieved this process, see Adsanatham et al., 2013; Bourelle & Bourelle, 2015; Lynch &Wysocki, 2003.

Resisting Meritocracy: Students' Conceptions of Work at a Regional University

Rebecca A. Powell

University of Southern Mississippi

Joyce Olewski Inman

University of Southern Mississippi

ABSTRACT

Using data from a study on labor-based course contracts, we analyzed 152 student portfolio reflections in an effort to identify the gap between students' lived work experiences and the narrow focus of work in the college literacy classroom. Findings suggest students' definitions of work encompass emotional, academic, professional, and extracurricular labor. Such an expanded definition of work in the college literacy classroom provides insight into how students both resist and advance meritocratic narratives of work.

The notion of work is not new to literacy and writing studies or to college classrooms. Whether exploring working class discourse and pedagogies, institutionalized notions of labor, the ways in which the teaching of composition is often defined as "women's work," or the cultural work of the college literacy classroom itself, scholarship has not shied away from framing writing as work. Indeed, rhetoric and composition has consistently imagined itself as the "blue-collar" discipline (Bishop, 1999, p. 35), and literacy has long been linked to emancipatory narratives. As composition and literacy teachers, we recognize the ways values associated with work infiltrate every aspect of what it means to be a teacher and a student in an increasingly neoliberal institution. We also, however, recognize that in our willingness to contemplate the work-based discourse of the literacy classroom, we run the risk of imposing our own definitions of work on students who bring with them extremely varied histories of work and its values.

Thus, when we introduced a labor-based course contract to basic writing courses at our institution, we were not surprised by how the nature of work and its ties to literacy, writing, and academic success butted against student expectation, instructor comfort, and institutional narratives. We wanted to embrace the ways course contracts provide instructors and students with an alternative means of assessment based on the behaviors and labors

of students rather than relying solely on their written products. Contracts constitute an agreement between the teacher and her students about what actions will result in academic success, and we believed that incorporating this assessment model would shift our attention from student identity to student action.

A number of scholars consider course contracts as a potential means of rethinking classroom assessment in ways that privilege classroom community, instructor and peer feedback, authorial choices, and the work and behaviors of writers and students. Asao Inoue (2012) suggests course contracts are "a fairer grading technology" that "reward[s] effort and labor," focusing students and instructors on the processes, actions, and behaviors that lead to quality writing (p. 93).[i] Similarly, current iterations of course contracts by Jane Danielewicz and Peter Elbow (2008) work from the hypothesis that certain actions and practices improve writing and that successful students share common learning behaviors, including attendance, assignment timeliness, and responsiveness. As these studies demonstrate, by focusing on behaviors and actions, course contracts reward the behaviors of the moment, not the privileges and opportunities of the past, refocusing and refining assessment, our classrooms, our own goals, and the goals of our students.

Indeed, course contracts seem to be effective because of the transparency they lend when discussing with students the differences between the labor and work of writing and the writing product itself. Although the field does not seem to distinguish between labor and work, there are important differences between the two that structure how we use them in our analysis and thinking. Informed by Hannah Arendt's (1958) philosophy that an active life is determined by the separate but related functions of labor, work, and action, as well as the differences between the histories and definitions of the terms "labor" and "work" articulated in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, we define labor as physical, emotional, and mental exertion and work as the thing that is done through that physical, emotional and/or mental exertion. Using a meritocratic frame, universities and popular discourse often privilege work, the thing that is done, but ignore or limit definitions of labor, the physical, emotional, and mental exertions necessary to do the work. In this institutional meritocratic frame, meaningful work becomes the reward for the unacknowledged or prescriptive exertions necessary for a college degree.

As one means of shifting the institutional focus from student identities and products, the perceived rewards of the meritocratic frame, to the labors and works of literacy, we collaborated with nine faculty members at our institution (three full-time faculty, four graduate assistants, and two part-time faculty) to implement course contracts as their classroom assessment method.[ii] Based on our goals for the study—increased student retention, academic success, and a transfer of writing language and concepts—the results of the study were successful.[iii] However, after we reviewed our data, we also discovered students at our institution had views on "work" that differed from those established in our disciplinary narratives and those articulated in instructors' course contracts. Our data also suggest that for this population of students the concept of work encompasses more than the literacy acts of the classroom and that the meritocratic nature of the frame we were proposing did not go unnoticed.

As researchers, we problematically assumed students and instructors shared our definition of work and valued it in the same ways we did. As white women in academia who have both resisted and enacted the old adage "work twice as hard to get half as far," our own values surrounding work influenced our attraction to course contracts in ways we only came to fully articulate through the reflexive process of this study. Moreover, students and instructors in this study brought their own histories of work to course contract

classrooms. Shaped by complicated and exploitative histories with work, students at this regional university know work and labor to be valued differently by race, gender, and class in ways we did not fully account for when we considered labor-based course contracts.

Because these different orientations to work and labor became evident throughout the course of the study, our data do not fully account for how race, gender, and work histories shaped student, instructor, and researcher articulations of work. Thus, we want to begin with what we do not know. Although we can say student articulations of work did not align across race or gender, we do not have clear data on how socio-economics might have shaped how students articulated work. Also, it is important to note that this study's results and our own interpretations of those results are heavily influenced by some of the same identity politics that our initial study attempted to address. Within our study, seven of the instructors were white women, one instructor was a white male, and one was an African-American woman. The racial dynamics at play within college literacy classrooms where the majority of instructors are white and the majority of the students are of color cannot be ignored.[iv] We came to question and trouble our own definitions of who works, why they work, what work means and how it is valued through the process of this study, and we invite readers on that same journey.

This article explores how students articulated work in course contract classrooms. In the next section of our article, we will provide a brief overview of disciplinary discussions of work, but the exigency for this project stems from the fact that scholarship that gestures toward student views on work seems to rely on limited student data.[v] Our study centers on student conceptions of work, to honor their experiences, their views, and the ethical research ideal that claims about students should be supported by ample evidence and

rigorous research. In doing this, we found that students' conceptions of labor and work are holistic, encompassing their entire lived experiences. In order to explore how students are encouraged to view their writing classroom through a lens of work, behaviors, and labor acts in course contract classrooms, we briefly examine the ways work is defined in our disciplinary scholarship prior to analyzing students' articulations of work and how their articulations grapple with meritocratic ideals traditionally associated with work.

A Meritocratic Framework

The enterprise, idea, and attainment of adult literacy and the ideals of meritocracy intertwine in enduring master narratives of higher education. These narratives of upward social mobility drive university enrollment, teacher and student identities, and classroom practices even as research and statistics challenge the accuracy of these narratives. The seductive narratives of meritocracy claim talent and work will be rewarded with educational attainment and that educational attainment will propel students to a higher social class. In these narratives, higher education works to expand opportunity and award merit and success to the talented and the hard working. It is a persuasive narrative, focused on powerful, cultural themes: individualism, merit, equality of opportunity, and social stratification. But, it is also a naive narrative, continually belied by research in education, economics, and sociology, the latest of which claim that while a college education may be necessary to "economic success," alone it cannot overcome the structural inequalities of poverty and racism—no matter how hard one works (Burkhauser et al., 2009; Fiske & Markus, 2012; Piketty & Saez, 2001).

College literacy scholars have explored the power and complexity of meritocratic narratives in students' experiences. Janet Bean (2003), in her oft-cited "Manufacturing

Emotions: Tactical Resistance in the Narratives of Working-Class Students," frames how working-class students trade working with their "backs" for working with their "brains" as a tactic of survival in changing economic times. Often spurred by their parents' belief that a college education will propel their children to white-collar work, students in Bean's study in Akron, Ohio, grappled with the promises of meritocracy and with their families' blue-collar work histories. Bean portrays the complexity of students' beliefs in the meritocracy of the university through an analysis of her student, Sarah. During a classroom discussion of an assigned reading critiquing these meritocratic ideals, Sarah emotionally counters the critique's claims with her experiences as a white, government-assisted, scholarship-winning student who worked hard to earn her spot in the university. Bean acknowledges that it would be easy to dismiss Sarah's anger as typical "student resistance to cultural critique" (p. 106), but she also suggests we would do better to see her "expression of anger" as what allows her to "occupy conflicting positions within the dominant narrative of upward mobility" (p. 105). Students like Sarah both hold and question the promises of meritocracy in higher education while working towards its end, and those of us who study and teach in college literacy classrooms navigate these same conflicting positions within the dominant narrative.

At the individual level, college literacy instructors are both gatekeepers and teachers, grade-givers and mentors, and at the disciplinary level, college literacy is both allied with and against the narratives of meritocracy. College literacy instructors and researchers contend with these tensions as we conceptualize and emphasize work in writing studies. We see these tensions play out in disciplinary scholarship devoted to exploring the socio-economic class values of the literacy classroom (Bishop, 1999; Bloom, 1996; Welch, 2011), attempts to locate and theorize work and workers through a Marxist lens

(Horner, 2000; Lu & Horner, 2009), studies on the relationships between literacy and economic success (Brandt, 2001), and analyses of student work as representative of classroom labors (Stewart, 1980; Yancey, 2004). Each of these lines of inquiry contributes to our complex understandings of work in literacy and writing studies, but few if any of these contemplate what students believe to be the work of composition or the works that constitute composition or the composing process. Work and its relationship to literacy becomes even more complex as we begin to contemplate the ways students talk about work in relation to the college literacy classroom.

How Students Frame the Ideas and Promises of Work

Clearly work matters to writing studies, but how and in what forms work matters to students bears more investigation. Conducted at a regional university serving a diverse demographic, including a considerable number of first-generation college students, our study aimed to intervene in student success and retention narratives that framed student identity as a hurdle in success and retention. We wanted to focus on how we might structure writing classrooms to encourage behaviors and values that lead to improved writing and thus chose to implement course contracts in our stretch-model of composition. Our corpus of data includes student portfolios (n=152) from ten sections of our stretch-model of composition in which instructors used course contracts (n=219 students) and six sections in which instructors used traditional grading methods (n=144 students), anonymous student surveys that asked for Likert-style and qualitative feedback related to students' experiences with assessment in these classes, institutional research data, and faculty syllabi, course contracts, and interview transcripts.

Our quantitative data showed students who were in contract courses were less likely

to fail and less likely to withdraw from the classes, and our qualitative data indicated an appreciation and uptake in the writing concepts—facts that we interpreted to mean that students benefited from thinking through their writing classrooms through a lens of work and labor acts. Indeed, in their survey responses to questions related to how the assessment process helped individual writers, many students expressed relief at the concept of a writing classroom that did not privilege their previous writing experiences but instead valued their specific actions and made explicit ties between those actions and their ability to improve as writers. We were encouraged by these results and interested in exploring how students articulated these ties in their reflection essays that accompanied their course portfolios.

Informed by Thomas Huckin's (2012) contributions to our understandings of critical discourse analysis when he insists that critical discourse analysis "be done in conjunction with a broader contextual analysis, including a consideration of discursive practices, intertextual relations, and sociocultural factors" (p. 157), we began reading students' portfolio reflection essays (n=152) summarizing their experiences in the course.[vi] Huckin's (1992) methodology for such work involves selecting an initial corpus of texts, reading the texts holistically to identify patterns of interest, questioning these patterns, verifying the patterns, and conducting functional-rhetorical analysis in order to interpret the results (pp. 90-93). In addition, James Paul Gee's (1990) approach to discourse analysis creates spaces for us to think about our students' use of language related to work in conjunction with their actions when it comes to the labors and work of literacy. For Gee, Discourse is "composed of distinctive ways of speaking/listening and often, too, writing/reading coupled with distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking, believing, with other people, and with various objects, tools, and technologies, so as to enact specific

socially recognizable identities engaged in specific socially recognizable activities" (p. 155). Thus, we approached our corpus of data using integrated methods but always with the goal of contemplating how students were discussing and enacting the works and labors of literacy.

Across 152 portfolios, students explicitly mentioned work 597 times, and the ways in which they framed work fell predominantly into four themes: work as justification, work as emotional engagement, work as product, and work and its accompanying attitudes. Students' reflection essays suggested that work is not just the goal but also the ever-present reality of their day-to-day lives. Many are already working outside of school, and most framed their student labors as work. Students conceived of work in broad terms but as a relative good that justified their success. The broad categories students used to define work illustrate how they push against meritocratic narratives. By categorizing emotion, care, and overcoming and wrestling with predispositions as work, students made room for themselves in the university, but they also seemed to both accept and struggle with the idea that the labor acts encouraged by the course contracts were comparable to their other experiences with work.

Inoue (2015) has argued persuasively for labor-based grading contracts, claiming "we can all labor" (p. 89). Inoue's definition of labor encompasses "reading, writing, and judging," the work of the college literacy classroom (p. 115). Based on the premise that "labor is a more equitable and fair measure. Everyone has 24 hours in every day" (p. 93), Inoue addresses students' lives outside the classroom in an endnote:

> I realize that many students work outside of school, take care of family members, and have other constraints on their time, so not all students have the same amount of free time. These limitations can be negotiated with each class since they will be different for each class. (p. 304)

The students in this study named their professional or personal lives and responsibilities as given and expected parts of their workloads. Students' course reflections, in other words, extended the definition of work beyond reading, writing, and judgment. By reclassifying these "constraints" and "limitations" as part of how students understand and experience work, we might more fully understand student experiences of labor and work in the college literacy classroom (p. 304).

Documenting the work of the college literacy classroom, students detailed how they had fulfilled the contract through work as part of their reflective essays framing their portfolios. Our composition program uses portfolio assessment measures, and all students are asked to write reflection essays that explain the ways they believe they have met the learning outcomes for the class. Individual teachers may instruct students to emphasize different elements of their class and writing experiences, and they may suggest differing approaches to the essay, from personal letters to third-person reflections. All students, however, are encouraged to provide evidence from their experiences and their writing to illustrate how they have met the expectations of the course.

Work as Justification

In providing evidence of meeting the expectations of the course, many students used work as a justification. In fact, 64% of students in the study used work as a justification for their performance in the course (n=97). Of those who use work as a justification, 56% (n=54) documented work within the class and the scope of the contract, while 44% (n=43), documented other forms of work, including outside employment, familial obligations, emotional work, and the intellectual work of evaluating their previous literacy experiences and predispositions. And it is important to note while students clearly ranked some forms of work as more important than others, when reflecting on

their actions, they rarely distinguished between the work of the contract and these other forms of labor. A number of students aligned their work efforts for the class with the contract. One student provided the following details of her work:

> In fulfilling the contract, I have attended every class except two I believe. I have been prepared to class except two times, one being at the beginning at the semester. With my projects, I always turned them in on time that you requested for. Also, during class while you would have a PowerPoint up on the board, I would take notes and I have my drafts for proof. [. . .] When you allowed us to do peer work shopping, I offered my thoughtful feedback on their assignments. I also fulfilled the contract by not using my phone during class, revising my essays as needed most of the time, and using office hours.

This student offers her timeliness, notetaking, and work with peers as evidence of her success in the class. Other students pointed to the completion of assignments and readings: "I have successfully done all my work, ranging from readings to writing assignments and being active in class and to also giving peer reviews." Clearly, for a significant number of students, the contract and the labor acts it established provided a comprehensive definition of work. These students aligned their labors with those established by their course contracts and recognized the acts themselves as successful acts that warranted recognition.

Others justified their experiences and expectations for the class based on struggles that involved the expanded definitions of work noted earlier. Their struggles to read, to attend class, and to juggle university life and outside employment and/or family obligations equated to labor, and they measured it as work related to the class. These hidden labors were not included in the course contract, and by the measure of the contract many of these students had not completed the

required work of the course. However, students argued that the emotional and material labors they completed to make it to the end of the semester should count as part of their work for the course. We almost read these justifications as excuses or even subtle manipulations, and while that argument could be made, we believe that argument misses an important gap between student and faculty conceptions of work. One student articulates this gap well in her differentiation between the "strongest work" and the process: "I believe that I rightfully deserve to receive an A in this course. I have put a lot of effort into this class, and even though I did not have the strongest work, this course was meant to teach us about the process." And, for this student, the process was coming to understand how the work of the literacy classroom—reading, writing, and judgment—rested on behaviors like timeliness, participation, and the willingness to struggle: "My most important quality of this semester was trying to succeed at things that I struggle with previously." The idea of struggle, over whatever barrier, was coded as work for students, and that work did not always result in the work of the reading, writing, and judgment, but it was a significant factor in students' estimation of their success in the course. In addition, comments such as these suggest many students believe that struggles and attempts to approximate behaviors should be defined as successful labor acts. The student quoted above does not claim that she was successful, only that she was "trying." Course contract assessment measures posit that these efforts will result in successful products, so it is interesting that the student emphasizes her struggles but does not seem to recognize the struggles as leading to a product the institution would consider successful.

Student ability is often classified as academic ability, but in their justifications related to work, students were clear that their ability to do coursework was rooted in physical and material concerns. The work of the classroom takes time, money, and health.

Consider the chain effect this student describes: "I believe I deserve a B because I have followed through with all of my assignments and completed them to the best of my ability. At first I didn't have any money to print out all those papers because I had no income, then I acquired a job so I could and that sort interfered with me being on time because of how late I got off but I tried." Different instructors require different behaviors for preparation; some asked that students bring copies of drafts or readings to class. The financial and material demands of course requirements led to a job which led to a loss of sleep which led to a struggle to attend class, and every instructor's contract included attendance as an expected behavior. Struggles and efforts in this instance involve more than just attempts to perform required acts of labor; they are a precarious balance of labor acts moored in acts necessary to remain in school at all.

Work as Emotional Engagement

Students also coded "care" and feelings as work: "My participation in the class shows how much I care about the course and how seriously try to show the behaviors beyond what is expected of me." Another student also specifically coded his care as participation in the community of the class:

> I try to answer the question that are being asked from [my instructor] and read and interact with my fellow classmates in the class when we are paired up in groups to show that my grade in the class really matters. I always try to come up with questions to ask [my instructor] on a particular assignment to show that I care about the assignment.

Completing readings and responses to those readings were typically labor acts noted in contracts, but, for students, these types of acts were also linked to feelings and emotions. One student noted, "I feel my participation should be an A+ because I always found myself having to put my feelings into class so

I can get something of importance out of class. I completed every reading log and every reading because that shows my teacher I am fully engaged and committed to the class." Demonstrating care required the work of collaboration, reading, and participation, but it also required emotional labor and a willingness to acknowledge feelings. Students characterized their care as college literacy work acts.

This emphasis on care and feelings is also evident in one of the specific struggles noted by students (n=45): how the habits and predispositions students brought to the work of reading hindered or aided their work and performance in the class. We highlight students' struggle with the work of reading because student's explanations of this struggle encompassed additional aspects of the hidden work of their lives' outside of the classroom, the predispositions and feelings they brought to the task, and their justifications of their experiences. Slightly more students (n=26) cited the work of reading as beneficial work than those who framed reading as a struggle (n=19). Those who framed reading as work that benefited their class performance often cited it as the work of preparation and participation. For example, one student wrote "Little things such as reading the articles or essays for homework has help me to become better at writing, and it has also shown that I am willing to do whatever it takes to be ready to participate in class." Reading was seen as an investment in the class and a demonstration of caring. The student's statement "to do whatever it takes" demonstrates his uptake of a meritocratic narrative. What might be seen by an instructor as a course requirement was coded by the student as work that would deem him worthy of opportunity.

For those who framed reading as struggle, they battled emotion, judgment, and exhaustion. The following student cited her love of reading, her judgment of the readings, and her inability to complete the reading all in the same paragraph:

> During this course, I did not read every assignment during this course. I started to get tired of the stories we were reading. I love to read and it honestly depends on if I am interested in the topic I am reading. The stories in the books were not interesting at all. The stories I did read, were okay stories but they were not good enough for me to finish. I do not know what else to say about the stories we have read in class.

The equation of the textbook and its model essays with stories and her focus on interest suggest this student brought previous experiences with and purposes for reading (enjoyment and pleasure) to the task of reading rhetorically in the college literacy classroom. These past predispositions towards reading can also be seen influencing another student's reading patterns:

> Honestly when we were given a reading assignment seven times out of ten, I either did not read it or just skimmed thru it to see what it was about. Not only was it your class I did not read in, but it was also high school English and other classes that assigned reading that I did not read. I really hate to read stuff that do not interest me, but when we were given reading that I was interested in, I read them and you could tell because the response logs were well thought out and put together. When it was time to discuss in class, sometimes I could not participate because I didn't read and that was not smart.

Although this student clearly understands how reading benefits his learning in the class, his "hate" for reading materials in which he is not interested and his high school habits perpetuated his struggle. Other students cited plain exhaustion in avoiding the reading, "I can personally tell you that I didn't read all of the readings assigned. I won't make any excuses to why I didn't read them but through

six hours of practice I am just exhausted." This student suggests her extracurricular responsibilities are exhausting work that leads to difficulties completing her academic work. Having been found worthy of merit as an athlete, the student apportions her work and effort accordingly, choosing the ballfield over the classroom.

Work as Product

In addition to complicating our understandings of work via justifications and hidden definitions of work, students also discussed work as the product of their labors (n=48). When the field discusses student work as product, it celebrates and interrogates individual student samples as part of a corpus, and some students' discussion of work products mirrored this focus on individual accomplishment (Yancey, 2004). In the following student's reflection, he focuses on his competence won through effort: "My confidence as a writer has increased. I now know I can write and compose good work if I try." However, the focus on the individual did not always solely celebrate accomplishment. Sometimes, it demonstrated how a focus on the individual writer produces meritocratic systems of reward and punishment in the college literacy classroom: "I now believe that I have the ability to write papers for college level classes without being punished for my poor writing skills." This student's reflection on her competence belies the reason for that competence: fear of punishment. Although the student now believes her abilities can help her escape that punishment, the motivation behind gaining those abilities stems from an understanding of writing ability as a good that is rewarded or punished.

In addition, while some students framed worked products in meritocratic terms, other students wrote about work products as collaborative efforts and means of self-assessment. Collaborative work products were the result of "talking to my peers about our work and what we could do to make it better," "the help of [my instructor]," "catch[ing] the audience's attention," and "including different sources." Students framed work products as the result of collaborations between students, students and instructors, and interactions with texts and audiences. So, while strands of students' reflections suggested an understanding of work in the meritocratic frame, other strands, such as those that focus on work products as collaborative and intertextual, push back against meritocratic notions of work and the individual and provide a more nuanced portrait of work as layered and communicative. And while many would agree that this is a healthier perspective of work, it is not one that aligns with the individualized notions of work associated with meritocratic ideals.

Work and its Accompanying Attitudes

Students' work naturally engendered pride and disappointment. Although a small number of students noted these types of feelings (n=30, 20%), we explore them in further depth here because we believe how these students articulated "feelings" as a by-product of work instead of what they put into work is an important distinction. About half of the students whose conceptualizations of work noted a by-product of feelings framed work as positive, beneficial, and rewarding, and these types of reflections align more closely with the meritocratic and individual nature of the course contract and with the typical narrative trope of literacy and success. In fact, the reward of one student's work surpassed his expectations:

> While in this class as a college freshman, I have been able to see my work fulfill before my own eyes. The projects that I have produced this semester have made me very proud of what I have accomplished and created. The fact that I have been able to take small ideas and make them into something much bigger has challenged me in many ways.

For another, work proved beneficial: "Since English is not my first language, I figured I

would have to work twice as hard to be able to have good grades in this class. Last semester, being my first was, very hard and exhausting to me. . . . Today, I can proudly say my writing process have improved in ways I didn't even think were possible when I came to this country." These are the types of reflections we expected would be most common throughout students' reflections, as they more closely resemble the takeaway most instructors felt students gain from the contract experience: work equals success, success equals pride.

It is interesting, then, that the other half of students who discussed feelings as a byproduct of work reflected on more negative emotions. For some students, those motivations arose from a need to avoid negative emotions; as one student writes, "According to my overall performance of this class based off of projects, revisions, writing skills, etc., I would characterize my performance as exemplary because I always pushed that extra mile when it came to my writing so I could not have regrets and doubts about the work that I have turned in." The student works to avoid "regrets and doubts," negative emotions, perhaps framed by the idea of the meritocracy, the idea that if he works hard enough, just a little more, he will make it.

Other students noted how the lack of work and effort on their parts or the lack of improvement from work they did complete inspired negative feelings. One student grappled with allowing herself to choose the "easy" path and the resulting humiliation: "However, once again, right near the end of the semester it just became so easy to not bring in my work. It was not only humiliating to not have my work finished, but it was also annoying because while other students were capable of working on their work, I was just starting mine." The course contract's expectation of timely work means the student will either do the reading, writing, and judgement labors of the college literacy classroom or complete the emotional labor of

not meeting those expectations. In the case of this student, "easy" became an emotionally-laden task of catch-up and frustration. These notes of frustration were sounded often. One student noted, "I failed that course because of my writing skills was not good as a whole. . . . [I] studied and stood up all night writing papers for and still failed," and another student reflected, "It seems to me that even when I try, I'm not really that good in topic sentences, but this semester I believe that I have improved a tad in formulating them." And while we might simply classify feelings such as these as the annoying after effects of avoiding work or as normal feelings of disappointment, we argue that these types of feelings are significant to understanding the emotional labors of work and that students are attempting to explain the ways in which the feelings and emotions elicited by work are also of significance and a type of work in themselves. Indeed, as Julie Lindquist (2004) argues "affective responses function as work," and the "burdens of emotional engagement are unevenly distributed in scenes of literacy learning" (p. 188).

Conclusion

Work for both students and instructors in the college literacy classroom "always involves a vision of the present inextricably tied to a vision of the future" (Branch, 2007, p. 214). We would add that the past, our pasts, both disciplinary and personal, also shape what counts as work, how we work, what we value as work, and often the outcomes of that work. Thus, when we consider student conceptualizations of and reflections on work and literacy, we begin to see the limits of a narrow definition of work that consists only of literacy acts. Students' conceptions of emotional labor, extracurricular work, and the material and social realities of work expand the meritocratic narrative to encompass their lived lives. And while the field of writing studies, with its theoretically informed notions of work, of workers, and of work spaces,

provides nuanced explorations of these work/literacy relationships, student experiences and understandings of work clearly demand that we continue to evaluate and expand our understandings of work in the literacy classroom.

These evaluations and understandings must stem from students' expertise on their own lives, experience we can only know through listening. Choosing course contract methods of assessment requires faculty to more fully interrogate our labor-based assessment methods in order to ensure our contracts are representative of students' lives. We must consider the possibility that students view their work processes through a broader lens that encompasses their everyday lives, not just literacy work acts. We have to contemplate the more social definitions of work projects that students might forward and accept a more collaborative notion of what constitutes such products. And, as Lindquist (2004) notes, we must make "room for the products of students' emotional labor in scenes of literacy instruction" (p. 189). In doing so, we can build classrooms and assessment structures that take into account a more varied and nuanced understanding of work and labor.

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[i] Asao Inoue's early work with course contracts (2012) used a contract similar to Elbow and Danielwicz's contract. These contracts award students a "B" based on completing specific labors and behaviors. Grades of an "A" are achieved through judgments of quality. Inoue's later work (2015, 2019), published after this study, awards grades solely based on labors and behaviors. In his new contract, students wishing to achieve an A must complete more reading, writing, and thinking.

[ii] This study received IRB approval from our institution.

[iii] Our measures for success included retention rates, pass rates, and grade distributions. In contract courses (N=219 students), 10% of students withdrew from or failed the class, whereas in non-contract courses (N=144 students), almost 18% of students withdrew from or failed the class. In addition, grade distribution data suggested the contracts did not lead to grade inflation among passing students.

[iv] Enrollment data at the institution provides racial demographic data for first-year, first-time students as follows: 62.7% White and 26.1% Black/African American. 2013 state census data lists the same population demographics as 57.5% and 37.4%. Enrollment in the stretch composition courses, however, flips this ratio, with a consistent average of 62% Black/African American students and 23% White students.

[v] See, for example, Jeff Smith's (1997) "Students' Goals, Gatekeeping, and Some Questions of Ethics."

[vi] The study entailed multiple levels of consent. Students could participate at the level of the survey and choose not to have their writing included in the study, hence the larger numbers of participation at the survey level.

FORUM: Views from the Field

The Work of Boundary-Crossing in a Community-Engaged Literacy Course

Michael Blancato
Ohio State University

Gavin P. Johnson
Ohio State University

Beverly J. Moss
Ohio State University

Sara Wilder
University of Maryland

Writing for *College English* in 2000, Parks and Goldblatt encouraged writing administrators and teachers to make room for "writing instruction and literacy research beyond university boundaries" (p. 585). The Literacy Narratives of Black Columbus (LNBC), a second-level writing and research course in the Department of English at Ohio State University, illustrates the challenges of writing and researching beyond university boundaries. In this unique section of a required General Education (GE) writing and research course, undergraduates collect and preserve literacy narratives from members of local Black communities, which have included Black church members; poets; educators; immigrants; visual artists; dancers; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual activists, among others. These literacy narratives are preserved in the public Digital Archive of Literacy Narratives. At a final community sharing night, students present a digitally curated exhibit of their collected interviews for an audience of community members and university affiliates. The guiding philosophy of LNBC is that as students gather, analyze, archive, and curate first-hand stories and insights from Black community members, they broaden their—and our—understanding of what literacy is and does. Moreover, instead of relying on traditional academic sources as the primary drivers of intellectual thought and research, this course foregrounds communal knowledge-making.

Since 2010, the LNBC course has demonstrated how asking students to move

"beyond university boundaries" complicates the work of the college literacy classroom. The various political, social, and logistical dynamics of a community-engaged literacy course raise questions about the work that can or should be done in a GE writing and research course. In this piece, we offer initial insights about engaging students in community-based literacy work from our ongoing study of the LNBC course. Drawing primarily on student interviews, we suggest that crossing boundaries in community-engaged courses challenges students to re-think their expectations regarding the work of writing and writing classes. The LNBC course complicates the role of work and its relationship to boundaries, as students are charged with crossing and connecting the boundaries of the traditional college classroom and the community space—a geographical and, for some, a cultural and psychological boundary. Enrolled in a predominantly white institution with a 5.7% African-American population, most of the students in the various sections of LNBC, while diverse, are not African-American. These students literally travel within and across urban, Black spaces in which they most likely are considered "other"—crossing racial, ethnic, and age boundaries. Moving from the predominantly white spaces of the traditional OSU writing classrooms to Black, urban spaces to collect literacy narratives becomes not just a process that students must negotiate to do the literacy work of the course—it is a major part of the work itself.

Students must take on this work from wherever they are in thinking about race and literacy (if they think about race at all) and wherever they are culturally, socially, and intellectually. One student represented the views of many when he stated that "so I don't think I've ever interacted with them [Black people] outside of maybe on paper. Like seeing them or reading about them kind of thing. Which is also kind of rare." For many students, this lack of experience working with Black people makes the work valuable yet tension-filled or even fearful. How does a 20-year-old white student from rural Ohio learn to ride the bus from campus to Black neighborhoods, locate and set up interviews with local Black visual artists in a city ten times larger than her hometown? How does an international student whose first and second languages are not English prepare an interview script and then conduct that interview with elderly Black Americans in a predominantly black nursing home? Adding to the tension, how do these students who represent a university that has such a large presence in the city, yet a somewhat checkered relationship with Black Columbus, create enough trust for reticent community members to even agree to an interview and trust these outsiders with their stories?

Although the tensions make boundary crossing challenging for some, these tensions make the course especially appealing to others. One student, when discussing her involvement in the course and what she learned about Columbus' Black dance community, states, "And me being a dancer as well and hearing their stories and how they got enthused to wanting to dance and pursuing that, I was like 'Oh my gosh that's me, too.' So, we fed off each other." This international student connected her interests and passions with those of her interviewees, creating a space of shared interest and blurred boundaries. This student continues, "You don't know what you don't know. So knowing that there are so many groups out there that are so embedded in black dance, African Culture dance, I was just very enthused. I was like 'This is beautiful. This is so dope.'" It would be wonderful to end here with this student finding the work of researching and composing across difference to be the kind of challenge she was ready to take on, to be "so dope." Yet, we know that crossing these geographical, cultural, and psychological boundaries of composing for, about, with, and sometimes in unfamiliar racialized spaces can cause anxieties and leave students unable to do their best work (Deans, 2000).

In addition to navigating the tensions associated with traveling in unfamiliar racialized spaces, students also had to negotiate the challenges that came with collaboratively composing digital media for an audience of community members. In the LNBC course, students work in groups to select excerpts from the collected literacy narratives to place into a digital artifact, which usually—though not always—takes the form of an iMovie. The interviewed students report they were surprised by the work constraints of creating a digital production as the final course project, rather than a more traditional academic research paper. One student notes that unlike an academic research paper, which often emphasizes the voice of the student composing the project, her group's digital project foregrounded the stories and experiences of others: "It's like you are direct quoting people the entire time. You're not really inserting your own fluff words." Further highlighting the differences between traditional research essays and digital media compositions, another student describes an "obligation to show the story in a magnificent way," which involved the inclusion of music that "correlated with everything [the students] put together." Often, students struggle with choosing music to fit the group's theme, identifying representative video clips, and depicting community members' stories fairly; moreover, the Sharing Night encourages students to think carefully about how they represent community members' literacy stories, in words, music, and images.

The challenges students identify with negotiating racialized spaces and composing a digital exhibit centering and celebrating community members' voices point to questions about the nature of work in college literacy classrooms:

- How do we, as teachers, account for the student labor of boundary crossings when we support and assess their work?
- How does the shift from traditional classroom spaces to community spaces disrupt students' view of where the work of composing takes place?
- How does the nature of composition and literacy work change when expertise is located in underrepresented communities rather than traditional university sites?

Despite the challenges and tensions associated with the course, the enthusiasm of many students who have taken the course and instructors who have taught it suggest to us that these are questions worth interrogating. Pursuing literacy work beyond the boundaries of traditional college classrooms and curricula requires students to experience and grapple with discomfort. We find that discomfort productive, and we want to recognize and celebrate it as pedagogically generative.

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To Work: Naming, Acting On, and Modifying in the College Literacy "Classroom"

Ed Nagelhout
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

As our worlds become immersed in the digital, as literacies become enacted by the digital, as learning becomes appended to the digital, and as our work spans the thresholds of the digital, the college literacy classroom transforms from a defined place of inoculation to comprehensive spaces for rhetorical action. For many of us in writing or literacy studies, our work entails promoting multiple literacies in the classroom, across campus, and for a lifetime. As such, we must continue to re-examine what constitutes literate practices, especially in the work of higher education, to develop rhetorical tools and strategies for literacy as lifelong learning.
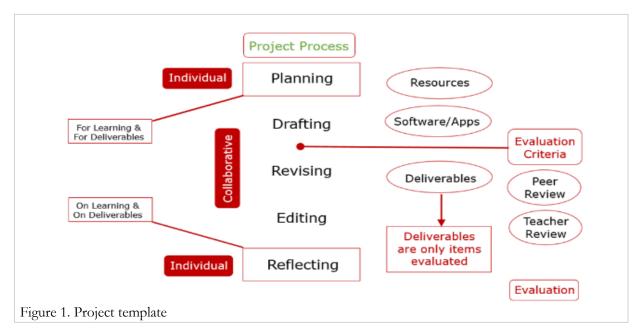
Literacy is rhetorical. Literacy is making considered choices, and classrooms should mirror and model these activities. Since literacy is never simply reading or writing, literacy is better understood in the classroom as literate practices: the results of the complex interactions among writer(s), readers, texts, and contexts (Brandt, 2011; Selber, 2004). And since these practices are both cognitive and social (Cushman, Kintgen, Kroll, & Rose, 2001), we can easily create classroom spaces that encourage more collaborative activities, privilege informal and situated learning, and promote decision-making, student self-monitoring, and lifelong learning—all features of literate practices. Unfortunately, in many departments and programs across the country, course development follows a traditional knowing-what approach. This means courses

are distinguished by how much you know, with pathways to knowledge approved from the top down and enforced through a series of prerequisites and program-approved gateways. In direct opposition to this traditional approach, I would like to briefly describe classroom practices that encourage a more collaborative approach, privilege informal and situated learning, and promote ubiquitous and lifelong learning, thereby increasing learner control, learner choice, and learner independence.

In my mind, any course or program that promotes literacy or literacies must account for different students with different skill sets and different experiences when they physically walk in the door or virtually log in. We must create classrooms that build from where each student is, to engage each of them in the middle of their own conversations in order to help them more effectively join in the middle of already-ongoing disciplinary conversations. In other words, literacy and literate practices are context-specific and context-dependent, so students in the classroom should learn how to be sensitive to the ways they will engage and contribute to the larger ongoing discourses in which they wish to participate. We interact orally, graphically, and visually in specific ways for specific purposes. Thinking of literacy in this way clarifies that a primary goal of our courses and our classrooms should be to help students develop the skills, tools, and habits of mind necessary for

successful literate practice at the university and beyond.

In order for students to do all this, I offer a project template we use in our Professional Writing program (see Figure 1). Our frame-

Figure 1. Project template

work begins with a minimal amount of readings and resources to get students started toward achieving the initial project aims. I use the word "initial" quite consciously because it forces us to build in the time necessary for students to work, to play, to make mistakes, to share, to collaborate: in other words, to learn. We see our projects, like students' learning, as developmental and recursive, as evolving through the stages represented in this graphic, but we expect the progress to be recursive, not linear: learners move back and forth among the stages as they work toward submission of project deliverables.

We believe strongly that literacy is social practice, so we want students to engage with the class, to share knowledge and ask questions, to be sensitive to their own learning needs while, at the same time, contributing to the larger ongoing conversations. This open atmosphere helps students learn about and learn how to choose and use a wide range of strategies that will aid in their critical learning and reflective literate

practices. We want students to personalize their experience with the project, to develop from where they are, currently, in their thinking and skill levels. Less obviously, but perhaps more importantly, literacy should be understood in the sense that individuals never fully master it or develop to a point where literacy is automatic. They learn for a lifetime; therefore, literacy is best understood as conscious and considered. By promoting an open and collaborative environment, one that encourages and rewards sharing, experimentation, and personalization, we find our students genuinely interested in helping one another learn.

In order for a project to resonate with students' lives and imagined futures, it should be student-driven. We expect students to take control of the projects and develop them to fit their learning goals. In all of the projects, every student contributes resources, such as readings, but they also use and review software or apps that are relevant to a particular project and share their experiences with the rest of the class. This helps them define their own learning goals for building literacies and meeting the project aims. For us, this occurs most seamlessly in the planning stage and the reflecting stage, a time when

students can articulate what they want to learn and how they will do it. This requires our projects be purposeful and have meaning for the students. Students need to engage with the work, even if it's purely for their own reasons, so they can feel like they are accomplishing things or doing something to learn for themselves. More importantly, student work should not be limited to or defined as just the deliverables, which are merely artifacts for a course rather than models for lifelong learning.

These early stages help students explore and establish a context for the project so they understand it well enough to begin to discuss how their work should be evaluated, for we develop the evaluation criteria as a class. This includes an explicit understanding that part of their reflection should address the ways that they have met the criteria relative to their own learning goals for the project. Once evaluation criteria are negotiated and agreed upon, drafts of the deliverables can be completed for the first time. On this side of the project, student work should go through multiple iterations. We might characterize these iterations as lower-order or higher-order: in writing, the difference between line edits and revisions; in reading, the difference between understanding a word and understanding a concept. In practice, this might mean working in small groups with peers, working in small groups with the teacher, or working in large groups with the teacher. Again, we must provide the time to allow individual students to make their own connections in order to feel a sense of accomplishment. The goal here is to model the recursivity of learning, to encourage trust in multiple perspectives, and to allow for the time necessary to develop quality thought.

Finally, we are adamant that only the deliverables for a project be evaluated. Real success in the literacy classroom, for us, comes when the majority of the work is participatory, a contribution to each student's own learning and to the learning of their classmates. To reiterate one more time, the key to all of this is time. We have to be patient and provide the time for students to explore, the time to experiment, and the time to fail, before they make the move to final insights. If a teacher is primarily concerned with coverage, then real learning—and learning in the future—will suffer.

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Remediation in the 21ˢᵗ Century

Laurie Bauer

University of Cincinnati, Blue Ash College

One of the first articles I read when I started teaching developmental courses was Mina Shaughnessy's (1976) "Diving In: An Introduction to Basic Writing." At the time, I took the article as the title suggested: as an introduction to basic writing, the students I would teach and, perhaps, some of the challenges and difficulties I would face. Many years later, I read this article with a much different perspective. Knowing very well that developmental students are often placed on a scale of development, Shaughnessy suggests that a scale for developmental education teachers would be insightful and could show the progress teachers can make through their teaching career. This scale is in response to her experiences and observations and includes four stages, all of which include a "metaphor intended to suggest what lies at the center of the teacher's emotional energy during that stage" (p. 234). I'm revisiting her article now because I've seen a shift in the students I teach and realize I need to work to not just understand my current students but ensure that I am understanding my role and responsibilities as their developmental education instructor.

The first stage, GUARDING THE TOWER, positioned the teacher as the guard protecting the academy while negotiating with preconceptions of the students and their chance for succeeding in such an institution. During this stage, teachers may begin to see and experience some of the difficulties of their students but, in order to protect the academy and themselves, they hold the same expectations and do not adjust their

pedagogies. In the second stage, CONVERTING THE NATIVES, teachers realize there are students who have the potential to "catch up" (Shaughnessy, 1976, p. 235), and they set out to reach these students and help fill their educational void. Once they realize that perhaps these students find the topics difficult and that not all students retain and understand information at the same pace, teachers move to the third stage, SOUNDING THE DEPTHS. In this stage, teachers begin to process the difficulties their students are having with writing and begin to think about them on different levels. The focus moves away from the specific errors students are making to the reasons and processes behind those errors. The fourth and final stage is DIVING IN. This stage emphasizes that teachers who have made it this far, who have advanced in the rough prior stages and are still in the profession of teaching basic writers, have important choices to make. These choices require the teacher to not only think about themselves but also about their students. It is in this stage, where, I believe, the "work" of the classroom changes and transforms and ultimately has the biggest impact on the learners—in this case, both the students and teacher.

When teachers "dive in," Shaughnessy (1976) suggests they have to make cognitive and pedagogical changes that would not only benefit themselves as educators, but their students as well. She highlights this difficulty by suggesting that teachers in the diving in stage must have determination and courage to

continue to make the "decision to remediate himself, to become a student of new disciplines and of his students themselves in order to perceive both their difficulties and their incipient excellence" (p. 238). In effect, she is challenging all teachers to take into consideration the background and experiences of their students, as well as the knowledge they gain from these various lived differences. Shaughnessy (1976) suggests that teachers need to spend more time getting to know their students—their lives, their experiences—and then use this information to help them succeed. I've spent years "working" and learning about and from my students. I've gone through Shaughnessy's different stages—at times working through the stages in the linear movement I believe they were intended, but at other times falling back into a prior stage making Shaughnessy's scale more of a recursive process. I would find myself making pedagogical strides only to be pushed back to a prior stage when something failed, like when I questioned student's ability or questioned my own beliefs on the importance of developmental education.

As Shaughnessy (1976) recommends, educators need to remediate themselves. As I reflect on what has worked to help me achieve and maintain the diving in status of teaching, I can't help but think about what I have learned—and continue to learn—about my students and their learning processes. I keep coming back to two learning theories I was introduced to early in my career but have different meanings for me today: schema theory and social learning theory. First, it is imperative that educators understand what students know so that they can connect that information to new knowledge. McGuire (2015) explains that all students bring prior knowledge and experiences to the classroom. This knowledge and these experiences can help or hinder learning depending on the accuracy, appropriateness, and completeness. Unfortunately, the experiences and background knowledge students need in order to make sense of and navigate through the topics and texts explored within their college courses is often not sufficient. Without the proper background knowledge and schema, students meaning-making and learning processes are often not as fluent. Since background knowledge and schema are directly tied to learning and meaning-making (Kucer, 2014; VanderLind, 2018), modeling and providing students with opportunities to further develop in this area are necessary for more successful outcomes within the college classroom. Spending more time preparing my students for an assignment through acquiring essential background knowledge not only increases comprehension but can increase motivation and retention as well.

Second, my view on social learning theory has changed considerably throughout my teaching career. When first introduced to Bandura (1977) and his work, I appreciated the idea of student-centered learning and the importance of social interaction. These ideas continue to drive my pedagogical choices; however, in light of digital literacies and technologies in which students are immersed today, I have found the importance of observational learning, the act of modeling, and exhibiting self-efficacy as vital for understanding their learning processes. As reported, students spend a considerable amount of time with technology (Smith, Raine & Zickuhr, 2011; Williams, 2008). Since they have the desire and motivation to learn about and use technology, it's important to look at their technological experiences and make connections between and among those learning processes. Today's students are accustomed to learning from others through the use of observation and modeling. They perhaps choose technology over these more traditional educational experiences because they feel more confident with that choice and are often more successful. Technology has changed everyone's learning processes and the way we receive and acquire new information. Understanding these changes in my students is necessary for successful remediation of my teaching beliefs and practices.

No more should we look at students as lacking or deficient. Instead, we should look at ourselves as teachers and realize that we have a lot to learn about ourselves and our students. These ideas put into perspective one of Shaughnessy's (1976) main claims about developmental education. That is, when we, as teachers, make the effort to learn more about our students "we begin to see that the greatest barrier to our work with them is our ignorance of them and of the very subject we have contracted to teach" (p. 238).

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"Work" as Taking and Making Place

Joanne Rose Andres Castillo
University of Utah

Claudia Itzel Sauz Mendoza
University of Utah

Romeo García
University of Utah

Christie Toth
University of Utah

Joanne: A second-generation Filipina-American in her mid-30s, my academic experience began in 1998 and was punctuated by repeated failures, with long stints in corporate America. Originally a STEM major, I understand work happens only when the force of friction that prevented the movement of an object is overcome, thereby causing the object to move ($W=F_s\Delta d$).

There are experiences that illustrate this scenario. The mindset that everything valuable comes from academia frames the student simply as a receiver of knowledge. This reality is intensified by racist and discriminatory environments that exist in varying degrees on most campuses across the U.S. My voice in these spaces highlights hidden frictions by removing layers of generations of dominant narrative. Here, the Force of Static Friction (F_s) that prevented these mindsets from moving could be defined another way: $F_s=\mu_s N$, where N is the number of students who supposedly don't complain about these behaviors, and μ_s represents the stickiness of pedagogical systems, reward structures, and hegemonic reinforcements encouraging the internalization and repetition of those practices.

But through recent encounters with some professors, I learned that my knowledges and experiences bring value to academia. These encounters repositioned me as a co-contributor instead of only a consumer on campus; I saw my professors as possible partners in learning. I disrupt the equilibrium of the academy by challenging others to think differently in classrooms or in administrative meetings where I've advocated for myself. I've leveraged the knowledges gained through my experiences to work against injustices I see in class and on campus by introducing my voice, stories, and perspectives typically unheard in Predominantly White Institutional spaces. My perspectives will not be part of the ignored! Instead, my voice reduces N and slowly erodes elements of μ_s so that F_s can be overcome: work is accomplished.

The shift from "everything valuable comes from academia" to "I bring value to academia" is evidence of the work done in me. Whenever different experiences and perspectives are considered, the predominant narrative is questioned, a mindset is moved, and work is done. If folks are willing to consider the realities and histories of others, work can happen.

Romeo and Christie: At the University of Utah, we regularly teach courses in which the majority of students are white Utahns. When these students are asked to undertake critiques of place-and-people(s)-based stories—stories linked to race, religion, and settler colonialism—they often articulate responses grounded in claims of local innocence, of not-in-Utahism. Should we read the resistance that emerges in classroom interactions as problematic? Or, should resistance be understood and approached as a condition of possibility generated by the presence of relations and the opportunity for those relations to go to work? We turn to a classroom moment in which we borrow from Joanne's physics-based discussion of work and the concept of friction as theorized by Anna Tsing (2005). Tsing unveils the grip that interactions and exchanges can have on the circulations and flow of power, as well as the possibility of friction to co-produce knowledges and meanings.

Romeo: In fall 2017, racist flyers were posted on our campus the week before classes started. I was teaching an intermediate writing course. It was a majority white class, and all students were either from or had strong roots in Utah. I decided to begin with the flyers. We'd focus on how the university responded and what sense of responsibility we had to address racism on campus and in Utah. However, there was a literacy at work for some students: "We didn't know that still happens." Resistance became more explicit as I tasked them to study—by recording, documenting, analyzing, and interpreting—the rhetorical work of storytelling and stories of/about us. Resistance was generated because their foundations were being challenged by new stories entering their lives. But herein lay the potential for work, the grip between their stories, bodies, and knowledges and mine, to produce new movement and energy. I wanted them to know that stories, like place, are not fixed; that they can re-make both.

One of the prospects of the work of literacy and rhetorical instruction is a wearing down of foundations via friction. The possibility of new stories is what we seek out in our Department of Writing & Rhetoric Studies. So, I invited my colleagues Christie Toth and Jon Stone to visit my class. They teach about local religious rhetorics of settler colonialism, and they are familiar with some of the literacies flowing through these communities. I hoped their engagement with place-and-people(s)-based stories in Utah would introduce a new and generative kind of friction.

Christie: When the flyers appeared, our faculty responded by composing an anti-racism statement to be hung throughout the department, a counter-flyering we hoped would do rhetorical work. "We value the many ways of speaking, writing, and being that students and faculty bring to our classrooms," it said. "We commit to engaging in teaching, learning, and scholarship that strengthens our communities beyond the university." During our visit to Romeo's class, Jon and I made three moves we hoped would generate friction. We modeled willingness as white people to interrogate the place-and-people(s)-based stories in our own heritages. We showed a video I made with students reflecting on settler colonial rhetorics at a local public memory place. Finally, I shared a friend's essay about the violent hate crime he experienced in Salt Lake City. We hoped these stories would disrupt the flow of not-in-Utahism.

Romeo and Christie: The future of literacy instruction must have co-worker relations and co-working opportunities as consubstantial to conceptions of work. Without such my semester might have turned out differently. Students may not have asked to write blogs on white privilege, chosen to present on racism in Utah, and/or engaged in dialogue with students who truly did resist. The future, both of the academy and the classroom, must foreground students' understanding of work. Friction, perhaps,

affords us a pedagogical concept for such work. To model the kind of work we envision, we close with one more student narrative.

Claudia: As a student of color, I wonder if the work I put in, of speaking back to the academy, actually matters? Speaking back creates a type of friction. But will I be heard? So, who benefits? I think about the anti-racist and white-supremacist document signed by faculty. It is displayed on faculty doors and at the entrance of the department. Despite the absence of student input, it suggests that this space is inclusive and liberal. I often wonder if the creation of the document is business as usual. So, who is responsible for putting in the work, beyond words on paper, of keeping the department accountable? These questions are central because students like me continue to experience racism in college literacy classrooms. And yet, the academy has created a systematic culture that teaches students to see activism as a call to responsibility. Activism, which overwhelmingly tends to rely upon students of color, cannot save us from oppression. It can create friction that can result in more equitable environments.

Despite feelings of skepticism, I continue to put in work, which brings me to the topic of the department's Writing Center (WC) and the ways in which it has overtly and obscurely fostered racism. The word center translates into a space, place, locus, and/or core. A student's rhetorical agency over their bodies is automatically reduced by having to go or move to a space determined by the institution to be the place where students have access to literacy instruction. No matter the pedagogical approach to tutoring, then, there is a form of management and control over student bodies. What if there were no place and no center that provides writing services? My work has involved developing a "Mobile Writing and Reading Assistance" student service. It breaks from a fixed space where literacy work takes and makes place and shifts to a model for and by students. This work, however, would not be possible if not for: (1) my own experiences as a student of color working within this WC, and (2) co-worker relations with faculty that inspired co-working opportunities within and beyond the literacy classroom.

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What Literacy Faculty Should Know and Be Able to Do: Reading as Literacy Work

Alice S. Horning

Oakland Univeristy

Teaching writing and/or leading a writing program can seem like a huge undertaking in combination with teaching reading: few faculty members with degrees in English feel prepared for the reading component of literacy work. Reading, however, is one area of theory and practice that is commonly neglected and urgently needed as preparation for literacy work. Carillo's (2015) recent study of current English/writing studies faculty suggests half of the 100 instructors in her survey said they felt they lack the training and background to help students become effective, efficient, critical readers (p. 32). She also cites David Jolliffe, who says that faculty do "not have access to ample resources to help them think about a model of active constructive reading in the courses or about strategies for putting that model into play" (2007, p. 478). While Carillo's survey is admittedly preliminary, it offers a sense that graduate students and current faculty who hold degrees in writing studies and related areas are not able to work on reading in literacy classrooms.

A further problem is that students' reading abilities are not as strong as they could be and should be. There is a growing pile of evidence for this claim from both quantitative and qualitative studies. Standardized tests, admittedly focused on short passages of text read under timed conditions and calling for multiple choice responses, such as the National Assessment of Educational Progress (2015) and ACT (2006, 2017) all show that less than half of students entering college have the reading abilities they need to be successful. Moreover, those numbers are declining. Qualitative studies like the Citation Project (Jamieson & Howard, 2016) point to students' difficulties reading sources and using them appropriately in their own work. Students' skills online are also poor in terms of both searching and critical reading of materials they do find, as indicated by the untimed Project SAILS (2009) and iSkills (Katz, 2007) tests. The more recent work of the Stanford History Education Group (Wineburg et al., 2016) shows that something like 50-80% of the middle school, high school and college students had an "appalling" inability to judge sources on these kinds of tasks:

> (1) Article Evaluation: In an open web search, students decide if a website can be trusted; (2) Research a Claim: Students search online to verify a claim about a controversial topic; (3)Website Reliability: Students determine whether a partisan site is trustworthy; (4) Social Media Video: Students watch an online video and identify its strengths and weaknesses; (5) Claims on Social Media: Students read a tweet and explain why it might or might not be a useful source of information. (p. 6)

The Stanford researchers collected almost 8,000 student responses to tasks like these for students at the different educational levels. It

should be clear from both quantitative and qualitative studies that many students need serious help with reading.

Given the lack of faculty preparation in the teaching of reading and the need for better reading ability among students, the following set of outcomes—loosely modeled on the WPA Outcomes Statement (Council, 2014)—can help to shape both graduate programs and faculty development initiatives.

1. Faculty and graduate students in English/writing studies should themselves get help with their own reading and critical evaluation skills, including the ability to read efficiently and effectively, as well as the ability to analyze and synthesize a variety of different texts in the full range of venues.

Most of us would like to think we are capable readers; loving reading is part of why most English teachers have chosen their careers. Still, sharpening skills, especially in critical evaluation, is certainly warranted. An easy way to help students in time-pressed courses is for instructors to read aloud from material they have assigned and provide think-aloud commentary on their own reading strategies. Students often find this commentary revelatory. This strategy, however, demands that teachers tune up their own reading abilities before sharing with students.

2. Faculty and graduate students with training in teaching writing should have repeated opportunities to develop skills in critical reading and thinking, including the ability to evaluate texts for authority, accuracy, currency, relevancy, bias, and appropriateness. These opportunities should be provided in every graduate course or degree program and in professional development for current faculty doing literacy work.

This outcome puts some of the burden on graduate programs in writing studies to take two specific steps. First, a course in both developmental and critical reading pedagogy should be a requirement in every program.

Second, graduate faculty should themselves be trained in teaching critical reading techniques they can use in their own classrooms to improve graduate students' reading abilities across the whole program. In addition, above and beyond graduate programs, current faculty doing front-line literacy work should be offered professional development opportunities to develop their own reading skills and to learn classroom techniques for improving reading among all students.

3. Faculty and graduate students should be trained to teach reading along with writing and should practice this teaching as a collaborative enterprise above and beyond formal training. There are "ample resources" per Jolliffe (2007) for this training as well as assorted experts, online resources (the Global Society for Online Literacy Educators' webinars, for example), and support from librarians to achieve this outcome.

As more and more of our lives and our instructional venues move online, there is ongoing need for critical reading for everyone. Students seem to have the most trouble seeing bias; it might be true that all readers have trouble seeing bias if they rarely see, hear, or read material that offers a point of view very different from their own. I have suggested that students who have access to cable news watch Fox News if their ordinarily preferred channel is MSNBC, and vice versa. This exercise will surely expose them to readily accessible forms of bias. But reading thoroughly and critically takes specific, focused effort beyond such a superficial activity. The library faculty on every campus are thoroughly engaged in and committed to this kind of work, as demonstrated by the Association of College and Research Librarians' (2016) recently revised *Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education* document. Literacy workers at all levels should be working in regular collaboration with librarians to improve critical literacy for all students.

Literacy work is more important than ever

before in our current political, social, and economic environment. Helping students become critical thinkers will help them move toward developing expertise in critical reading and writing needed for full participation in a democratic society. Front-line literacy workers—that is, the graduate students and faculty whose main professional focus is reading and writing—bear the main responsibility to achieve this goal.

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Author's Note
An extended discussion of these issues will appear in the *Canadian Journal for Studies in Discourse and Writing* later in 2019.

The Sky is Falling

Deborah Kellner

University of Cincinnati, Clermont College

Educational skepticism is healthy, but when skeptics question the value of developmental education and find evidence to support its devaluation and demise, we must consider the reliability of their claims (Goudas & Boylan, 2012). Skeptics embrace the mistaken belief that developmental education is not working (Boatman & Long, 2017; Hodara & Xu, 2016; Papay, Murnane, & Willett, 2016; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Xu, 2016). They consider time spent, direct cost, and psychological aspects as evidence of negative impact. They say we need to recreate another system and examine new data with the hope that this time it will prove differently. While they are cautiously optimistic their new plan will work, I remain skeptical of their evidence.

In a way, then, this piece is skeptical about developmental educational skepticism. Perhaps instead of thinking that what we do is not working, we need to reconsider what is needed and how success is interpreted (Goudas & Boylan, 2012). I admit that no one has all the answers. I know this because it has taken my entire career of more than 35 years as a developmental educator to come up with some plausible solutions, and I am still working on them. This piece serves not to share possible solutions, but instead to spotlight and value the real work that happens in developmental courses.

The essence of work in the developmental classroom is murky, complicated, and unpredictable. It deals with real people who have very real obstacles. Some skeptics say that the obstacles are too big and will take too long to address (Papay, Murnane, & Willett,

2016). They believe a speedier approach is needed so that no time or money is wasted. Other skeptics say to overlook the obstacles and mainstream developmental students with prepared students in credit bearing courses that really "count" (Boylan, Levine Brown, & Anthony, 2017). They say to offer additional support and somehow developmental students will magically progress as they model behaviors of the prepared students. Despite the evidence of what really works, or lack thereof, institutions' quantifiable data do not hear the voices or the stories of the underprepared. It may be that what really works is undefinable. What works for one may not work for the masses because real people who have very real obstacles are undefinable. Their individual successes get lost in the data.

Teaching developmental students is extremely rewarding. Individual success may be limited when compared to prepared students but, when it happens, all the research in the world cannot refute the immeasurable feeling of students who finally believe that they can not only survive but thrive in academia. Overall, I think I have done a good job of working with developmental students. I feel good about the students I have reached. I have watched them blossom; yet, I know that, for these students, the credit goes to them. They are the ones who have had to embrace the success model and carry it forward. They are the ones who have learned resiliency from previous experiences and need to apply it here and now. The credit goes to others, too, faculty and staff who are involved in their

individual stories (Rose, 2015). These professionals have the intuitive ability to put students at ease, no matter the course, and help them truly believe that success is possible and then work tirelessly with them. When the skeptics say that the success numbers are too limited and that change is necessary, that we have not helped enough students to make it worth the effort to maintain these first-year developmental courses, I know the small numbers that are so readily ignored speak volumes.

Every student has a captivating story that offers a glimpse of the sociocultural and academic chaos from their past. Sometimes, even they do not know how to tell their story in a college setting. They come with individual, unread texts of themselves. They come with thirteen years of schooling that have left them with feelings of inadequacies. They are deemed at risk because of their past academic performance, incoming placement scores, and low literacy levels. They need time: time to acclimate, time to develop necessary literacy skills, time to believe in themselves, time to trust in the system that has failed them before, time to make connections with faculty, and time to embrace the success model and create a whole new identity (Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011). Skeptics say we do not have enough time for all of this, that there is work to be done and we must focus solely on completion. Regardless, the faculty connections these students make help support their evolving identity and small snippets of growth begin to emerge—for some. For others, the connections combined with a strong, inviting environment are not enough, and some continue to have difficulties and need even more time.

Developmental students are extremely unpredictable. Because I do not always understand them, I try to capture some wisdom from written assignments and classroom behaviors in order to be able to define the undefinable. For many, it is a case of randomness.

Case one: A "random" kid. Robin (pseudonym) writes about her high school experience and she is clear about one thing. She feels like she does not fit in. She describes a high-school senior year activity where each student receives compliments from all the others in class. She is surprised when other people think she is a really good person and actually notice a "random kid" like her.

Case two: Collective randomness in my developmental class. The college culture is everywhere—logo headband, cap, t-shirt, sweatshirt, bag, and even earrings. They appear college ready; they look the part. Yet, as students, they are complex and mysterious; their literacy needs are diverse and multi-faceted. Even so, the openness to transition into a successful student identity is apparent by their presence. As past behaviors are challenged, there is hope that I can help them blend into the complex community of college readers and writers.

First year developmental courses are filled with "random" kids. Even the skeptics will acknowledge this. But this randomness also adds a new dimension: their difficulties with school success are not solely literacy-related. They may have not yet mastered the art of reading and writing but they have also not yet mastered the art of success. If we ignore their randomness and only address their literacy needs, we make little progress. The data does not tell their full story. Their developing identities are fragile, and they need time to embrace what success really feels like (Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011). Only with time will we learn their stories.

When the obstacles are undefinable and what works is undefinable, then measuring success becomes undefinable. First-year literacy courses work even when what works is undefinable. They familiarize underprepared students with the demanding expectations of college (Karp & Bork, 2014) within the confines of an accepting environment. As literacy skills and self-confidence build, insecurities melt away. Only then do students begin to trust the system and feel a sense of

belonging. The reality is that the sky isn't falling. Instead, the sky is the limit as these students create their successful school identities. I want to embrace their randomness and their inadequacies. This is the real work that happens in a developmental classroom.

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The Spectrum of Service: Refocusing Academic Work through a Military Lens

Brenda Helmbrecht
California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo
Dan Reno
University of Nevada, Reno

Put the welfare of the nation, the Army and your subordinates before your own. Selfless service is larger than just one person. . . . The basic building block of selfless service is the commitment of each team member to go a little further, endure a little longer, and look a little closer to see how he or she can add to the effort.
 —*The U.S. Army Values*

Activities other than research and teaching...have little exchange value, no matter how highly they might be valued on an individual basis by fellow faculty, by administrators, or society…they generally appear under the ill-defined and seldom-rewarded category of "service" in promotion and tenure evaluations, a category to which the work of writing administrators is too often relegated.
 —*Evaluating the Intellectual Work of Writing Administration, Council of Writing Program Administrators*

In higher education, faculty, administrators, and students often use the term "work" casually: we go to work, we do our work, and we always have work left to finish. Thus, we appreciate the journal's editors asking us to slow down and fully consider our work as instructors and scholars in the field of composition studies. Here we explore what it means to approach work through the lens of service. While service is an essential component of academic work, we seldom explore how the two concepts inform one another. As a WPA and an Army veteran, we decided to join our unique notions of service to reconceptualize the term to highlight how service shapes our teaching and research. When we began collaborating, we found common ground in how we conceived of the "ethic of service" that shapes our work. Moreover, Dan's military background influenced our thinking about where and how service fits into the work we do as compositionists. Much of our work is supported by a commitment to service, a term we understand to mean more than academic titles or the committees we sit on and goes beyond personal military aspirations. By refocusing service as central to knowledge production, we can newly theorize how ideas are generated, disseminated, and consumed in our field.

In *Terms of Work for Composition* (2000), Bruce Horner describes three conventions for using the term "work." Horner regards work "simultaneously as an activity, the product of that activity, and the place of its practice" (p. xvii). In other words, work is located in our teaching practices, the writing we produce,

and our institutions and classrooms. Further, when instructors and students meet in academic spaces, they collaboratively shape and define each other's work. We interrogated the relationship between service and work in our unique experiences to create a foundational definition for our collaboration as student and instructor. In supporting Dan as a graduate TA, Brenda wanted to understand and validate Dan's experiences as a soldier, including the literacies he developed during his service. By identifying service as a commonplace for our work, we could identify and understand our "ideological assumptions" about each other's work from a relative vantage point (Horner, 2000, p. 7).

To explore the relationship between work and service, we consulted texts that explicitly address the work of Writing Program Administrators, in part because service and work seem closely intertwined within administration. Linda Adler-Kassner's (2008) *The Activist WPA: Changing Stories about Writing and Writers,* Theresa Enos and Shane Borrowman's (2008) edited collection, *The Promise and Perils and Writing Program Administration*, and Susan H. McLeod's (2007) *Writing Program Administration* help us frame the work we do together, but these texts do not explore service. Paul Heilker and Peter Vandenberg's (2015) edited collection, *Keywords in Writing Studies,* offers detailed discussions of thirty-six terms that shape the field, yet it also omits "service." In contrast, Horner (2000) highlights the commitments that become "lumped under 'service,'" a nebulous catch-all category for committee work, assessment, advising, and leadership positions (p. 2). As Horner suggests, service is hard to make concrete and to commodify, unlike the number of classes we teach or articles we publish. If service is an important part of our work—and we believe it is—understanding who and what we serve could further ground our teaching and scholarship. Each point on the academic triad—teaching, scholarship, and service—should equally inform each other as they constitute our work.

Positioning composition "on the border between the realms of the academic and the social" (Horner, 2000, p. 3) enables us to look outside the confines of our own discipline to understand how we work and serve. Military discourse may seem an unlikely reference point for academics seeking to understand their work, yet thousands of veteran students across the country certainly have much to teach faculty. In the introduction to their 2015 anthology, *Generation Vet: Composition, Student Veterans, and the Post-9/11 University,* Sue Doe and Lisa Langstraat explore the complex relationship between civilian faculty and veteran students on college campuses, noting that these individuals' "values overlap in significant ways" (p. 18). We see such an overlap with work and service. Military leaders compose lesson plans, teach, and reflect with new soldiers while maintaining effective communication through writing and speech—pedagogical tasks akin to teaching first-year writing. Further, the military's conception of service offers valuable insight as we consider the larger causes that can be served by written literacies. Service is an essential element of veterans' literacies, and by understanding what service means in this realm, faculty may be able to understand their own work differently.

If we regard our own service as carrying the same intellectual and emotional weight as teaching and research, we could develop a more resonant definition of work. Dan regards service as a value he established in the Army: viewing his new role within academia through service provides a sense of security and belonging for his military/service identity and adds rhetorical weight to his ethos. Further, when work has been emblazoned in service—work that is recognized, distinguished, and selfless—an ethical individual cannot help but always work with a higher level of determination. Similar to soldiers asking for the toughest missions, the best scholars pursue more demanding texts and work to achieve advanced knowledge in their fields. The parallel is not perfect, yet we can glean new meanings about work by

considering how servicemembers and scholars offer their training and expertise to their communities with an understanding that such work may require sacrificing one's personal life, time, and even money. In some ways, service is an individual choice and a selfless act, much like taking an oath of military service or the noble dedication to student learning. When work has been imbued with service, one cannot help but perform at a higher and more fulfilling level.

When we revised this piece on Veterans Day, which marked the 100th anniversary of the WWI armistice, we also celebrated Dan's third year as a veteran. Dan's conception of service became ingrained in him during the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command. What remains is the shouting of a Drill Sergeant, someone who instilled a sense of pride in some soldiers for the first time in their lives by telling them to value the choice they made to serve and defend. A dedication to ideals can motivate those who serve and become the nucleus of service. Echoes of this experience influenced Dan as he noted Brenda's dedication towards his academic development, particularly in fostering the intersection of his military and scholarly work. She closely assessed his work, motivated him, and pushed him for deeper thinking and reflection. When mentoring drifted out of the classroom into office hour chats, walks across campus, and coffee shops, Dan made a connection: this is service, too.

As a non-commissioned officer, Dan was familiar with the time and effort involved in mentoring soldiers, an experience that contextualized how he understood Brenda's commitment to his academic work. From our own experiences, we see service as the vigilant polishing of one's scholarly ethos through committed praxis to one's students and field. Of course, the term service is far from neutral, as service carries echoes of volunteerism, altruism, and sacrifice—hence, the Army's use of the phrase "selfless service." While we have begun to unpack the meaning of work and service, we also have more thinking to do. Yet, we maintain that by exploring work through the lens of service, we might be able to elevate the work we do to an even higher standard, one that deserves greater merit and recognition.

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Book Review

Sullivan, P., Tinberg, H., & Blau, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Deep Reading: Teaching Reading in the Writing Classroom*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Vanessa Kraemer Sohan

Florida International University

In a recent episode of the teaching-related podcast, *Cult of Pedagogy*, host Jennifer Gonzalez interviewed literacy educator Pernille Ripp about how to counter the trend in K-12 education toward what Louise Rosenblatt (1978) termed efferent reading, a skills-based approach to reading instruction that conceives of texts as containers for information, rather than a source of aesthetic pleasure. In a write-up about the episode on the *Cult of Pedagogy* blog, Gonzalez highlights this quote from Ripp about the state of reading in today's K-12 contexts, "We're constantly reading for skill. . . . We're constantly asking kids to *do something* with their reading, and then wondering why they're choosing to leave us and never picking up another book. They can't wait to get out of school so that they don't have to read" (2017, para. 12; emphasis in original).

The conversation between Gonzalez and Ripp echoes the problem posed by *Deep Reading: Teaching Reading in the Writing Classroom*, part of the NCTE series that also includes *What Is "College-Level" Writing?* (2006) and *What is "College-Level" Writing? Volume 2: Assignments, Readings, and Student Writing Samples* (2010), both edited by Patrick Sullivan, Howard Tinberg, and Sheridan Blau, as well as the WAC Clearinghouse eBook *What is College Reading?* (2017) edited by Alice S. Horning, Deborah-Lee Gollnitz, and Cynthia R. Haller. Not only are current approaches to reading in secondary and postsecondary contexts contributing to what Kelly Gallagher (2009) termed "'readicide'—'the systematic killing of the love of reading, often exacerbated by the inane, mind numbing practices found in schools," (as cited in Sullivan, Tinberg, & Blau, 2017, p. xv), but statistics from the Nation's Report Card (2016) also suggest that proficiency in reading is down among 12th graders. The editors sound the alarm, noting that the trend toward simplistic, mechanical approaches to reading has resulted in declines in reading comprehension that have serious implications for our democracy.

As the mother of a second-grader in the public school system in Florida, I have come to understand the reading problem on a more personal level. As I try to shepherd my son through his education, I have become increasingly frustrated with a standardized test-dominated system in which mindless rather than mindful reading practices (see Carillo in this volume)—including formulaic written responses to mind-numbing reading comprehension passages—have taken over from interactions with real books. Even the corporate programs that supplement such approaches with real books, e.g., *Accelerated Reader*, cost schools thousands of dollars and promote reading among well-established readers, while doing little to develop a long-term love of reading in all students, particularly young readers who are struggling. This, according to the research available that is not sponsored by the programs themselves (see Mallette, Henk, & Melnick, 2004; Biggers, 2001). In my son's elementary school, even *Accelerated Reader* is being slowly phased out in the upper-elementary grades in favor of computer programs such as *iReady*, which tracks students' progress toward state standards by exposing them to, you guessed it, more reading passages but with cute cartoon monsters to guide them on their way.

As an assistant professor in one of the largest Hispanic-Serving Institutions in the country, Florida International University, I have had numerous conversations with college students—a diverse set of largely first-generation, multilingual students—about their reading and writing experiences in the Florida public school system. These conversations have been haunted by the specter of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test, now Florida Standards Assessments, the standardized tests that shaped so many of their literacy and learning experiences during elementary, middle, and high school. Based on these conversations, I would agree that many of today's students are in danger of becoming what Gonzalez (2017) calls collateral damage of a highly problematic approach to reading, unfortunately characteristic of both K-12 and university contexts, which "positions readers as passive recipients of information and defines reading primarily as a kind of text-focused close reading" rather than actively engaged with constructing meaning in texts (Sullivan, Tinberg, & Blau, 2017, p. xiii).

In order to support deep reading and deep readers, this collection seeks to disrupt passive, skills-based approaches to reading by offering a more thoughtful take on the connection between reading and writing—an approach grounded in theory and tested in practice by college and secondary teachers and students. Building on the work of Rosenblatt (1978; 1995) and other important, but often overlooked, theorists of reading in secondary and postsecondary education, the editors of this reflective collection have aligned themselves with Rosenblatt's belief "that a great deal is at stake when students read—for individual development and growth, for the health of our communities, and for the strength of our democracy" (Sullivan, Tinberg, & Blau, 2017, p. xxiii). We must do more, and we must do better when it comes to reading.

If reading is so high-stakes, then why hasn't rhetoric and composition as a field taken it up more often and more seriously? Disciplinary scholarship on reading spiked in the 1980s but dropped off again in the 1990s. And although the conversation has continued in recent years, reading has largely been viewed as separate from, rather than part of, composition studies. Moreover, there has been in our field what could generously be called a slow uptake—and more accurately identified as a neglect—of the work of reading scholars (see, for example, Atwell, 2007; Miller, 2009; Newkirk, 2012; Smith & Wilhelm, 2002; Wolf, 2008). The trend could be attributed to the disciplinary tensions between literature and rhetoric and composition: If we're not teaching literature, then what are we teaching? Nowadays, most

first-year writing instructors teach rhetorical approaches to reading, a trend which has filtered into the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Compositionists need to know more about reading and "develop a theory of writing that is informed by the central role that reading plays in the production of knowledge and meaning" (Sullivan, Tinberg, & Blau, 2017, p. xix). Sullivan, Tinberg, and Blau's collection seeks to fill that gap.

The repetition of the Nation's Report Card (2016) statistics by multiple contributors throughout the volume might seem to perpetuate rather than disrupt the overblown crisis rhetoric of the reading problem trope. However, reading can be more fairly characterized as a problem when deep reading is defined according to college-level reading practices. Citing Kevin Kelly's (2016) differentiation between reading and screening, Horning writes in the Afterword of this collection, "If we want, as I think we do, readers who can do 'deep reading'—that is, readers who can stay focused and follow a narrative or argument—then yes, there really *is* a problem with reading" (emphasis in original, pp. 355-356). If we can better understand what college-level reading entails and how to engage students in such reading in the classroom, we can perhaps overcome the readiness gap that faculty and administrators in two-year and four-year institutions have observed (see Cecchini in this volume).

The contributors have thus mostly been able to move beyond overly-simplistic characterizations of the problem to offer a diverse set of useful strategies for educators, particularly in grades 6-13, to engage students in the work of deep reading. Moreover, they are careful to avoid the trap of "teach up" or "blame down" rhetoric (see Adler-Kassner in this volume), instead arguing that K-12 and college-level faculty in all disciplines and at all levels need to address the systemic problems that contribute to this problem, and that college-level writing faculty can and should

address reading more directly in their classrooms.

As the daughter of a literacy professor, educator, and public school administrator dedicated to promoting best practices for teaching English Language Learners, I have been ingrained with a healthy skepticism of the systems of power in place, but also with a profound hope in the possibility for teachers to engage in the kind of work promoted in this collection: "to help nurture skilled, passionate, habitual, critical, joyful, lifelong readers across all grade levels and especially across institutional boundaries in US high schools and colleges" (Sullivan, Tinberg, & Blau, 2017, p. xx).

Part I: The Nature of the Problem sets the stage by establishing the obstacles teachers and students face, including chapters from postsecondary (Jolliffe) and secondary (Morris) perspectives, while also addressing how technology shapes our reading and writing practices (Blake Yancey, Craig, Davis, & Spooner), and how reading is taught across the disciplines (Courtmanche).

David Jolliffe's chapter identifies the reading problem as "the failure of the field in general to interrogate the roles that reading plays in high school and college writing and to recognize the paucity of theories, methods, and materials teachers have in both settings to develop more informed perspectives about themselves as teachers of reading" (p. 3). This chapter situates the reading problem in the context of the CCSS and the Council of Writing Program Administrators' (CWPA) "Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition." Notably, the 2014 CWPA revision of the outcomes statement paid greater attention to the expectations readers have related to their disciplines and to the importance of exposing writers to a diverse set of texts who do different kinds of rhetorical and generic work than previous versions. Jolliffe points to the work of scholars who have helped the field update its understanding of reading as integral to writing

practice and offers fourteen propositions related to the problem of defining reading. He ends the chapter with a number of useful questions about how to define, implement, and establish the study of reading in college contexts, and how to work with and against the definitions of reading established by standardized approaches in K-12 contexts. Jolliffe also wonders whether reading and writing should always be connected, and whether a college course devoted to reading alone may need to be established in order to deal with the reading problem.

Sam Morris's chapter reflects on his experience as a new high school English teacher, offering useful context for understanding the very real challenges faced by high school teachers, including the lack of material resources and the pushback they get from administration when trying to work within/against the limitations of their particular material contexts. In spite of these challenges, Morris argues he and other teachers have found ways to teach reading in innovative ways that engage their students. In Morris's case, reading Stephanie Meyer's novel *Twilight* enabled him to connect with students and find short-term solutions to the reading problem in high school. His essay highlights the lack of long-term solutions to the very real and immediate problem of the ways reading and writing are understood and taught in K-12 contexts.

Given the multiplicity of different texts and reading experiences, Kathleen Blake Yancey, Jacob W. Craig, Matthew Davis, and Michael Spooner's chapter calls for a more thorough examination of how we read digital materials, offering particularly useful data about the reading habits of students. The authors offer useful suggestions for how we can engage students in discussions of how readers experience texts differently, depending on the device being used, and the limits and possibilities of the particular display. They argue that we need to equip students to analyze and understand the visual narratives

and design principles of the documents students read and produce, and how their choice of device allows for particular kinds of interactions with the text. Most usefully, they offer three assignments "to engage [students] in considering how we tap each of these texts to make meaning—for ourselves and for others, now and in the future" (pp. 54-55). Interestingly, these assignments, though slightly different in approach, echo the careful take on reading, particularly annotation, promoted by Rebecca S. Nowacek and Heather G. James in their chapter on working with STEM students and also Salvatori and Donahue in their discussion of summary, paraphrase, and annotation.

Part I concludes with a chapter by Jason Courtmanche, the director of the Connecticut Writing Project, who reports on a 1-credit honors course he developed titled, "Why Read? A Defense of Reading and the Humanities in a STEM-Centric Era." Courtmanche describes the evolution of the course as well as the reactions of students across the disciplines to the work of the course, which involved students in meaningful discussions about the purpose and power of literature with one another, Courtmanche, and two sophomore mentors. In their discussions, students describe the effects of the readicide identified by Gallagher (2009): though students enjoyed reading in elementary school, they lost that love of reading as a result of middle and high-school curricula that were both too fast-paced and testing-oriented. However, during the course Courtmanche saw students experience a kind of reawakening to the aesthetic pleasures of reading. Ultimately, Courtmanche found that the course, admittedly unintentionally, enabled "a bunch of future scientists, engineers, businesspeople, actuaries, pharmacists, and dentists [to come] to the conclusion that reading literary fiction not only could offer them pleasure, recreation, and escape, but could actually improve their critical understanding of the world, deepen

the emotional experience of their relationships, and foster empathy with other human being" (p. 77). Courtmanche's use of literary texts could potentially work to support the argument for the use of literary texts in the composition classroom made by Sheridan Blau in his later chapter in this volume.

Notably, Part II: Listening to Students includes the perspectives of three students (Ross, Pretzlaff, and Walls), who explore their reading and writing experiences in K-12 and college contexts. Their essays and the responses by their teachers/mentors (Pekins, Adler-Kassner, and Lunsford) reaffirm the inability of state tests to develop the love of reading that we want to nurture in our students. The students' representations of the complexity of their literacy development and their reflection on the classroom practices they have encountered provides invaluable feedback for composition teachers and would be useful to share with students when asking them to engage in the same kind of critical thinking about how their reading and writing practices connect.

Although Meredith Ross's chapter might share some characteristics with the literacy narratives we often assign in first-year composition classes, her writing style and her particular secondary and postsecondary experiences stretch—in a good way—the conventions of such narratives, in part because her educational history has been so unconventional. Ross explains how and why her parents chose to homeschool—or rather, unschool—her. This decision, she argues, enabled her to explore her interests and develop an ability to read, write, feel, and repeat. In response, John Pekins, her former community college teacher and, as it happens, homeschool advocate, writes that the traditional school system can learn much from Ross and other homeschoolers' positive experiences when given more freedom during the process of learning to read, write, and practice (Pekins, p. 98).

Whereas Ross was thoroughly unschooled and, therefore, nearly untouched by more formal and formulaic approaches to writing and education, Evan Pretzlaff's chapter describes one student's process of academic becoming, particularly how he came to realize how and why writing is different in high school and college. He narrates how he came to understand and apply threshold concepts as they relate to his discipline, history, and how that work enabled him to grow as a reader and writer. He writes, "Through formative high school experiences, significant 'aha' moments, and the foundation that threshold concepts provide, I sought to situate history as a unique discipline, one in which threshold concepts define much of the writing I've done throughout undergrad and graduate school" (p. 116). In her response, Linda Adler-Kassner argues that we need to rethink the "blame down/teach up" model in favor of the model Pretzlaff exemplifies: one in which "learners must find ways to connect with the epistemologies of the contexts where they are learning" (p. 119).

Like Pretzlaff, Taryn "Summer" Walls reflects on how her cross-disciplinary writing and reading experiences have shaped her development as a writer. She includes excerpts from her own writing at different stages in her career—as an International Baccalaureate high school student and then as a college student—analyzing what the writing reveals about how she has improved in her thinking, reading, and writing. She enjoys the freedom of college-level writing and encourages high school and college teachers to open up their curricula—at least to a certain extent—to motivate students like her, who are willing to read and write about the things they care about. Drawing on her experience studying abroad in the U.K., she also recommends taking a page from the British system by arguing that "trying a variety of assignments, no matter how long or short, is one of the best ways for a writer to grow" (p. 131). Her mentor, Ronald F. Lunsford, reflects on the

process of working with Walls, underscoring Walls' claim that "The delicate balance between advice and a writer's autonomy requires tact and discernment, acquired from trial and error in the practice of writing" (p. 132-133): advice all teachers and students should live by when giving and receiving feedback.

The largest section of the book, Part III: Practical Strategies for Teaching Deep Reading in the Writing Classroom provides pedagogical approaches that stem from and apply to a variety of institutional contexts. The contributors are most interested in addressing approaches to reading that can be employed by teachers in grades 6-13, whom the editors see as the key agents for preparing students for college reading and writing. In the section, scholars address deep reading as a threshold concept (Sullivan); mindful reading (Carillo) and unruly reading (Salvatori & Donahue); the writing center as a reading-writing center (Harris); the best curricular, placement, and pedagogical practices for promoting student retention and success in two-year college-contexts (Hern; Tinberg); the place of literature in the discussions of deep reading (Blau); and a model intra-university collaboration on STEM-focused reading initiatives (Nowacek & James).

For Patrick Sullivan (2017), deep reading and learning should be theorized as active, generative, and problem-oriented; deep reading is a meaning-making process that allows students to wallow in complexity, confusion, and uncertainty through an engagement with "troublesome knowledge" (p. 145). Through deep reading activities, students and teachers develop a humble, cautious, and open-minded disposition that understands diverse perspectives (p. 146). Sullivan makes a connection between deep reading and the discussion of threshold concepts, which also encourages students to develop a metacognitive understanding of their processes of learning and seeing the world (2017, 147). The problem-exploring

disposition Sullivan promotes thus seeks to counter the answer-oriented culture common in both K-12 and college curricula, by giving students guidance and, most importantly, time to work against the habits of surface learning they may have developed previously (see Roberts and Roberts, 2008). Sullivan concludes with a narrative of a course he designed around "big questions," a move he argues allows him to engage students in the kind of deep learning and deep reading required to "think productively about a complex subject" (p. 157). Concluding with an argument for framing, defining, theorizing, and applying deep reading as a practice, Sullivan's essay suggests cultivating deep reading practices must be a priority of the grade 6-13 language, reading, and writing classroom.

Kelly Cecchini offers her experience as an English Language Arts high school teacher who worked closely with fellow high school and college instructors to develop a program aimed at closing the college readiness gap seen in the high percentage of her students who failed to test into credit-bearing classes at the local community college. Cecchini and her colleagues' efforts resulted in a move from only 44% of students testing out of credit-bearing courses to almost 68% testing out.

Like Cecchini, Ellen Carillo reminds readers that the work of teaching reading is not the job of a single subject area or, in college, a single discipline or field. Carillo defines mindful reading as "a *framework* that contains the range of reading strategies that students might be taught, including—but not limited to—annotation, rhetorical reading, close reading, the says/does approach, and reading like a writer" (emphasis in original, p. 190). Her aim is on mindful readers, not mindful reading, which she achieves by asking students to try out, test, and experiment, rather than master the texts they engage with in the course (p. 191). Carillo's helpful appendix offers specific prompts she has used to engage students in metacognitive, mindful

reflection on the interaction between their reading and writing practices, and how those practices transfer to other contexts.

Katie Hern—a two-year college professor with experience teaching in an accelerated, integrated reading and writing course—argues that so-called remedial courses must "provide meaningful content for students to engage with," including an engagement with difficult texts and conversations with students about what working with such texts means, as well as lots of reading and writing practice (p. 214). Hern's piece speaks to the important connection between reading and retention and success initiatives. Her work with the California Acceleration Project points to how such courses serve as gatekeepers often preventing students from completing their degrees. In addition to calling for more meaningful content, she calls for other curricular changes, including the reduction of the number of required remedial courses. Such courses can also teach the skills essential to being a student, and teachers can easily structure courses to overcome students' fears that they don't belong.

Muriel Harris's discussion of the importance of the reading-writing connection as part of the processes of writing addressed in writing center scholarship and practice calls for tutor training and further research on "(1) reading to write, (2) reading while composing, and (3) reading while revising" (p. 229). Students in the writing center demonstrate a need to engage more closely with print-based and online materials, as well as reading assignments and genres. Interestingly, Harris offers one of the only mentions in the book of multilingual writers, referencing Gillespie's (2007) work at my institution, Florida International University, with multilingual students who engage in multilingual conversations with writing tutors about the texts they are being asked to read and write about. The composing processes of writing, as demonstrated in the center, are relate to reading, and the revision students engage in depends on "reading and re-reading-re-seeing—the writing they produce themselves, both during composing drafts and when reading to revise" (p. 237). While tutors are trained in a few strategies that promote reading (reading aloud and helping students interpret instructor feedback), more work needs to be done "to reunite reading and writing instruction in the writing center" (p. 241).

Howard Tinberg reflects on his own pedagogical practice in the two-year college, historicizing both current reading trends and controversies. Tinberg also reflects on the limits and possibilities of his current approaches to teaching reading as it relates to writing and offers recommendations for teaching, including sharing our experiences as both novice and more advanced readers, giving students a road map for reading—here, Hern's reading cycle chart would also come in handy. Tinberg also makes a case for the pleasures of difficult, slow, re-reading, and the importance of collaboration with colleagues.

Chapters on bringing literature back into first-year writing (Blau) and reading in STEM disciplines (Nowacek & James) suggest the value of carefully considering what other disciplines—closely related and less closely related to our work in the humanities—can contribute to rhetoric and composition's approaches. For example, Sheridan Blau's chapter aims to revisit the debate about whether literature can be useful to writing courses. Although his chapter could be seen as fanning the dying embers of a controversy begun and, seemingly, ended long ago, he offers a broader understanding of literature, emphasizing culturally significant texts from within/across disciplines, and suggests an active approach to reading literary texts à la Rosenblatt (1995). His description of the willful ignorance of Rosenblatt's brilliant work on the part of academics in and beyond English education points to one of the reasons why his argument for returning literature to our composition textbooks merits

a listen: if we were to truly follow in Rosenblatt's footsteps, we would focus "on the emerging and continually self-correcting, text-attentive, and response-attentive character of the reader's process in a 'transactional,' mutually informing relationship with a text, as the reader, guided by the text and by the reader's emotional and cognitive experience of the text, construed, constructed, and experienced the text as a literary work of art" (p. 272). Thus, writing and reading are both viewed as processes of constituting meaning.

Rebecca Nowaceck and Heather James speak from the perspective of writing center director and instructional librarian, respectively, offering a challenging and inspirational approach to better understanding the so-called novice habits of student readers/writers in STEM fields. The authors look for examples of "writing over reading" behaviors, which they argue help to explain the behaviors of college-level readers that we might otherwise view as "novice," such as cherry-picking quotations, jumping around in the text, and making personal connections (p. 304). In fact, expert STEM readers engage in these practices as well; however, novice readers lack a refined mental map of the field, and so engage in lower-level versions of these expert writing over reading practices. Nowaceck and James briefly describe a course for honors STEM students in which they engage students in some of this important work, and they call for more work integrating reading and writing processes in ways that view those processes as contextual and developmental. If we can help students map their disciplinary research communities through research and mentorship, we can better help them develop into the kinds of writers that understand the particular rhetorical situations in which they are asked to make reading-writing connections.

In their discussion of unruly reading, Mariolina R. Salvatori and Patricia Donahue offer a critique of characterizations of the reading problem that offer deficit-approaches to the problem. If we look at the resources students bring to the classroom and make the most of those resources, they argue, we can work to bust the myths that have established the seeming impossibility of the reading practices we value, e.g., that deep reading is impossible in today's fast-paced technological era; that writers are born, rather than made; and that interpretation has been (de)valued. The authors then offer a number of strategies and close readings of student examples that point to the ways students can engage in such unruly reading practices, including translation, even when engaged in seemingly straightforward, and thus often overlooked, forms of writing, such as annotation, summary, paraphrase. Both teachers and students should view reading-writing-thinking as recuperative and reflexive acts of invention, and interpretation as less authoritative and more open to readers' challenges (p. 333).

The book concludes, in Part IV: Letters to Students About Reading, with two letters (Sullivan, Luján) offering advice directly to students. If you want to provide your students with a brief precis of the arguments of this collection, I would recommend Sullivan's letter. In it, Sullivan explains to students why he has come to the conclusion, based on his research, "that 'deep' reading and reading for pleasure may be the most important things you can do to prepare for college" (p. 340). If you want to make a case to students for writing and reading as linked to a particular time, place, and space, and as linked to more than one language and identity, then share with them Luján's chapter, which makes the case for slow reading. In his letter, Luján seeks to demystify the reading process: "Slow reading is like low riding. You slide into the driver's seat, get hold of the steering wheel, slide down, kick back, and cruise down the main drag. No hurry. Take your time … look out the windows at the scenery. *Oralé*. Enjoy the rhythms of the ride*"* (p. 345). As Horning writes in the Afterword, "It pays to read" (p.

260). She argues that this collection and the accompanying volume co-edited with Gollnitz and Haller, *What is College Reading?*, have made the case that writing scholars need to pay it forward by participating in the re-turn of reading to our classrooms and to our research.

As a reviewer, my reading of this text is necessarily co-constructed, an interpretation based on my particular experiences and point of view, including my training within the discipline and my experiences teaching at particular institutions. To that end, I personally wish that the text had more explicitly addressed how the reading-writing connection can more closely attend to and make use of the diversity of our students' experiences. Luján's brief chapter stands out as one of the few contributions to make connections between diverse texts, contexts, students, and teachers—a missed opportunity in a collection that otherwise seeks to represent the diverse voices of teachers and students across K-16 contexts.

After all, as John Trimbur (2016) has pointed out, recent scholarly conversations about developing a translingual approach to composition developed out of early conversations in the era of Open Admissions and out of the Pittsburgh School. These conversations have helped scholars argue for a more generous and intentional understanding of how texts—and the languages, vernaculars, and Englishes found in texts—are negotiated by readers and writers. Thus, while the editors and contributors don't explicitly make the connection to current conversations about language and language difference, their work could be seen as engaging with the kinds of dispositions toward writing and reading that honor, rather than erase, difference. It would have been nice to see the chapters engage more explicitly with the linguistic diversity in our writing classrooms, and the editors seem to have missed an opportunity to publish reading-related research written by scholars who reflect our students' own diverse identities.

Moreover, it is important to acknowledge how conversations about the reading problem are always already situated within larger systems of unequal power relations—structures which systematically deny students' right to their own languages, literacies, and cultures. As Carmen Kynard (2002) argues, "I am not interested in proving my and my students' literacy and intelligence but in examining the political dynamics that deny it" (p. 33). While I see the work of this collection as exceedingly valuable, all discussions of the decline in reading in K-16 contexts need to address how representations of the reading problem potentially perpetuate deficit-model representations of students' literate abilities. If the collection included more representation by teachers, scholars, and students from underrepresented groups, it might offer an even more situated understanding of the challenges, problems, and strategies teacher-scholars and their students in K-16 contexts have addressed and overcome.

Overall, however, this collection offers a welcome discussion of deep reading that will be of great help for teachers, researchers, and administrators who need to make the case to themselves and others that they can and should do something about the trends they see in their classrooms: the lack of deep engagement with texts and the need to complicate and counter the "screening" activities of students who—without a doubt—read a great deal, but not necessarily in the ways that are valued in the academy. By including writing by and for students, and by offering theoretical and practical approaches to integrating deep reading practices in the writing classroom, the book provides composition scholars who are both familiar and unfamiliar with scholarship on reading with multiple entry points into this important, not-new but renewed, conversation. Perhaps, then, we are moving both forward—and backward—by arguing that we should think of writers as composers, composing themselves and co-constructing their

understandings of the world in their reading, writing, and thinking practices. For we are never just readers or just writers, but are always being composed in and by the world around us.

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Afterword

Bruce Horner
University of Louisville

Each of the six essays comprising this special issue of the *Journal of College Literacy and Learning* focuses on a specific feature of the work of college literacy and learning that, however distinct, nonetheless operates with and in relation to the others: assessment culture, composing modalities, student orientations to writing; reading; faculty development. Underlying this complex whole is an understanding of the work of college literacy and learning that includes students learning literacy skills and knowledge, and the work of teaching these to students so that the students can then exchange their skills for pay. This is in accord with dominant understandings of the role of college literacy and learning in preparing students for participation in the workforce. Compositionists, in this framing, are charged with attempting to serve students and, simultaneously, society by rendering students capable of being productive employees. Scholarship operating within this frame is directed at identifying the best—most effective and efficient—means of providing students with those skills they will need. Disputes then have to do with what those skills are, how best to inculcate these, and who is best situated to do so: matters that in and of themselves are complex.

But I want to use the occasion of this afterword to pose an alternative understanding of the work of college literacy and learning. For, paradoxically, the dominant view of such work as preparing students for the workplace, despite its explicit concern for student welfare, perforce overlooks the value of the work students accomplish *as* students in writing courses, and, hence, the status and value of the students themselves as workers. Ordinarily, the activities in which courses engage students are defined not as real work but, instead, preparatory to real work to be performed elsewhere and at another time; hence, the students themselves are understood not to be engaged in real work as students but, instead, as engaged in what is known as "student work" carrying the same negative status as work denigrated as "women's work" (Horner, 2010). Thus, rather than being seen as workers, students are seen ordinarily as the recipients and object of the work of others (most obviously, teachers). Indeed, even those efforts incorporating "service-learning" assume that work in the classroom must be subordinated to work outside the classroom to merit value as real: "academic" is, from this perspective, a pejorative.

This preparatory approach to the work of college literacy and learning also assumes the stability of that which is to be transmitted to students, its transferability to other contexts (e.g., workplaces), and its lack of susceptibility to change in the process of its transmission and transfer, a lack that makes possible their portability across contexts. Education, in this scheme, then becomes a matter of knowledge distribution, complicated by students' lack of receptivity or by ineffective teaching.

But there is an alternative view of knowledge and, by implication, student work. Here is what Wanda Orlikowski (2006), a scholar of organizational knowledge and

management at the MIT Sloan School of Management (and, hence, someone with some degree of familiarity with practices in the realm that at least some of our students may find themselves inhabiting) has to say about knowledge—what she calls a "practice" view:

> [K]nowledge is not an external, enduring, or essential substance – but a dynamic and ongoing social accomplishment. . . . [This view of knowledge] leads us to focus on knowledge not as static or given, but as a capability produced and reproduced in recurrent social practices. A practice view of knowledge . . . leads us to understand knowing as *emergent* (arising from everyday activities and thus always 'in the making'), *embodied* (as evident in such notions as tacit knowing and experiential learning), and *embedded* (grounded in the situated socio-historic contexts of our lives and work). And . . . knowing is also always *material*. (p. 460)

If we accept this "practice" view of knowledge as the always emergent outcome of those practices, then we can say that students are engaged in and responsible for sustaining and revising knowledge of literacy, even in the very process of learning—even "practicing" in the derogatory sense—that knowledge. They are, in effect, reworking literacies in the act of learning them, just as, inevitably, they must rework them again if and when they are called upon to perform literacy activities in some workplace in the future. That is work they perform and accomplish as students in classrooms, even if (as is ordinarily the case) neither they nor their teachers acknowledge this work. As Claire Kramsch (2008) observes of learners of additional languages:

> [F]ew of them are aware of the role they play as non-native speakers/actors in the life or death of a language, its development, its usage, its semiotic potential. . . . Learning a foreign language, with all the decentration, conflict, and discoveries this brings, is one of the more favorable academic means by which to restore to learners the discursive agency that they think they lack. (p. 20)[i]

I am suggesting that we need to shift our orientations to the work of college literacy and learning to include not only the work that composition teachers and programs are charged with accomplishing for or on students, and all that this entails, and not only the activities we have learned to think of as, well, work for which we're preparing students—effort for pay. Instead, we need to acknowledge, address, and reorient ourselves and our efforts to attend to the work that, like it or not, students and their teachers engage in together *as* students and teachers in classrooms: the work students and teachers do in renewing and revising language, knowledge, and social relations through their continual (re)composition in writing (Horner, 2017). That is work that also goes on, recognized or not, under the guise of literacy teaching, learning, and "preparation," work that contributes to sustaining and revising college literacy in the very process of its learning (and teaching). And it's work in which all of us, students included, have a stake distinct from the need for workplace preparation. Through their writing, students remake written language, the knowledge writing is often thought merely to communicate, and the social relations writing is often thought merely to reflect. Recognizing students' inevitable participation in and accomplishment of such work would allow us to engage more deliberately with our students in that work, and it would enable us to direct their and our efforts toward better ends than what we and our students have been led to think we are, or should be, working.

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Notes

[i] "Peu d'apprenants ont conscience du rôle qu'ils jouent en tant que locateurs/acteurs non-natifs sur la vie ou la mort d'une langue, son développement, son usage, son potentiel sémiotique. . . . L'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère, avec tout ce qu'elle apporte de décentration, de conflit et de découvertes, est une des matières scolaires les plus propices a . . . redonner aux apprenants la puissance d'agir discursive dont ils pensent manquer." Thanks to Christiane Donahue for assistance in translating this passage.

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