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COACHING THE WRITING VOICE OF THE NON-READER: TEACHING LITERARY ANALYSIS THROUGH A STUDENT'S LIFE

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In many introductory literature courses on college campuses, instructors encounter students who willingly self-identify as non-readers; these are often the same students who are not only uninterested in reading literature but also assume they have very little to say about it, who are fairly certain their opinions about it are of no interest to their instructor, and who often find no relevance in studying literature or contributing to classroom discussions about it. As Gerald Graff observes, professors can "tacitly assume that everyone knows the justification for the [literary] analysis, a situation that can widen the gap between students who eagerly talk the talk of literary analysis and students who remain silent, bored, and alienated" (1). At small universities such as ours that emphasize career preparation—most of our students are majoring in the health care fields—non-readers can be the most common student in the classroom, taking the course as an elective that fits their schedule, with little motivation in reading literature and less in analyzing it or understanding why others do. A semester-long class of such students can seem interminable, when previously successful classroom strategies fall flat. Even approaching only a six-week summer course, The Short Story, I anticipated a possible lack of interest and engagement from the students who would arrive in my classroom and considered that I would be grading the kind of writing that reflects such reading apathy. It was time to shift strategies again.

After twenty nine years of teaching literature and writing, I know that one effective teaching strategy is to design an assignment

that students do not expect, where neither the instructor nor the student can anticipate what may follow. The goal is to make the professor and the students feel invested, activated, and engaged together in the classroom and its discoveries; consequently, I designed assignments that made learning the elements of literary analysis personal, as if the students' own lives were short stories. This essay explains the process by which a literature course can elicit good prose writing from students who write about their own lives *first* and literary analysis *second*, culminating with their assignments in a writing portfolio. The final literary analysis essay and self-assessment piece incorporate the students' reflections of themselves as more aware writers and readers, and the experience of teaching with this method certainly can generate the same for the instructor.

The results were gratifying beyond my expectations; in fact, it confirmed for me that when the issues in students' lives connect with the academic subject and task at hand, their genuine writing voices can come through powerfully, and that experience can vindicate the instruction of writing, as well as transform the students' conception of deep learning through literature.

Student Expectations and Engagement

In a typical introductory literature course like this one, assignments usually focus on analyzing literature to find meaning in the experience of a text, a skill that is transferable to analyzing other complex works of art and expression. However, knowing that I might be walking into an assemblage of reluctant readers and writers, I decided to shift my focus from analytical writing assignments on the short stories to analytical description and definition pieces about the literary elements of the students' own lives first: setting, symbolism, character, and dialogue. These terms we repeat so blithely can rest like stones under the stream of our students' thoughts about literature—overheard from teachers for years—with little understanding of their impact within a story, poem, or play. Surprisingly, I discovered that if students read short stories, discuss one literary element of the story in class, and then focus on that element in the "short stories" of their own lives—a significant setting in their recent week, for

example—they can become much more engaged in the momentum of the short story at hand and, more important, in the identity of themselves as writers.

By writing about their own lives instead of initially about the literature itself, students can comprehend better the complexity of literature, such as which details writers choose in order to deepen the meaning and experience of a work of literature. In my class about the short story, the students became invested in writing effectively about their lives because they wanted to have a great impact on their readers—the other class members and me. In short, they became more invested writers.

Compositionists such as Peter Elbow and Patricia Bizzell have long discussed "both the institutional and pedagogical split between literature and composition that sees writing and reading as opposed activities," while also trying to "stress the linkage between reading and writing," as Phoebe Jackson notes. In applying Elbow's contention that giving "more centrality to writing" would enable students to see "how meaning is slowly constructed, negotiated, and changed," Jackson assigns low-stakes writing exercises in her Introduction to Literature course, which require students to identify with characters and put themselves in the story, such as with Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (Elbow 280; Jackson 112). Jackson reports that her goal was achieved: the writing exercise "worked to destabilize students' initial thoughts about the play," and "they began the first step of discovering how to generate meaning about a text through writing" (112). Elbow explains in a later essay that compositionists and literature people could benefit by merging their "cultures": "I wish the culture of literary studies gave more honor to the courage of just sitting with, attending to, or contemplating a text" and adds, "what do I wish people in composition could learn from the culture of literature? More honoring of style, playfulness, fun, pleasure, humor" ("The Cultures" 543). The methods of both Elbow and Jackson develop essentially what often takes place in a class discussion about literature: students insinuate themselves into the work of literature at hand and move inside the characters and setting, discovering what it could feel like from their own perspective. Gayle Whittier

uses similar strategies in her course, Alternative Responses to Literature, in which one assignment asks students to compose thoughts about "literature and space"; her main aim of the course was "to restore pleasure to reading and writing in a college setting through shared enthusiasm" (170). These are effective ways to write about literature, but these assignments do not, in my opinion, displace students' expectations enough. Students can still think that their own lives and the stories of the characters' lives are completely unconnected.

More recently, James Seitz argues that "The Secret to a Good Writing Assignment" is being less focused on simply declaring a thesis and finding supporting evidence and more focused on "a way to inquire into a problem, to seek out and multiply possibilities for addressing that problem, instead of rushing to an ill-informed conclusion before [the students] even recognize the depth of the questions before them"; he explains, "I'm suggesting we might reconsider our obsessive attachment to the thesis, to argument, in our writing assignments" (52). Seitz makes a good case, and his kind of writing assignment could be quite successful especially for courses with a variety of readings, across the genres; however, it also may require more class instruction regarding strategies to approach such an assignment. Seitz's suggestion is a relevant one, and such an assignment is worth considering as a bridge between a composition course and a literature survey course. Unfortunately, for the typical non-readers in a literature course, they have no questions to pose because they see the creative piece at hand as complete and remote, requiring nothing of them; they know it will be considered good literature no matter what their input about it is, and their curiosity about it remains dormant.

Elbow's desire for the pedagogies of the composition and literature cultures to merge is a convergence that can benefit both, especially if the emphasis can turn first toward the student instead of the literature. My assignments in The Short Story course continue this convergence but with a distinct difference: in class we analyze the short stories in our discussion, but, aside from a response paragraph about the readings for each class meeting, the

students' longer writing assignments focus *first* only on their own lives, not on the short story. After that, they explore a particular literary element either in a reading response or as part of the essay on the Midterm or Final Exam, culminating in a literary analysis final essay. For example, they are directed first to analyze a literary element, such as setting, from their own experience: to explain and describe a setting that is significant to them and their families. An important distinction to make is that this is no artificial exercise for which writing about their lives is merely a brief stopping point, but rather their description of this element, such as setting, can be an end in itself: to explore the impact of their true voice on their fellow classroom readers (shared in peer review workshops). In this case, the reading response on setting in the short story assignment that follows begins a parallel study of the literary elements that will comprise their portfolio: defining setting in their lives and comparing it with the setting in a short story we read. With this kind of syllabus, I have found students to be more enthused about their writing, enjoying the exercise of describing their favorite environments, symbols in their home, or the characters of friends and family members; this enthusiasm can transfer quite smoothly to their analysis of the literary readings, and my enthusiasm for reading their portfolios also increases.

The Student's World and the Academic Voice

Besides attaining confidence about the subject, our classroom writers can thrive on assignments that bring others into their world: their families, their history, their heritage, their communities. Students in my course share sections of their portfolios with each other and explain their choice of topics and details. Kim Brian Lovejoy observes that when students "write for different purposes and audiences, they learn that language need not be as rigid as they might have thought," that "students learn about language as a dynamic cultural entity" (85). In writing about significant matters of their daily lives, students extend the language of their intimate world into the language of the classroom and academic world. Lovejoy's observation about the fluidity of language is an important one; it affirms for

students that they can communicate in effective ways already and that it is the job of writers to communicate their world to the reader who is not part of that. By language, I mean not only diction but also syntax, tone, clarity, and the choice of details—all that generates a coherent momentum for the reader. Almost all student writers bring something of this language into their academic discourse, and we professors must be on guard not to allow the student's voice to evaporate in the process of completing our assignments. Asking students to write about their lives, their issues, their college and personal environment is most successful when the intention goes beyond a gesture to inspire confidence and carries with it an intention to inspire empowerment. Empowerment is achieved when students merge their worlds with the academic world. And an empowered student is a compelling writer.

Grading as an Interested Reader Again

Every writing teacher knows the dreaded mental wall one faces when grading essays with predictable content, including Rebecca Gemmell, of the San Diego Area Writing Project, who identifies "robot writing" as the kind that students produce from years of responding to directions that ask them to analyze common literary elements. These are the kind of essays that any student can find online for a fee, the kind that any student anywhere could have written; such writing is bland and uninspired, and the student's distinctive voice is nowhere within it. Consequently, Gemmell shifted tactics and asked her students to write a response to an essay about the death of poetry. In response, she "got more passionate and convincing arguments from students" than ever before, and she followed that with a short, reflective writing practice that required students' opinions not necessarily about Macbeth himself, for example, but about the definition of a hero in today's society (64). One result was that when the students got around to writing more about the literary work at hand, they wrote "thesis statements that presented a clear stance," among other improvements (67). She was much more interested in grading assignments in which the students had invested something of their experiences and opinions, rather

than the mechanically written essays they had previously submitted to her. In truth, the key is to involve the students on a level where their thoughts go more deeply into their lives, go beyond an intellectual exercise.

I was curious to see what my students had written when sitting down to grade the first writing assignment in my course; that curiosity alone was an indication that I, too, was more engaged and ready to experience the pleasure of being a reader of their work and not only a grader. I was not disappointed—nor was I bored, distracted, frustrated, or mentally exhausted, all of which we can experience in grading student writing. Rather, I was drawn into the momentum of their descriptive settings and characters, touched by the details of their narratives, encouraged by the depth of their observations. In response to the assignment to write on the element of dialogue in their lives, one student shared a particularly poignant conversation she overheard between her parents in the hospital about her brother, who was dying. Her analysis of their word choice, tone, and responsiveness to one another's comments was as thorough and insightful as any I have read by a student. Another wrote about the conversation she had with her mother upon returning to a childhood home. Writing about their lives through the focus of literary elements does not automatically make students good writers, but it does illuminate for them that the literary elements worth analyzing in a work of literature are relevant in understanding what the author is saying about being human. And grading their assignments certainly made me a more involved reader than I would have expected to be in this course.

Syllabus and Writing Assignments

My syllabus for The Short Story required writing assignments of five hundred words each on four topics: a significant setting in students' present or past experience, a symbol important to their family, a character (real person, living or not) in their lives who has impacted them deeply, and a dialogue they found meaningful (see Appendix A). Students had to describe and analyze each element; subsequent readings responses about the short stories then explored

that element in the literature. Other graded work included midterm and final exams (quotation identification, short answer, and essay), a quiz on each short story, and an essay analyzing at least two elements of a story from the syllabus (with an academic journal article for support), incorporating also into the essay a reflection paragraph about their reason for choosing the particular author they did, as well as a self-assessment essay (300 words) reflecting on their writing in the course. The final grades ranged from an *A* to a *C+*, which is fairly typical of this class, but the enthusiasm for writing about the stories was much more robust than I have usually observed in a course taken by non-English majors to fulfill an elective.

To deal with the long in-class hours (3-hour class meeting, twice a week for a summer course), I used the computer lab to keep the writing momentum moving forward, beginning with a simple writing prompt for the pieces that would make up their portfolio (see Appendix B). In short, for this literature class, I wanted to catch the students off guard, since I believe they were expecting exactly what I could have assigned and what they likely were assigned the last time they studied short stories, perhaps in high school. There are good reasons to focus on the standard elements of fiction with the literature, and we include a careful study of them in this class, but not immediately or specifically in the writing assignments. So at our second meeting, when I directed them to write about a setting that they knew well and that they could describe in rich detail to someone who had never been there, the students were surprised, but not one of them hesitated to begin. Their writing did not disappoint—me or them.

The Students' Emerging Voices

In ensuing days in the computer lab, students wrote about their family's favorite vacation place, about the characters of their friends, about the dialogue between sisters. Some were more serious than others, but I found myself very much looking forward to reading what the students had written that week. Initiating new sorts of writing tasks can be the difference between engaging a student with little interest in literature or writing and one who feels fully involved;

I was genuinely interested in reading what they knew well, and they responded to my interest. The most compelling pieces of writing were often about topics the students had not previously thought worth writing about, involving difficult experiences. This was demonstrated by my student Shannon's thoughts about writers who explored the dynamics of the family. She wrote,

> *Having a support system that consists of family members is essential to a person's well being. In Alice Walker's short story "Everyday Use," she dramatizes the negative effects on a person that result due to poor family relationships. Maggie is shown as a meek, nearly silent character who stands in the shadow of her older sister Dee. Walker illustrates how the lack of support from a family results in a person becoming withdrawn, isolated and alone. My family is very close, so when my mother fell ill, we relied on each other heavily. We were used to sitting in hospitals and listening to the beeping of monitors. We all sat around my mother's bedside calmly while other families would have been hysterical. In the span of a few months, those trips had become the norm. My mother had been severely sick for over a year and the experience put our family through trying times. We had to plan our schedules around doctors appointments and turn down invitations to spend time with family friends. We sat in waiting rooms, at doctors' offices, and through consultations. We were shown models of the body as doctors and surgeons explained each new theory on what was wrong* (see Appendix C for full story).

When we professors declare that the universality of human experience can be found in literature, we assume that students accept that claim, but that idea is never made more relevant than when students explore challenges in their own experience through a study of the literature we teach.

Significantly, I did not procrastinate in grading these pieces, since they were a continual discovery to me. Because I learned more about my students' own family characters, settings, and lives, I understood them and their ways of learning more deeply. For example, what details do they notice in a natural setting? What do

they see when they walk into their living room? How do they listen to their grandmother? We translated these to their habits of reading: What descriptive passages do they think are most significant? What is the impact of certain word choices in the characters' dialogue? Why do they miss certain points of the plot? How do they hear a dialogue inside their own head when reading? All of these are worthy of close study in any course that involves readers analyzing a literary text, and the more they wrote, the better my students saw the connections we were making.

"Each of you is living within your own series of short stories," I declared more than once and then explained that until they understood the settings, characters, plots, and dialogues in their own lives, they could not well appreciate and enjoy the stories that authors wrote. After weeks of these kinds of writing exercises and discussing both their writing and the short stories in relation to the elements of fiction, one student wrote in a final self-assessment: *"Through our class discussions, I discovered parts of the story and their relationship to the plot that I would have missed otherwise,"* and these insights *"helped me to see that authors put their heart and soul into their work and that the most minute details are written with a purpose and are vital to the story."* She added, *"Our class essays helped me to find my voice as a writer. . . . I developed a clear sense of self in my writing, and have more confidence in my writing."* One of the most compelling pieces she wrote was about the dialogue between her troubled brother and her father, which she overheard. Our students see and experience stories in their lives that are equally as compelling as the stories we read together in any course; our responses to their disclosure of these details can demonstrate to them that all good writing is about communicating as clearly as possible from one's own perspective, one's genuine voice. Maura Stetson underscores this in her analysis of discerning a student's "institutional voice" versus an authentic one when she notes that "[v]oice is developed through the students' individually discovering and gaining confidence in what they have to say," adding that "[a]uthenticity in writing can't be taught, but it can be encouraged" (74). Introducing writing tasks that incorporate different aspects of students' lives, aspects that can be aligned to

literary elements, inspires students' confidence in their ability to communicate and define their own voice; such tasks feel more immediate to the student and more responsive to the act of writing itself.

By inviting students to write about their lives as short stories, an instructor can help a non-English major or a non-reader discover abilities and methods of learning that the student has not previously considered. New methods of writing can stimulate the interest of both student and professor, and the center of that place is the best kind of writing to achieve, often that which changes the student and his reader in the process. One of my students, Chris, wrote a piece that I could not put down, entitled, "Fallujah." Here is an excerpt:

> *It is a bright moonlit night, the full moon reflecting off the slightly corroded railroad ties. The stars are brilliant when viewed northward, but to the south the lights of the city mask their beauty. A gentle breeze slightly caresses my face through the ballistic eyewear and protective gear that is unwantedly carried. There are far off sounds of mortars and RPG'S (rocket-propelled grenades) echoing over the berm yet again. Another night of dogs howling, these grotesque, four legged, disease ridden, creatures that never shut the hell up. It is the beginning of a three-day mission to the soy field near the Jolan district on the outskirts of Fallujah, and the insurgents know we are coming. I hate night missions because you never know whether your next step will be your last, due to the dark. Gratefully it's bright, so I won't step on anything; on the other hand, they can see me walking along that berm, the only safe place to walk on a night like this. Rocks, rocks, rocks, a never ending cascade of rocks that twist, tweak, and roll ankles, knees and hips, like that of a small dinghy in the ocean. Miles behind us, miles to go, we are half way now, over the foul smelling, murky, and almost gelatinous stream that feeds the Euphrates* (see Appendix D for full story).

The intensity of this piece is one possible kind of result that an instructor could expect in an initiative to write about students' experiences. In such cases, the instructor can approach the method

of feedback from several perspectives. As mentioned above, I first responded to the impact of his writing on me as a reader; in our conversation after class, the student was astonished that I found his piece so fascinating. An Iraq war veteran returning to college, Chris was pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in nursing and did not consider himself to be a writer at all. But something changed him in the process of studying short story writers alongside the stories and settings of his own life. As he wrote in his self-assessment, weeks later:

> *As I am not a writer by any stretch of the imagination, I was a little apprehensive in the idea of taking a short story course as an elective. However, in the short time that I was in the course I came to realize that I identified with one author in particular, Ernest Hemingway. He wrote in a manner that spoke to me. He was honest and blunt. Writing is now not just a chore for school, but a gratifying hobby that has helped me heal, explore, understand, and become enlightened like no other outlet has. I am grateful for the blessing bestowed upon me to be able to put my words on paper in such a manner that can heal and inspire.*

As the student discovered, this experience was more than simply learning how to write effectively in college; in short, this writing experience deserves a quality of feedback from the instructor that is as genuine as the voice of the student writer, respectful of his testimonial. As with all my students, I wanted Chris to understand that narrative writing, especially in the writing of a memoir, as one psychologist articulates, "can help individuals move forward and become transformed and empowered during and after the writing process" (Raab 200). When we encounter non-English major students or non-readers in our courses, we have an opportunity to introduce them to forms of writing they do not expect, with results that they cannot anticipate. Chris is now considering a study of psychology and possibly moving into a job that could help other veterans who share the post-traumatic stress disorder that he is working daily to manage. Writing has helped him realize that his

writing voice—his perspective, his experience, and his analysis—can empower him as a college student, a life-long learner, a writer, a citizen.

Conclusion

I continue to use the strategies of applying literary elements to students' lives in all my literature courses; in taking part, students discover that writing affords them an opportunity to order, analyze, and evaluate the dynamics of their lives, whatever their ages. In this way, they become more aware of the impact of their own stories on themselves and are able find a more intimate as well as intellectual stance within which to experience a work of literature. These students truly have arrived in my academic community, receptive to the experience of creative work and empowered to establish themselves in a literate society by their own written word.

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APPENDIX A

Portfolio consists of:

Four 500-word essays on the literary elements in relation to their lives;
first drafts of the above essays, including peer workshop comments from students;
reading responses (12-15 typed lines) analyzing an element in the short story/stories assigned for each class meeting;
first and final draft of a 1,000-word essay on two or more of the four elements (below) in analyzing a short story from our syllabus (with an academic journal article for support), incorporating also into the essay a paragraph about their reason for choosing the particular author they did; and
a self-assessment essay (300 words) reflecting on their writing in the course.

APPENDIX B

Writing Prompts for essays on the literary elements in their lives:

Setting—"One of my family's favorite places to be together is. . . ."
Character—"Someone not related to me who has impacted my life in a meaningful way is. . . ." [or "someone I have admired most of my life. . . ."]
Symbol—"This object is an important symbol in my life; it has a history that you could not imagine and makes it especially meaningful for me."
Dialogue—"Sometimes a conversation stays with a person for a long time; that was the case with this conversation and what happened afterward."

APPENDIX C

The rest of Shannon's story

> *Eventually it was discovered that she had acute pancreatitis caused by a tumor the size of the tip of a pen on her pancreas. My father waited alone through an eight hour surgery in the cold, sterile waiting room. Surgeons removed half of my mother's pancreas and her spleen in late July, 2010. During this harrowing experience, my family stayed strong because of each other. We made sure that each of us was there to comfort one another. We made spending time together and talking about what was on our minds a priority. It was especially difficult for my brother, Tyler. He was young, and did not quite understand*

that the hospitals, doctors, and IV lines were there to help our mother get better. Without the close relationship my family has, it would have made this time even more difficult for all of us. We knew to take care of each other and to not hide what we were feeling about the situation. My family is comprised only of myself, my brother and our parents; we did not have any other relatives to give their support. It was up to us to support each other through this difficult time.

APPENDIX D

The rest of Chris's story

Please don't slip, please don't fall, PLEASE DON'T DROWN; the weight of my gear will pull me under and hold me there like an anchor, let me die anywhere else. I made it, but my buddy is not so fortunate: he slips, thankfully at the edge and we grab him, just in time. Forty degrees outside and he is soaked, you can see the steam rolling off him like the fog of San Francisco. He begins to shake almost to point of convulsions. All stop. We take over a house, it's a beautiful little home with nobody inside, must have been abandoned since the initial push into the city, there are bullet holes and a large hole from a rocket launcher facing south, not the best place for a large open hole to be facing. He has changed his clothes and on we go…Those damn dogs won't shut up; any louder or any more of them and they will find us for sure. So much for the element of surprise. I hate these damn dogs. They make so much work for me. The incessant barking causes firefights that in turn causes death and dismemberment. We made it. The disgusting hovel that the last platoon left for us, holds trash, shit, empty brass from firefights, and the smell of cordite still engrained in the mud walls. Oh, did I forget to mention the overwhelming smell of chlorine that invades every orifice of your body? I hate this damn country, more specifically this city. I hope it is all worth it.

Affecting Argument: Students Learning to Argue and Arguing to Learn

Amy D. Williams

Educators have long extolled argument as a cornerstone of academic life and the basis of democratic citizenship. This positive view of argument relies on the belief that argument writing develops critical thinking skills, appreciation for complexity, curiosity about the world, and openness to many points of view. Yet after reviewing twenty-six years of empirical studies about teaching argument, George Newell et al. conclude that we actually know little about "how reasonableness and thoughtfulness develop in classroom contexts" (297). And some scholars contend that despite popular belief, argument writing may not encourage these qualities at all (DeStigter).

Contemporary public discourse offers ample evidence that teaching argumentation does not always result in open, thoughtful dialogue. Alarm over communication in the public square has shifted popular and scholarly attention to the role of affect in argumentation. Some bemoan a lack of civility (Baker and Rogers); others worry that calls for civility undermine progressive causes (Sugrue, Tomlinson). And some scholars suggest that affect—both the affect writers express in argumentative texts and the affect they experience while composing those texts—can undermine intellectual inquiry and learning (Felski; Jacobs; Smagorinsky; Tannen; Tompkins).

In this article, I follow these scholars in examining the affects writers experience as they learn about and compose argument essays. Specifically, I consider the affective obstacles writers may face as they learn to write arguments and how those obstacles prevent them from developing curiosity, openness, reasonableness,

and thoughtfulness. I argue that when argument instruction ignores the impact of affect, writers may learn the generic moves to make in an argument essay, but they are less likely to develop habits of mind that will help them succeed in college writing (Council).

My research uses one aspect of a writing classroom ecology—pedagogical discourse, or the spoken and written words teachers use when teaching argument—to explore the affects it provokes in students. The data for this paper come from a study conducted with high school writers learning to write arguments in a summer writing workshop. I share examples of students' affective responses to pedagogical discourse, including affects that seem to close off open, generous, and critical thinking. I also show that when pedagogical discourse complicates narrow notions of argument as combative and competitive, students' affective responses become more muted. These examples suggest that students' affective responses to instructional discourse can reinforce an understanding of argument as a form of combat that works against the development of thoughtfulness and critical thinking. Conversely, pedagogical discourse can also encourage a reworking of these instinctual combative stances and affects.

Using these findings, I theorize a more productive role for affect in teaching and learning argument, and I offer instructional strategies writing teachers can use to improve argument-writing pedagogies. My purpose is to show how and why affect matters in argument writing—not just when it appears in our students' texts but also as it operates in the ecology of our classrooms.

Affect, Argument, and the Limits of Reasonableness

Peter Smagorinksy recently called for more attention to the "gut reactions" students experience as they argue and how they work to "rationalize [those reactions] through whatever justification they can come up with" (98). Like Smagorinsky, I am interested in gut reactions. Rather than labeling them "emotions" as Smagorinsky does, I use the word "affect" to draw more explicitly on recent work

in affect theory. Affect is how bodies move and become; touch and disturb; influence, alter, shape, entice, and resonate with other bodies and things (including objects, forces, practices, ideas, and values). Affect emerges in connections between things, as they provoke and respond to each other. A more inclusive category than emotion, affect embraces all the visceral sensations and intensities bodies experience—those we can identify and name and those that "remain uncapturable and hard to pin down" (Dutro 385). It is an ongoing, everyday rush of vibrations, movements, impulses, dispositions, thoughts, emotions, and feelings that work "beneath and alongside conscious knowing" and beneath and alongside articulation (Seigworth and Gregg 1).

I find this definition of affect helpful in understanding critiques of argument from the scholars I listed above, who describe the affect associated with academic arguments—the kind of arguments we often ask students to write. Felski calls argument an "affective stance that *orients* us in certain ways" (18, italics in original). Using literary criticism as an example of argument, Felski suggests that arguments begin in uncertainty, which almost immediately provokes sensations of fear, anger, repugnance, hyperalertness, and attentiveness. Tannen describes the "pain" of being on the receiving end of argument's fear, anger, and repugnance (1663). While Felski and Tannen focus on argument's negative affects, Tompkins notes that argument also exhilarates. She compares the affects provoked by academic arguments to those provoked by Western movies. In both, she says, the moment of violence is also a "moment of righteous ecstasy," a "climax" that fills a "visceral need" and seems "biologically necessary" (587). Thus Tompkins paints academic argument's affect as both "delicious" and "hardly . . . distinguish[able] from murderousness" (587).

We can admit a legitimate role for affect—even angry affect—in argumentative contexts and still grant that it may be inimical to openness. Felski complains that while argument's ostensible goal is to nurture thoughtfulness, the authors of many published scholarly arguments seem to assume "the smartest thing you can do is see through the deep-seated convictions and heartfelt attachments of

others" (16). Tompkins and Tannen concur. A related critique comes from scholars who bemoan the neglect of rhetorical strategies such as silence and listening in argumentation (Glenn and Ratcliffe). By privileging oral and written discourse, both the academy and Western culture as a whole miss powerful opportunities to "negotiate and deliberate" in multiple ways and to create a different affective climate around argument (3). Taken together, these scholars suggest that our current academic culture does not promote open, thoughtful, and dialogic argumentation. More importantly, all agree that affect in argument is not just the "deployment of textual vehemence" (Tomlinson 57); it is an integral part of a writer's experience while inventing and composing the argument.

Researching Pedagogy and Affect

To understand students' affective experiences while writing argument essays, I conducted this IRB-approved study in an annual two-week summer workshop designed to improve high school students' argument-writing skills and to encourage their college attendance. Jointly sponsored by a public school district and a large research university, the workshop enrolls approximately fifty 10th to 12th grade students each summer. The workshop prioritizes enrolling students who have failed a language arts class, have scored below proficient on a state-mandated assessment, or have been identified by a teacher as one who could benefit from focused pedagogical attention. Still, the population is diverse. Some students attend only to earn recovery credit for a failed language arts class. Others are hoping to hone their already strong writing skills. Several participants are enthusiastic writers—though not necessarily enthusiastic academic writers. Many are potential first-generation college students, attracted by the workshop's goal of college matriculation. The workshop's co-founders—from the public school district and the university—are talented, experienced educators committed to helping students succeed as writers and college students. Workshop faculty are secondary teachers from the school district who participate to further their training and career development.

The workshop teaches an acronym as a template for an argument essay: TIRE, or *Thesis* (in an introductory paragraph), *Ideas and Claims* (in body paragraphs), *Refutation* (usually in a penultimate paragraph), and *Ending*, or conclusion. Intended to help students on language arts proficiency tests and college entrance exams like the ACT, TIRE is what workshop founders call a "tool" students can lean on as they learn more sophisticated ways of developing and organizing an argument. The curriculum also encourages a robust writing process that includes a variety of research methods, ample revision, and practices of self-regulation and reflection.

The data I collected included the workshop's curriculum materials, PowerPoint slides, classroom posters, teacher development materials, and handouts; observations and fieldnotes of workshop sessions and faculty meetings; interviews with key faculty and thirty students during the 2016 workshop; and anonymized free-response journals from twenty 2015 workshop students. The students composed the journals in a daily, timed activity during which they were instructed to "Keep your hand moving; Let your ideas flow from your brain to your paper; Don't get too logical" (classroom poster, emphases in original). The workshop uses the freewrite journals as a way to develop and assess students' increasing "fluency" (as measured by the number of lines written during each timed period). While the journals did not result from my intervention as a researcher, many of the daily prompts concerned the curriculum and writing process, making the journals a valuable source of information about students' writing experiences.

For this article, I approach affect by paying attention to discourse—teachers' discourse and students' descriptions of their affective experiences. Some affect theorists might object to this linguistic focus. Affect, they would claim, is preliminary to discourse; it is an intensity that "does not necessarily have a narrative" (Edbauer Rice 201). Others might note that affect and discourse work in opposite directions, affect multiplying potentiality and "language enforc[ing] a closure" (Corder 18). I resist an affect-discourse binary. Affect cannot be only what is non-articulable; it includes both what can be expressed and the ineffable. Furthermore, affect needs discourse

because "the turn to affect opens up crucial questions about meaning-making practices, the articulation of the somatic with these, and issues about how the speaking subject makes sense of and communicates affect" (Wetherell 353). These "crucial questions" invite discourse into affect studies.

I used the workshop's curriculum materials and my fieldnotes to identify prominent elements of pedagogical discourse—language or ideas that received emphasis through consistent repetition. I then read the journals, interview transcripts, and fieldnotes holistically, looking for and coding students' responses to the discourse, especially those related to affective concerns such as embodiment, relationships, connectivity, and movement. I then used axial coding (Corbin and Strauss) to develop relationships between students' affective experiences and discursive elements of the workshop's pedagogy. However, these relationships may also reflect students' past educational experiences. It is possible that the affective responses students describe are unique reactions to the workshop's discourse, and it is also possible that the workshop's discourse activates affects that originate in previous writing classrooms or other sites. Nevertheless, my methodology allows me to describe a relationship between discourse and students' affect. Two repeated patterns in the workshop's discourse demonstrate this relationship.

Pattern 1: Mixing Metaphors

In Western culture, combat metaphors play a prominent role in talk about argument: we defend a position, attack an opponent, fight for our voice to be heard. Abundant research supports the role of such metaphors in structuring not just thought, but also emotion, behavior, and somatic sensations (Lakoff and Johson, Charteris-Black, LeMesurier). Whatever its linguistic and cognitive functions, metaphor also carries affective entailments. Because these affects often work beneath conscious knowing and beneath articulation, they may be particularly hard to dislodge.

The workshop purposefully uses alternatives to combat metaphors to encourage the idea of argument as dialogic learning rather than competition or combat. These new metaphors are *argument is conversation*

(dialectic problem-solving), *argument is mashup* (combining existing forms of knowledge to produce novel ideas), and *argument is acting like a college student* (being enculturated into patterns of thinking, writing, and behaving). The first two metaphors are rhetorically apt because they utilize vehicles—talking and making music—drawn from students' areas of interest and expertise, while the "college student" metaphor points to an imagined future. Perhaps more importantly, these metaphors share some affective entailments with the more common combat metaphors while also differing in significant ways. For example, combat and conversation can both provoke excitement, anticipation, and apprehension, but combat is more closely associated with the fear, distrust, and extreme vigilance that move bodies, ideas, and beliefs apart. While conversation, like combat, can spark fear and uncertainty, it also arouses curiosity, interest, and wonder that combat does not. Unlike combat, conversation is an invitation to engage another body, idea, belief, or attitude without violence and sometimes with a willingness to be changed by the interaction.

The metaphor of a mashup may also produce beneficial affects. Workshop students know that mashups of film, video, or music generate new art forms from previously discrete, independent, and even contradictory elements. Perhaps even more than conversation, the metaphor of a mashup carries an expectation that relational reworkings will be fruitful. Thus mashup metaphors may elicit affects of excitement, aesthetic appreciation, and surprise and may facilitate sensations of creative movement. Additionally, because mashups reference art forms (music and film) that provoke powerful affective responses, the metaphor may elevate affects through association with those aural and visual stimuli (Anderson).

Despite the obvious attraction of these metaphors, they seemed to be a hard sell in the workshop. In 2015, most students still described argument in competitive terms, often using language associated with combat (fighting, reinforcing, beating, and, more graphically, "shoving an opinion down [someone's] throat"). Others described argument as a contest that they were trying to win but did not include violent or threatening references. In all, three-

quarters of 2015 students described argument in competitive terms, suggesting that most understood and experienced argument metaphorically as an arena where the goal is to win (argument is a contest), even if winning requires some form of violence (argument is war).

In 2016, the workshop revised the curriculum to focus more explicitly on the metaphors of conversation, mashup, and college student. During the last week of the 2016 workshop, I interviewed students to understand their responses to the new curriculum (see Appendix). When I asked them to define argument, only three students spontaneously described argument using combat language. Of these, two students said argument is "fighting," and one said it is "defending" a position. If students did not define argument in combative terms, I followed up with this question: "Some people, when they talk about argument, describe it as a fight or a war. How accurate do you think that is?" An additional eight students agreed with the metaphor. Together, eleven students, or 36.6%, approved an argument is combat metaphor. However, 40% (n=12) of the students rejected the combat metaphor even when it was offered to them, and five students adopted the curriculum's language of conversation (n=4) and mashup (n=1) in their answers (see Figure 1).

One 2016 student explicitly used the conversation metaphor to reject the combat metaphor: "I mean, to describe it as being a war, I feel like is a bit rash. I think it's more like a conversation." Even when students did not use conversation or mashup, the entailments of these metaphors seemed to help some students disassociate from more truculent metaphors. For example, one student disagreed that an argument is a fight or a war because "there are multiple sides, it's calmer, it's more civilized, it's more diplomatic." While not invoking conversation, this student's answer clearly draws on its associations. The difference between students' responses in 2015 and 2016 may reflect the more unguarded nature of journal writing versus face-to-face interviews. Nevertheless, it is significant that when the workshop's curriculum emphasized alternative metaphors, only three students (10%) spontaneously used pugnacious language in defining argument. And nearly half rejected a combat metaphor

Spontaneous descriptions of argument as combat or competition in 2015 journals (n=20)

Response	Frequency	Percent of total
Argument=combat or competition	15	75%
Argument=conversation	0	0%
Argument=other or not addressed	5	25%

Answer to question about accuracy of combat metaphors in 2016 interviews (n = 30)

Response	Frequency	Percent of total
Argument=war (student offered or agreed with)	11	36.6%
Argument=not war	12	40%
Argument=conversation	5	16.6%
Argument=other	2	6.6%

Figure 1: Comparison of 2015 Journals and 2016 Interviews Coded for "Argument-as-Competition/Combat"

when it was presented to them. Both Tannen and Kroll ("Adversaries") have theorized the value of non-combat metaphors. My data corroborates their claims.

Nevertheless, nearly 37% of students continued to conceptualize argument as combat, perhaps reflecting the prominence (and intransigence) of competitive metaphors in Western thought and language. As an example, the workshop's thoughtful and intentional educators occasionally reverted to combat metaphors, even when they were trying to show something else. Two pedagogical exchanges that I captured in fieldnotes demonstrate the metaphor's insidiousness. Both occurred during the 2016 workshop that prioritized using conversation and mashup metaphors.

On the first day, a faculty member introduces the idea of a mashup by displaying a slide with this quote from Mark Twain: "There is no such thing as a new idea. It is impossible. We simply

take old ideas . . . give them a turn and they make new and curious combinations. . . .” After allowing students to discuss the quote with a neighbor, she asks if anyone agrees with the quote.

A student answers, “I believe the quote is true because even the television was a new idea . . . but there were drawings and stories and someone combined those ideas.”

After approving his answer and thanking him, the teacher asks, “Did anyone have the opposite?”

A student raises her hand. “I didn’t exactly have the opposite, but I thought it wasn’t completely true.”

The teacher responds, “So you see there are two spectrums—some who think one thing and some who think totally different and some who waffle in between.”

Twain’s quote and the pedagogical exchange that follows seem intended to generate a range of responses that will become the material for an argument “mashup.” The first student eagerly draws on the mashup metaphor—showing how TV combines elements from different creative genres to produce a new medium. The second student disagrees, but only to qualify the first position as not “completely true”; she hesitates to reject it outright. Her response is notable since both the first student’s introduction of a truth value and the teacher’s request for “the opposite” invite a more competitive stance. The second student refuses to take the bait. Instead her answer (“not completely true”) “raises difficulties” around the question, nudging the discussion onto dialectical, conversational ground (Aristotle 265). Rather than pursuing this dialectical possibility, the teacher reinforces a competitive model by speaking of “two spectrums” that are “totally different” with those who occupy a middle ground as “waffl[ing],” a verb with mostly negative connotations.

Later in the workshop, an experienced faculty member teaches a lesson on writing an ending for an argument. She notes that the ending follows the refutation and, by way of review, asks, “What does refutation mean?”

A student answers, “To redirect. To stop and go in another direction.”

The teacher immediately replies, "Pretty close. Refute means to prove the other side wrong. It's to see that you aren't so sunk in your own idea that you can't see another point of view. A refutation is where you can say, 'Somebody might think differently than you do, but here is why I am right.'"

The student's answer is consistent with conversation and mashup metaphors. *Redirect*—commonly collocated with "the conversation"—suggests the possibility of change and of discovering new purposes or meanings. His answer also associates refutation with affects of movement and hints of embodiment ("stop . . . and go"). The teacher's first response—"Refute means to prove the other side wrong"—misses an opportunity to nurture the student's incipient affective openness. Perhaps sensing this, the teacher quickly moves to a position more aligned with argument as learning ("see another point of view," "somebody might think differently") before falling back on a more combative moral/ethical framework ("I am right").

I share these episodes not to critique these teachers, who are both gifted educators. Rather, these instances exemplify the tremendous pull of competitive metaphors for argument and the way language betrays good intentions. On these two brief occasions, skilled teachers exhibited the kind of discursive slippage that likely happens all the time in the teaching of argument writing. Given the predominance of competitive, combative metaphors, such language is bound to appear in our discourse, despite our best efforts to reframe argument as a mode for learning. Students and teachers live in a society saturated with combat metaphors (Tannen's "combat culture"), and this may explain why the 2016 curriculum revisions shift but do not eradicate existing conceptualizations of argument. Additionally, the metaphors of combat and communication are merely different ways of enacting a shared communicative goal. Given that all argument "aims to affect or change beliefs or actions," it may be inevitable that one metaphor cannot fully replace the other (Ross and Rossen-Knill 183).

Pattern 2: Considering the Other Guy

A second discursive pattern appears in the workshop's teaching of refutation, which they call variously "counter argument, counter claim, rebuttal, objection, [or] the other guy's ideas." Some of these terms, like counter and rebut, are so closely associated with antagonistic contexts (counterattack, counteroffensive, counterstrike) that connotations of hostility and fighting seem unavoidable. Even the less loaded term *objection* (with its juridical associations) seems at odds with openness and argument-as-learning. Most commonly, however, the workshop uses the language of "the other guy." For example, a PowerPoint slide states that the goal of refutation is to "reject ideas from the other side of your argument" and lists four bullet points suggesting how young writers might go about this:

- Understand what the 'other guy' thinks and why
- Think about the other perspective(s), pick 1 or 2 of the other's [sic] guy's ideas and decide what YOU think about those ideas
- Present a counter-argument explaining why you disagree with the other guy's ideas
- Reject the other guy's argument because it represents bad reasoning OR concede the point, but as less important than the ideas you have argued

(workshop slide, emphases in original)

The word *other* appears six times on this slide alone, and the refrain of "What does the other guy think?" becomes a recurring motif in the discourse of workshop teachers and students. In essence, the words "other guy" become shorthand for refutation.

This language appears to have important affective consequences. While teachers use the "other guy" language to encourage empathy for the other guy's thinking, students often respond to the other guy's character. This unintended result may be due to the curriculum's consistent use of the word *other* to modify guy, an imagined or real person who disagrees with the writer. In the curriculum's PowerPoint slides and in teacher talk, the collocation of other and guy is so

consistent that linguistically it is the guy—not his idea or thinking—that is other. The repetition of *other* also emphasizes dissimilarity. The other guy is not just someone who sees things from an alternate perspective; he is intrinsically different, foreign, and alien. This discursive construction may work at the level of insinuation to suggest that workshop students and the other guy have nothing in common. If the students are learning to think like college students, the other guy must be ill-informed and unprincipled. Thus many students respond to the curriculum's discourse by viewing the other guy as an adversary and his ideas as an attack on their own.

Barry Kroll notes that "the standard response to an attack, assuming one chooses not to retreat, is to block and counter attack. This is as true in written argumentation (e.g., refutation, rebuttal, counter claim) as it is in most martial arts" ("Adversaries" 452). In the workshop, students counter the other guy by foregrounding their superior understanding of issues and minimizing the weaknesses of their own arguments. Simultaneously they highlight the other guy's limited grasp of the issue and dismiss his incisive observations. Students use various strategies to accomplish this. Sometimes they label the other guy as ignorant ("thick-skulled") or naive (someone who "doesn't really know" about the issue). One student, writing in support of laws to allow guns in schools, responds to objections by drawing attention to the other guy's fears. In a journal, the student notes that gun control advocates are afraid of students accessing guns, afraid of teachers harming innocent people, afraid that the presence of guns encourages violence, and afraid that guns may accidentally discharge. While the student lists legitimate concerns, the litany of worries effectively paints the other guy as cowardly and his fears as exaggerated. Furthermore, by suggesting that the "other guy" is driven by fear, the student intimates that their relationship is fraught, not friendly, thus subtly drawing on the entailments of argument as combat (Felski).

A pattern of denigrating the other guy's intellect, knowledge, or character is not unique to workshop students. "Positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation"—what linguist Theo Van Dijk labels the ideological square (39)—are common features

of adversarial discourse. But workshop students' use of these strategies suggests that as they write, they experience affects appropriate to adversarial situations. This orientation works against curious and hospitable engagement, as students retreat from what Dale Jacobs calls threshold places where they might patiently explore the relationship between their ideas and the other guy's.

The consistent use of the gendered, singular noun (guy) may also contribute to students' perception of argument as having just two sides. One journal prompt asked students to respond to this question: "What does the other guy think about my topic?" In answering, sixteen of the twenty student journal writers (80%) described argument as having just two sides. In contrast, I did not use the words *other guy* in any of the 2016 interviews. Of the thirty students interviewed, only thirteen (43%) described argument as two-sided (see Figure 2).

Students who saw argument as adversarial used commonplaces such as "there are two sides to everything," things are "very black and white," and there is no "middle ground." More positively, they sometimes reported finding research that compelled them to change sides or that forced themselves to think about the opposite side. Insisting on sides and setting the limit at two forecloses on a multitude of ways students could visualize the conversation (circles, octagons, hexagons, squares, triangles, networks, rhizomes, etc.). These restrictions seemed to reduce students' appreciation of an

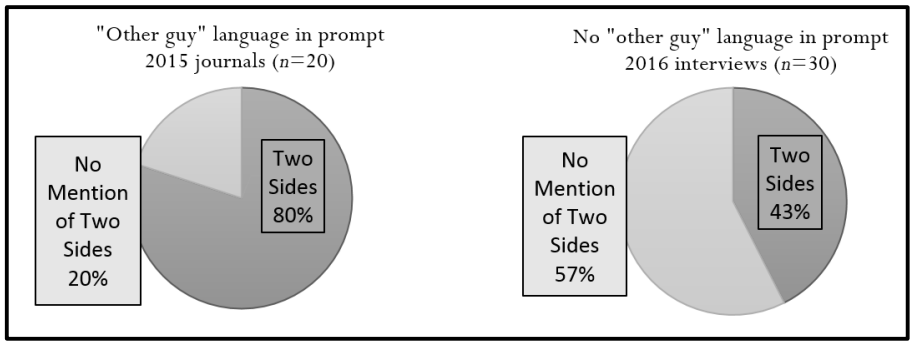

Figure 2: Students' Perceptions of Argument as Having Just Two Sides

issue's complexity. Furthermore, students often polarized the sides along moral or ethical lines. As one student said in an interview, "It's like there's two sides into the topic, and, like, one side is, like, about the good stuff, and then the other side is talking about everything that's bad and that's wrong."

The notion of two sides also works against some of the hoped-for entailments of conversation and mashup metaphors—curiosity, wonder, desire for engagement—that might reveal complexity and lead to learning. Rather than searching for nuanced answers, students who see issues as black and white look instead for evidence to prove they are on the "right" side. Besides discouraging openness and thoughtfulness, the "other guy" language, then, may also discourage rigorous research. The curriculum sometimes unintentionally contributes to scholarly insularity by suggesting that students find credible internet resources through which they can "learn both sides of the topic" and by directing students to let what they think (rather than what the research says) guide their response to the other guy's position. For example, one PowerPoint slide reads: "pick 1 or 2 of the other's [sic] guy's ideas and decide what YOU think about those ideas" (emphasis in original).

The workshop students' two-sided approach to argument is not unique. Ursula Wingate's study of first-year undergraduate students found that many students hold a similarly "narrow concept of argument," a tendency she links to curricula that focus on a "thesis-antithesis-synthesis" essay structure (149). And Tannen observes a similar pattern of simplifying arguments to two manageable positions in texts ranging from student papers to peer-reviewed articles, where authors position their work in opposition to someone else's that they then prove lacking in some way. Students may adopt these frameworks because they have been taught explicit formulas for writing argument essays or because they see established scholars using similar formats. But they may also adopt antagonistic stances because those stances align with affects that the workshop's pedagogical discourse provokes in them.

On its face, refutation encourages openness since students must consider ideas that differ from their own. Teaching students to include a refutation in their essay could prompt them "to examine their own perspectives to find connections with the perspectives of others" (Council 4). In the workshop, every student's final essay included a refutation section—usually one paragraph immediately before the conclusion. The refutation section offers textual evidence of the author's openness and critical thinking. But applying an affective lens to students' experiences while writing these essays suggests that a text's refutation section is not a wholly reliable indicator of students' openness and learning.

An Affective Theory for Teaching Argument

As a result of this research, I believe that argument writing instruction is more likely to result in thoughtfulness, curiosity, and openness when it produces affects that support those habits of mind: namely, affects associated with connectivity, relationships, and movement. Before giving an example from the data, I outline recent scholarship that aligns connectivity, relationships, and movement with argument as a form of learning.

As I noted above, Krista Ratcliffe has proposed listening as an inventional strategy that interrupts argument's negative affective cycle. Rhetorical listening occurs in the "shared atmosphere" of gaps between self and other—the "excess" where we adjoin but do not overlap (71). Ratcliffe uses the imagery of an energy field to represent these places of "non-identification." Containing everything that cannot neatly fit within a framework of difference and commonalities, these energy fields become places of pure affective movement and connection, places where multiple relationships form and reform, and places where openness is born.

The relational possibilities of Ratcliffe's energy fields mirror Dale Jacob's metaphor for argument as a kind of hospitality centered in threshold spaces where encounters between the self and others occur. Prioritizing the "gathering" (rather than the competing) sense of the word *agon*, Jacobs proposes argument as a form of hospitality that invites bodies and ideas over thresholds of division and into

shared space. Hospitality is thus movement that engages rather than vanquishes. Both Ratcliffe's rhetorical listening and Jacobs's hospitality are affectively relational—they emerge in purposeful movement toward and recognition of an ineluctable interdependence of bodies, objects, and things. In this affective betweenness, binaries of self and other collapse into more nuanced and productive connections.

I explore the idea of relational/connective/moving affect by considering the writing experience of a workshop student I call Jordan. Jordan was an outlier among students because of the metacognitive way he talked about his attempts to develop openness as a writer. His journal suggests that affect helped him practice "new ways of being and thinking in the world" as he wrote an argument essay (Council 4). Jordan described himself as a confident writer, citing a history of teachers praising his writing ability. He recounted the positive feelings he experiences when he finishes a writing assignment and said he motivates himself to write by imagining people in the future reading and praising his work. His writing confidence, then, appears fully relational and affective; it relies on intensities that form between others' responses (real and projected) and his own writing body.

In turn, this positive and secure writerly identity seems foundational to his openness and learning. Other scholars have noticed a connection between writing confidence and experiencing writing as learning (Johnson and Krase), and this appears true for Jordan as well. For example, Jordan described "opening" himself to other views by asking his mother questions about his ideas and claims. He said he knows that his mother will answer in ways that challenge his thinking, and he admits often not liking the answers he receives. Jordan's learning strategy (asking questions) represents a "risky revelation of the self" and a willingness to "plunge on alone, with no assurance of welcome from the other" (Corder 26). Significantly, Jordan said he asks his mother difficult questions because his mother "knows" that he is "smart" and a skilled writer and "thinker." It is telling that Jordan follows the description of his courageous practice with an immediate affirmation of his intellectual and writerly identity, the affective and relational basis of which he has already established.

Jordan also experiences openness as movement. He likes writing about questions and issues for which he doesn't have a ready response because, he said, "it gives you space and room to look around, research, and gather thoughts and information, that you may have not thought of before." Here he figuratively represents the experience of openness as embodied sensations that encompass temporality ("space and room"), require movement ("look and gather"), and ultimately lead to knowledge (things "you may have not thought of before"). Jordan's conceptualization of openness aligns with Kroll's invitation for students to "'think' about patterns of argument with their muscles and sinews and joints" ("Adversaries" 464). Thus Jordan enacts, albeit tentatively, an affective and embodied model of openness that writing teachers could encourage.

With my research and Jordan's experience in mind and with the goal of encouraging argument as a form of learning, I have made changes in my first-year writing classes—changes that I hope arouse affects of connection, relationship, and movement. I believe these affects support the development of both openness and critical thinking more generally.

First, I introduce my students to Lakoff and Johnson's idea of conceptual metaphors. We discuss the everyday language associated with these metaphors. For example, I ask, "What language or figures of speech do we use that suggests we conceptualize time as money?" We also explore the affective consequences language and metaphors impose on bodies: "If you conceptualize time as money, how do you experience time? How else might we conceptualize time? How would this change our experiences?" Many of my students come from or have lived in cultures that conceptualize time through metaphors other than money. Their experiences contribute to a robust discussion in which students explore different metaphors and the behaviors, values, and lifestyles those metaphors support. For example, I have had several students describe the more relaxed relationship to time they see in Polynesian countries. They speculate that island cultures may conceptualize time using metaphors related to ocean tides, allowing people to experience time as consistently

abundant. These discussions help students see how metaphors can constrain our ability to think and act in certain ways.

Second, we explore students' experiences with argument and openness. I ask my students what they think the word *argument* means. We talk about when, where, and how they have argued, and I ask them to describe those experiences. While some students have had experiences where argument felt like cooperation and learning, most describe it as a competitive or confrontational activity. I ask them how many times they have mentioned having an argument with a boyfriend, girlfriend, parent, roommate, coworker, or boss and had someone respond, "That's great! What did you learn?" We talk about the predominance of competitive orientations to argument and the prevalence of combat metaphors. We list language associated with argument and combat and the affects that language could produce. We talk about how an argument-as-combat metaphor might limit the ways we respond to new or challenging information.

I then ask students to consider where and when they feel open to new things, ideas, people, or experiences. I ask them to describe affects associated with openness. What does openness feel like in their bodies? What sensations do they experience when they encounter new things without resistance? What language and metaphors do they associate with those experiences? Together we try to imagine metaphors that capture affects of openness—connection, relationships, and movement—and apply them to argument ("argument is visiting a new country," "argument is meeting a new friend," "argument is speed dating"). We make these new metaphors a prominent part of classroom discussions. I encourage alternatives to the combat metaphor and warlike language because, with Kroll and Tannen, I believe these new metaphors can shift students' cognitive and affective responses.

Besides the metaphors students create, I use the argument-as-conversation metaphor and Burke's idea of the parlor extensively (in part because the word *parlor* always elicits some laughter). I also try to monitor the language I use. For example, instead of asking what the "other guy" thinks, I ask, "What additional ways are there of thinking about this issue? How do those ways of thinking make

sense to people?" Still, I know that I cannot eliminate all combative and competitive language; I am constantly correcting myself as I teach. I also know that alternative metaphors are unlikely to fully replace combat metaphors. So I have found it helpful to involve my students in critiquing the relationship between metaphor and affect and to offer my own pedagogical language for critical analysis.

I also know that not all students experience combat metaphors negatively. And there are times when an adversarial response is appropriate (Tomlinson). I tell students that I want their repertoire of argumentative stances to match the variety of argumentative situations they will encounter in and outside of my classroom (Kroll "Differently"). I find it helpful, then, to encourage my students to practice many ways of learning from and communicating within difference. To prevent students from becoming sedimentary about any single argumentative approach, I try to help my students see that it is only *after* they have learned about an issue and the positions surrounding it that they can choose an appropriate argumentative stance. If they begin with an adversarial orientation, it becomes hard to enact different moves or to forge different connections later on. One way I forestall students' committing to a particular stance is by having them begin researching a topic in groups, posing and answering broad research questions around that topic rather than around a thesis (or around a thesis masquerading as a research question). I encourage students to see themselves as nomads, traveling through and mapping the conversation they find in the literature. The metaphor of traveling prepares students to discover and evaluate unfamiliar ideas and perspectives; the metaphor of mapping keeps them situated in a relevant conversation. After working as a group to understand the existing landscape of the issue, students decide individually on a claim, thesis, and argumentative stance. In the end, a student may still take an adversarial, combative approach to argumentation, but I always appreciate the conversations that lead to that choice.

Finally, I look for ways beyond the essay to assess students' learning. The formulaic conventions of essay templates like TIRE do not inherently demand sincere conversations in which one works

out—through back-and-forth engagement with others' perspectives—what one truly believes. Additionally, students' texts do not always faithfully reflect their experiences while writing. Following TIRE or similar formats, students may include a token refutation without seriously appreciating other people's ideas. Conversely, as noted above, students may produce essays that show little sign of openness despite having rich dialectal experiences while researching and writing. One pedagogical implication of my study, then, is the need to evaluate what an argument essay can reveal about student learning. An essay that includes a refutation may indicate that a student is developing openness as a habit of mind. But we will have a better sense of their "willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world" (Council) if we also understand their affective experiences while writing.

We might, then, ask students to reflect on their affective experiences while writing the essay. At what points in the writing process did they experience affects associated with connectivity, relationships, and generative movement? When were those affects, in the words of one student in my study, "shut down"? Asking students to become aware of affect doesn't mean that students will be able to control their affective responses—affect is, by its very nature too diffuse, emergent, and unpredictable for that. But we can teach students to slow what Kathleen Stewart calls "the quick jump" from affect—the tight chest, the racing heart, the fluttering stomach, the quivering legs—to thoughts and evaluations. If students resist the urge to label affects ("I'm angry") or interpret affects ("She's wrong!"), they are better able to view their affective responses as invitations to explore new "ways of approaching the complex and uncertain objects [ideas, perspectives, people] that fascinate because they literally hit us or exert a pull on us" (Stewart 4, see also Dutro). Ultimately, students may also learn to cultivate affects that support openness.

Conclusion

Affect matters. We may want to assume that teaching argumentative writing will develop our students into open and curious thinkers—

the possibility certainly exists. But we cannot presume that outcome without taking into account students' affective responses, which can undermine teachers' efforts to make argument writing a learning activity. Affect can hinder students' ability to practice the openness, curiosity, and critical thinking that argument writing is designed to promote. If we accept argument writing as a pedagogical imperative, we must also accept an obligation to think about the affects writers experience in writing arguments and how those affects sustain or compromise openness, curiosity, and thoughtfulness. The pedagogical strategies I describe in this article—examining metaphors, imagining new metaphors, talking about affect, and finding multiple ways to assess openness and learning—can help students recognize and appreciate the affective milieu within which they encounter and produce arguments. When students understand that openness and curiosity are both cognitive and affective responses, they are more likely to develop these habits of mind. If our writing pedagogies acknowledge the affective dimensions of argument, our students will be more likely to experience argument as learning.

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APPENDIX
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (QUESTIONS RELEVANT TO FINDINGS OF THIS ARTICLE)

I want to ask some questions about the writing you do in school and at the workshop. And I just want to say again that this isn't a test. There are no right or wrong answers.

- How important do you think it is to be able to write argument essays like the one you are writing here in the workshop?

  Probe: Where else do you think you might write an essay like this?

- Think about writing an argument and try to describe what it feels like while you are writing—your emotions or thoughts or how your body feels.

- How would you define argumentative writing?

  Probe: Some people describe argument writing as a fight or war? How accurate do you think that is?

- What do you think you are good at in writing argument essays?

Bridging the Great Divide: Understanding (Critical) Composition for the Indian Immigrant Student

Nidhi Rajkumar

In *Who Can Afford Critical Consciousness?* David Seitz studies several multicultural, minority students, some of whom are immigrants or the children of immigrants. Seitz examines the inherent disconnect between these immigrant students' perceptions of the writing course and their real lives beyond the composition classroom. To me the title *Who Can Afford Critical Consciousness?* itself suggests the dichotomy between the inherent value of composition and its perceived value in the eyes of immigrant students. There is a disparity in the engagement such writing demands from the students and the price these students must pay to succeed in it. This price is the student's investment while the cost is the time such an engagement demands. The cost is high because this time comes from time allocated to subjects, particularly the Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) courses that hold a higher value than composition studies in the eyes of these immigrant students and their families. In the case of several immigrant students, particularly South Asian and Chinese students, the value of one subject against another is defined by its place in a disciplinary hierarchy which is in turn determined by the cultural pedagogical ideology that immigrant students often bring into the composition classroom (Mervis; Suarez-Orozco, Bang and O'Connor; Hale). This is a price that the student has to pay despite the cost being much higher than what the student might be willing to or able to pay.

I examine this issue from the perspective of an Indian immigrant student, and arguments that I present are informed from my own

experiences as an Indian immigrant composition student, scholar and teacher. I further inform my observations through recommendations that are based on scholarship that examines this disconnect between the (Indian) immigrant student and the American college level composition class. It is important to note at this point that even though this is from and about Indian immigrant composition students, scholars, and teachers, several of the observations will resonate with other immigrant student groups, specifically the Pakistanis and the Bangladeshis. My inquiry begins with Seitz's study on an Indian immigrant student and her Indian immigrant teacher and stays within reaching distance of the context established by Seitz. Yet, it is important to underscore that all the questions this paper asks and explores can extend to other immigrant composition students and teachers who are in similar situations.

Seitz presents Gita, a student in a composition class and her writing teacher, Rashmi. Gita is a first-generation Indian immigrant and business student who strongly identifies "with a dual frame of reference," specifically "her American-bred ideal for individual freedoms compared with the gender constraints of her Indian social networks" (76). Comparatively, there is little on Rashmi, except that she is Gita's writing teacher and is, to me by all indications, an Indian immigrant as well. Seitz introduces Gita as one of the first in his study who openly admitted to zoning out during class discussions because she viewed them as irrelevant to her life, especially her academic life. Gita's persistent, almost stubborn determination not to engage with these issues becomes the overarching theme of this particular case study and is also an example of what several Indian immigrant students in American writing classes experience.

Contextualizing Perspectives

Before I continue, it is important for me to establish my positionality in this study and contextualize my perspectives. I see myself as Gita as well as Rashmi because of the experiences that make me identify with both. I "am" Gita in that I too am an Indian immigrant student, with a "dual frame of reference" walking between two worlds of being American and Indian simultaneously. I "am" also Rashmi, a

writing teacher who finds herself very often standing across this great divide, unable to connect with a student's inability to overcome built-in, traditionally determined pedagogical constructs. I also place myself in a third role as a composition scholar attempting to examine this issue from my unique vantage point of Indian immigrant student, teacher and scholar.

These multiple positionalities illustrate the role that culturally defined career and professional goals play in the life of an Indian immigrant student like Gita. The importance that STEM fields hold for the Indian communities is evident in the annual "Open Doors" report from the Institute of International Education. The report states that 42% of the 886,000 international students enrolled in American universities in 2013-2014 were from India and China. Furthermore, an analysis of enrollment by discipline shows that STEM fields accounted for 45% of immigrant students enrolled at the undergrad level. This is significant because many of the immigrant students enrolled in first-year writing are from these STEM fields. Their academic choices embody this hierarchy of disciplines that is both overtly and covertly reinforced through the traditionally defined cultural environment from which students like them and Gita, come. "Gita," Seitz writes, "acted from two sets of seemingly conflicting convictions. [One was] her socioeconomic situation as part of a first-generation Indian immigrant family [that] shaped her practical views of labor and a free market economy" (97). The second was "her social concerns" (97), which in this case was centered around issues of gender within sociocultural contexts.

As the Indian immigrant teacher, I have seen this phenomenon repeatedly semester after semester in my own classes. One writing assignment always focuses on the student's journey that ends in my classroom. Thus far without exception I have seen that all my students from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are (1) always from the STEM fields and (2), have almost always faced family resistance if they chose writing in any form, as a career. As an immigrant child I understand the reasons, accuracy, and implications of this almost normalized narrative, yet as a writing teacher I find myself on the other side of this divide. As a teacher I articulate the guiding purpose

of education as inculcating intellectual authority in my students that will eventually lead to their intellectual autonomy. This, I believe, is essential to empowering them both as individuals and for the society at large. However, over the years it has become evident to me that as a teacher of composition, the effort is torn between what we as teachers see as the means to inculcating this intellectual authority and the reality of an immigrant student's lack of engagement in this process.

My third standpoint is that of the Indian immigrant composition scholar who believes in a multicultural approach in all aspects of the discipline. Brice Horner, Samantha NeCamp, and Christiane Donahue argue for a "multilingual approach in not only their teaching but also their scholarship" (269) and I borrow this idea and extend it to include an acknowledgement of multiculturalism in composition teaching and scholarship. In much the same way that Horner, NeCamp, and Donahue acknowledge the shift within composition studies that challenges the hegemony of English monolingualism and everything that goes with it (271), I propose that a similar understanding and sensitivity to acknowledging multicultural forces that act upon the Indian immigrant students in the writing classroom could redefine the dominance of any one culture in a multicultural writing classroom.

As a scholar when I step back and look at Gita and Rashmi's situation, I notice clearly the disconnect between what Gita sees as irrelevant versus course work that Rashmi sees as important. If we are to effectively address this, we need to first identify the problem. The next step is then to identify some of the key factors that play into this problem, and finally we need to find ways in which we can address this problem in the reality of the classroom. These steps will at best eventually lead to the building of bridges across this great divide, or at the very least it will better explain the challenges that immigrant, specifically Indian immigrant, students face in a composition class. In this way, we as teachers can begin to address them.

The problem of this divide between Gita's lack of engagement in a process that will eventually lead to inculcating intellectual authority and Rashmi's inability to engage Gita requires an examination of both

perspectives. However, I place the onus of bridging this divide more on the composition teacher and in their acknowledging and incorporating the multiple sociocultural contexts that come into the writing classrooms. This, I believe, is critical if we, as teachers of composition, strive to motivate and inspire intellectual authority in our students. Despite my multiple positionalities, I do not claim singular credit for identifying or naming this divide. Scholars like Seitz, Ira Shor, and Lisa Delpit, to name a few, have examined this divide, albeit under other names and from varying perspectives. I will come back to these names as I define the problem, and I will conclude by proposing some suggestions that will lessen the divide in the day-to-day reality of the composition course.

Understanding Gita

As I approach Gita and Rashmi from my perspective as an Indian immigrant, I am hardly surprised at Gita's inability to fully engage in the composition class. Sabrina Eveland analyzed South Asian immigrant students in American universities and found that "the stable career path" prevalent among second generation South Asians who "feel pressure from society to assimilate, while being dually pressured by their parents to attain success" (34) was common. She sees the value of her work for educators as well as administrators, so they can "understand why there are so many South Asian students oriented towards the math, science, engineering, and medical fields of study" (34). More importantly, she gives "more insight into both the influences behind academic success among South Asian students and the internal and inter-familial stress that can occur when South Asian students (must) pursue courses of study their parents do not support" (34). This insight is the key to understanding this problem and to getting the students to successfully engage with any course. This success can be defined in Freirean terms.

In light of scholarship like Eveland's and my own cultural exposure to the disciplinary hierarchy that is built into the Indian family, Gita's zoning out in her writing class is not unusual or surprising. However, I am fascinated by Rashmi's inability to pick up on what

might be happening to Gita behind the scenes considering Rashmi seems to be an Indian immigrant as well.

Outlining the reality of being an immigrant student and a teacher in the place and space that is the American composition classroom is deceptively simple. Here "place" and "space" are distinct, in that "place" is the physical classroom, while "space" in this context means the internal connotations of what it means to belong to this world of critical writing, as a student and as a teacher. This is because it involves breaking up this experience into two identities – one of Rashmi and another of Gita and everything that they must stand for. These identities must then be examined from a highly specific context of the Indian immigrant student and the culturally defined pedagogical perspectives that become "baggage" they bring into the writing classroom. It is this perspective that prevents them from engaging with the composition process that, when all is said and done, is being forced on them. Molded by a certain socio-cultural ideology that defines how they view education in terms of its function and purpose, these students resist composition as a subject not because they want to, but because they are culturally conditioned to.

Gita's disinterest, its reasons, and the implications when teachers fail to see these cultural forces that shape student motivation are of central importance. In order to explain the situation of the Indian immigrant student in an American writing class and the student-teacher dynamic, Paulo Freire is immensely useful. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire makes a case for why education is the salvation of the oppressed. Freire goes on to state that it is education that will give humanity freedom, which in this context is intellectual authority. It is what I, as a teacher of writing, want for my students and know must come from the students themselves. According to Freire, this freedom comes in two ways: first, drawing a distinction between thought and action as shaped by genuine love as opposed to the thought that has been conditioned by the oppressors' model of humanity, and second, freeing the oppressed by getting them to reject this adherence to the oppressor that has by now become central to the identity of the oppressed, at least in the minds of the

oppressed. To be sure, Freire is significant because Gita's situation is directly translatable in Freirean terms. Gita would be representative of Freire's oppressed, or the student who needs this awakening to gain her freedom from an oppressive socio-cultural reality embodied in the cultural mandates that surround her. The irony becomes evident as Gita seeks her freedom through another oppressive pedagogical system that she is unable to identify with but promises to relieve her of the more oppressive of her two prisons. The reason that the pedagogical system in this case is oppressive is that Gita is not a part of it in the Freirean sense. She is disconnected, uninvolved, and fails to find the validity of her experiences and what it means to "be" Gita in the context of this pedagogy. This is a system that is forcing liberation on her, and does not allow her to win her own liberation.

Gita openly admitted that she "zoned out during class discussions that she felt did not directly affect her life or academic progress through the course" (89), and this demonstrates the contradictions and the divide that reinforce the oppression that Freire associates with the internally divided oppressed individual. Gita's conflicting convictions are her socioeconomic situation as part of a first-generation Indian immigrant family and her views of labor and a free market economy, both consequences of her socioeconomic situation. Gita's "oppressors" are defined by "this single-minded goal held by many parents in her extended family . . . and their lack of higher education [that] may prevent them from seeing valuable opportunities aside from the high-status medical professions" (97). Gita is "trapped between two cultures and time periods" and the freedom that she seeks is embodied in the dream of moving to Australia, far away from her socio-cultural oppressors who are personified collectively in her family and relatives, to whom she remains chained. That is why Gita *will* embrace this oppressive pedagogical system—because of the freedom it promises her. However, I argue that without intellectual authority, Gita does not stand much of a chance of any kind of freedom simply because the belief of her oppressors will otherwise remain embedded within her as part of her identity. Unless she tries to redefine herself in terms

of her identity as a human being, she will remain chained irrespective of where she tries to go.

At some level she is well aware of this, but seems unwilling, perhaps unable to grapple with the meaning of what remains evident yet unsaid, so she pulls back from being rebellious. She says "But I can't do that. See, I put my parents and my brother first, my relatives next, and then myself . . ." (qtd. in Seitz101). The "But" signals her perception of no way out and the paradox is that until she sees the relevance of critical education in the process of (re)constructing the self, until she can bridge that perceived chasm that lies between what she wants and what she is being offered, she will never begin her self-liberating move towards intellectual authority and freedom as a human being.

Eveland's study clearly demonstrates "the traditional South Asian attitude towards following a well charted recipe for success" that pushes the student towards "choosing a career that is high paying" (36). This pressure is passed down from one generation to the next and the Indian immigrant student finds themselves in the narrow space between "pleasing one's parents and pursuing one's own interests; of following the tried and true versus walking down the road less traveled; and of retaining cultural values or assimilating the dominant culture in a new country" (Eveland 36). This is the position that Gita and several others like her find themselves in and is what we must acknowledge if we want to reach across this divide.

I have previously expressed my confusion at what manifests as Rashmi's inability to understand the influences that are acting on Gita and that are influencing her attitude towards the course. First-year writing classes are, for the most part, taught by graduate student instructors in the role of TAs (Connors). These graduate students are an important part of this equation, yet there is a "dearth of research in writing studies on this population" while "the field itself diversifies" (Ruecker, Frazier and Tseptsura 613). To understand the contrary forces that divide the Indian immigrant student's perspective of what is being provided and how a writing class is of value, I look to understanding the immigrant teacher.

Michael Hale writes "a nation of immigrants is holding another nation of immigrants in bondage" (18) and Rashmi and Gita's situation is an illustration of this reality in the writing classroom. Hale uses the larger immigration debate to get his students to reflect on the problem of misinformation and the role of critical writing. In this process he states that his primary concern is to get his students engaged in the debate in the here and now and to help them develop a sense of agency that makes them active participants in the debate both within and without the writing classroom. Diana Belcher outlines the forces that define an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) writing classroom – they are "*need based, pragmatic, cost-efficient and functional*" and of these the more critically oriented classroom would be "accommodationist," "assimilationist," "market driven," and "colonizing" (134). I would argue that several of these descriptive terms would be ones that define our own composition pedagogies. As teachers work towards these ends, Belcher uses past scholarship to point out "that teacher intuition and knowledge of language systems (are) insufficient, and that understanding of language use in specific contexts (is) essential" (136). Much the same way as I extended Horner's argument on acknowledging multilingualism to composition scholarship to include multiculturalism in composition classrooms, I extend Belcher's observations into the critical writing classroom. Just as Belcher argues for encouraging a complex view of context and to consider social perspective, I argue that it is essential for the teacher of critical pedagogy to consider the "discourse domain." Belcher defines *discourse domain* as the continually changing and dynamic context constructed by those engaged in communication (136).

Understanding the Disconnect

Ira Shor presents the student-teacher disconnect through the seating pattern of the students in his writing classes. Shor observed and found that several students moved in passive, silent protest, and chose to stay beyond the physical and intellectual reach of the teacher by choosing to sit in the remote "Siberia" of the classroom. This "Siberian Syndrome," Shor noted, negatively impacted the effectiveness, even the legitimacy of his authority as a teacher. Shor

felt that this "studenthood is hardly passive" because this passivity is being actively constructed by the students as a manifestation of what Henry Giroux (1983 and 1988) called students' resistance to schooling. Contrary to what is understood to be the proper, learned, and expected "routine professional behavior" of what "teacherhood" and "studenthood" imply, Shor writes, "Students are constructing the subordinate self at the same time that are resisting and undermining it, while believing that their 'real selves,' and 'real lives,' are somewhere else, not contaminated or controlled by this dominating process" (17).

Shor acknowledges his authority and begins to recount in graphic and minute detail the "disturbing and hilarious moments" he spent in the "Siberia" of his classroom. Shor tries to "establish the learning process as a cultural forum . . . for the negotiation of meanings, it helps to get students' thoughts and feelings into the open as soon as possible" (34). To me this is a prerequisite to understanding the internal forces that compel students, perhaps like Gita, to move into the "Siberias" of the writing class, either emotionally/mentally, physically or both. Another important tool that Shor employs is the democratic composition pedagogical model. Shor argues that when the students are treated as "reflective constituents who are consulted in the making of their education" (35) it makes them intellectually involved. I believe that students' agency and investment in their composition courses will eventually inculcate the intellectual authority that I see as a highly desirable aim of a composition course.

Ideal as this sounds, Shor points to moments when the students resist even these attempts at bridging the teacher-student divide by presenting this as the "classroom-corporate boardroom" divide. It is important to establish that "corporate boardroom" is not the florescent-light filled boardrooms of the corporate world, but is used as a stand-in for everything that students perceive as their real-life as divorced from the writing classroom. Shor defines this disconnect in the students' expectations of the teacher as one who will "do most of the talking, because that's the way education *has been done to them so far*" (67) (my emphasis). His choice of words is important to me because they point to the students' passive, receptacle-like role where they are "being talked at" and where "the teacher is firmly in command" (67-

68). Shor returns to this "contradiction [that exists] between the actual and the apparent functions of schooling," which make school a "warehouse instead of a learning center" and which takes a toll on the student who is "pulled in opposite directions" (9). This disillusionment is heightened as "the social prestige of college" coupled with the centrality of a college degree and getting a job "makes this a high-stakes situation for these Indian immigrant students and their families. These stakes are further heightened because a failure to comply has some very serious ramifications; unemployment, welfare, crime, the Army, struggling with self-employment or marrying money" (Shor, 16).

Education, in Freirean terms, is a reinforcement of the oppression because it is not in tandem with the oppressed and is therefore doomed to failure. It is toxic to the realization of being human, and the system is not accountable for its failure. "Cooling off" is how this often plays out, as the disconnect between the students' goals and the methods in which they previously and truly believed, fail to get them to their dreams of self-actualization, intellectual authority, and freedom (Shor). Shor sums up by saying "All conflicts of American life converge in school, turning education into . . . battlefields for the conflicting interests of the state and the people" (40). What is lost in this process is the students' ability to critically reflect which in turn keeps them from becoming agents of social change. A greater loss is the awareness of this contradiction between a flawed system and broken aspirations that makes the students increasingly more disenchanted with the entire process of education. A teacher's helplessness when faced with students defined by such a reality is hard enough. Add to this the parental and societal pressures that reinforce this belief in an education system that transfers its failures on the students. Now, also add the costs of what most Indian immigrant families must pay in various ways so their children can get an American education and the stakes become unimaginably high. These students must make the choices that are determined by their elders who are culturally revered to a point where questioning their authority is not an option. This comes back to the original problem that I see for Gita and Rashmi. Gita is the Indian immigrant

student who must realize her dreams with her American degree in Business, while Rashmi is left trying to break through a wall made up of traditionally defined norms, parental and socially dictated choices, and a student's burning desire for freedom. All that Rashmi has is her own belief in the value of what she is teaching and its role in Gita's process of self-realization.

I see this situation as unintentional, but common and damaging nonetheless. I would argue that its real danger comes from its unintentionality. Lisa Delpit enters this conversation from the standpoint of a teacher who is looking at the educational system as something that is being *done* to other people's children. Delpit recalls observing white conservatives and liberals "battling each other over what was good for these 'other people's children' while excluding from the conversation those with the most to gain or lose by its outcome" (6). To Delpit, the disconnect is between the establishment and the students who are affected by its policies. Delpit draws on her personal experience to address this disconnect—the memories of herself as a graduate student and what she considered valuable moments in learning. She writes, "I also learned in graduate school that people learn to write not by being taught 'skills' and grammar, but by 'writing in meaningful contexts'" (12). Her assignments are nontraditional in that she has her students write books, weave baskets, play games, and redecorate the interiors of their learning spaces. She admits that her methods worked, "Well, at least it worked for some of the children" (13). Interestingly, the group of students for whom these nontraditional methods worked best were her minority (black) students who were not progressing by traditional methods. Delpit is admittedly not talking about immigrant students, let alone Indian immigrant students, but I would venture to say that the problems that several immigrant minority groups face in the first-year writing classroom are not entirely dissimilar from what Gita and others like her experience.

Delpit, along with others like Shor and Seitz, echoes the contradiction that is the focal point here when she sums up the situation of the "skilled" individual incapable of critical analysis who "becomes the trainable, low-level functionary of the dominant

society" (19). Such trained individuals serve only to reinforce the existing oppressive systems in opposition to "a critical thinker who lacks the 'skills' demanded by employers and institutions of higher learning" who can only "aspire to financial and social status within the disenfranchised underworld" (19). For the minority to rise, "skills" and critical thought must work in tandem. This comes back to the whole point of contextualizing their realties that can "only be devised in consultation with the adults who share their culture" (45). Though she is referring to students, teachers and parents of color that include those that are not financially as advantaged as others are, I extend this idea to include Gita and others like her. Gita points out that to her family, higher education is the only way to avoiding a financially insecure future and therefore is a financially defined commodity, the most valuable being the medical profession. Most Indian immigrant families prioritize the STEM fields. That is why Gita's choice of a higher education in business studies was a hard sell.

Delpit cites John Dewey to underscore the importance of the students' context and experience, "the greatest asset in the student's possession—the greatest, moreover that will be in his possession—[is] his own direct and personal experience" (124). Coming in from a teacher's perspective, Delpit concludes that a "failure to allow students to explore their past experiences in light of the theoretical constructs will only produce a mindless imitation of others' practice rather than a reflection on teaching as an interactive process" (125). It is no wonder then that Gita is unable to connect with the class topic, even though she *does* care about the issues being discussed. The class assignment focused on issues of exploitation of women's labor and the natural environment in Third World countries, and one might imagine that this topic would naturally lend itself to an Indian immigrant student. Yet, her inability to engage with this topic underscores the importance of contextualization in the process of bridging this gap. Gita says that she *does* care about the environment, but cannot relate it to the class she is in. She provides her own contextualization when she specifies "environment" as being "the environment in which women are working, like the factories or

whatever. That environment I do care about, but planting trees or something like that, that had no interest to me" (90). She further specifies the one-person audience to whom she is writing—Rashmi, the writing teacher and what the word "environment" means to her. Gita is unclear with what Rashmi wants and is therefore disconnected.

Delpit widens the scope of resolving this pedagogical and intellectual disconnect because this issue is more relevant today in the multicultural reality that is the American writing classroom. Only by acknowledging and incorporating these multicultural experiences through contextualization can we create a self-sustaining critical framework that will achieve self-realization. It is this self-realization in the Indian immigrant students that will open windows, maybe even make a door in the walls that they are surrounded by.

Recommendations

It would be erroneous on my part to extend these reflections to include *all* immigrant teachers and students, even Indian immigrant students, but it is becoming evident to me that this disconnect is seldom confined to any one group of students. It is often a larger problem of contextualizing the students' mindset with the delivery mechanisms in the writing classroom. It is when we, as teachers of writing, understand the contexts that accompany the (Indian) immigrant student that we can begin to make some headway in getting these students invested in the process of developing intellectual authority and seeing its inherent value. The *gurushishya parambara*, or the teacher-taught tradition, and the *guru-kula sambradaya*, where the student lived with the teacher during the entire duration of their education, is an example of learning that was spontaneous and went beyond the traditional model of institutionalized Western education. This model saw the guru take care of every aspect of the discipline's well-being, while the disciple "respects the guru as his father and never disobeys him whatever be the provocation" (Kaladharan 209). It may be worth noticing that the relationships are reverential and involve an intimate parent-teacher and child-teacher dynamic within a home-school environment. While replicating such a model as it is in today's context is neither practical nor desirable, the idea

of an "education rooted in and supported by the natural environment" (Kaladharan 209) that included an understanding of the world of the teacher and student is one that we can take inspiration from.

To create a similar environment where the multiple perspectives can intermingle freely, I recommend a process that involves two phases: the first is understanding difference and differences, particularly the factors that define difference for the Indian immigrant student; the second is exploring the value of some nontraditional pedagogical methods that will address these differences and eventually bridge the divide. These are macro perspectives that are presented at a conceptual level so that each instructor can review the situations at hand and modify these ideas to suit their own classroom circumstances.

Helping Rashmi Understand "Difference" and Differences

Scholars are increasingly confirming through research that parents play an important role in a child's educational and career decisions and to acknowledge and understand their perspectives is essential if we are to understand the motivations, or lack thereof, in our students. The Japan Institute for Labour Policy and Training Report no. 92, shows a direct connection between the kinds of school and career choices a student makes and the opinions of what their parents saw as favorable versus unfavorable choices. As Seitz has demonstrated through the examples of Gita and Rashmi, many Indian immigrant students could come into the writing class with conflicting dual frames of reference. As for Gita, the central voices that create this duality are those of her parents. Parents of Indian immigrant students, much like their Japanese counterparts, are the physical manifestations of the pressures that shape the framework for most Indian immigrant students, and central to understanding this duality is understanding the parents. This is why I believe that any teacher of writing will effectively engage a student only when they begin to try to understand where the student comes from; recognizing and acknowledging the cultural and traditional differences therein; and developing an understanding of difference per se. However, as we understand them

as embodiments of this cultural reality, we must be careful not to fetishize these differences making them fixed, immovable categories.

The United States has "the largest number of immigrants in the world," and the population of immigrant children has rapidly grown. Marcelo Suarez-Orozco and Carola Suarez-Orozco outline the growth of the immigrant population in the US, "In 1970, the population of immigrant origin stood at 6% of the total population of children. It reached 20% by 2000 and is projected to be 33% by 2015" (9). All of these children, Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco further point out, are born from foreign-born parents (9). This is consequently "an era of hyper diversity" and is evident in, for example, their levels of education. On the one hand these immigrant parents are among the most educated people "comprising 47% of scientists with doctorates, a quarter of all physicians, and 24% of engineers . . . 41% of newly arrived immigrants had at least a bachelor's degree" (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 10). On the other hand, they make up the lower levels of education and must find jobs as low-skilled workers in agriculture, service industries, and construction (Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco, 10). Suarez-Orozco and Suarez-Orozco claim that in 2013, 28% of all recent arrivals "lived in poverty," and this percentage had grown from 18% in 1970 (10). I propose that understanding the immigrant parents of these students from a realistic and non-prejudiced perspective will explain the motivations of the students more holistically. This is my intent in the methods I outline further on.

Yan Guo points out that "transcultural knowledge construction" whereby these immigrants change themselves by integrating into the new system of their newly adopted homeland can manifest in two ways: "opposition and discrimination, or to cultural creativity and the integration of new knowledge within academic and societal positionings" (123). The inability to understand immigrant parents in turn is attributed to either misconceptions of difference or a lack of knowledge about their culture (Guo 123). Guo demonstrates through interviews that this transcultural knowledge construction is the blend of what the immigrant parents bring with them and what they experience here. This is the dual frames of reference that

they knowingly and unknowingly pass onto their children (126). Guo urges all teachers to acknowledge this "rapidly changing social context" and "better address the needs of students from a multicultural, multilingual population." Guo and Mohan (2008) suggest that educators and administrators need to recognize that educational tasks may be given culturally divergent interpretations" (134). Guo concludes by arguing that teachers and schools in general "need to learn immigrant parents' views on education and cultural differences on home-school communities" (137) to begin understanding the students in their classrooms and schools.

Acknowledging differences is part of what a teacher must do, particularly when looking at students who fall outside of the mainstream. Yet it is important to realize that differences that are rooted in tradition and culture are often seen as "unchanging" while they are "systems that blend and shift in response to pressures from the environment" and the ingenuity of those who belong to such groups (Kerschbaum, 617). The challenges are immense as they are real, as Stephanie Kerschbaum notes that "using discourses about difference to attend simultaneously to broad groups characteristics and to instability within (traditionally defined) categories" makes writing teachers, particularly the new ones, anxious (617). To address this Kerschbaum suggests that this scholarship on difference can be approached in primarily two ways: "by becoming more aware of differences that have received little attention and by developing new insights on familiar differences" (618). This *fixing difference* as Kerschbaum terms it, is "the process of treating difference as a stable thing that can be identified and fixed in place," what I call "Difference," as well as the "attempts to fix, that is improve, the way difference is understood" (619). This can happen when the teacher enters the world of the student and the student's world enters the writing classroom. In *Course X*, Leonard Greenbaum and Rudolf Schmerl focus on the "ecology" of the university system and the first-year writing classroom addressing both student and teachers often indistinguishably. At the core of that analysis, however, are the economic and intellectual expenses that such dictated choices mean when imposed on the students, a conflict I referred to previously.

Greenbaum and Schmerl also manage to bring teacher and student into the world of the other and thereby address some real-time problems that define the world of the first-year writing classes.

Using Non-Traditional Assignments to Reconnect Gita and Rashmi

Bringing each into the world of the other is a phenomenon that Eileen Lagman examines as part of a larger study on the loss in transnational literacies and brain drain in the narratives of her research informants. She points towards a trend in recent scholarship that has begun to look increasingly at immigrant and migrant communities and the effects of globalization on literacy practices (27). According to Lagman, such scholarship highlights the varied and multiple literacies that are a part of the transnational experience, specifically the new literacies they bring. She writes, the "multiple literacies, whether it is through acquiring digital skills, speaking across languages, or mixing languages, they have multiple social and cognitive positions, because of the transnational ties they maintain, from which they can make meaning" (27). However, she is quick to also point out that this focus of scholarship on these "new and multiple literacies is an effort to counter the narrative that immigrants are lacking, particularly English language skills or official school-based literacies" (28). These unconventional, multimodal methods become a means to bridge this divide because first, as they are a part of a larger transnational experience through which universal meaning may be made; and second, these multimodal methods transcend problems that those who are not from the mainstream (like the Indian immigrant students) may otherwise face. The reason for this, says Lagman, is that educators see immigrant students as either unwilling to participate or unable to assimilate. The way to consider all these multiple literacies, Lagman suggests, is through the "virtual nationhood," which is "the transnational connections made possible by computers and mobile phones to simulate a nation across borders" (46).

Integrating computers and digital technologies into the process of composition can bring the worlds of the Indian immigrant student into the world of the classroom, and vice versa. The use of already

popular digital technologies in the composition class work has great potential in engaging students irrespective of their differences. Daniel Anderson advocates the use of basic computer technologies that are both accessible and affordable in the composition classroom, so that the environment can be reconfigured as construction sites or studio spaces (42). Anderson believes that this in turn will "serve as a catalyst for instructors wishing to reconceptualize pedagogies" that will "jumps start innovation," innovations that instructors have found to "yield pedagogical insights and theorizing that can be layered over practice through reflection"; such pedagogy in turn facilitates creativity, motivation, and engagement (44). Of the many advantages that Anderson presents, I would point to the "hands-on time in class for students to work together as they develop technical skills and multiple literacies" (58). Collaboration between teacher, student, and the space of critical thinking present a very viable and sustainable pedagogical tool to *fix difference*, which Kerschbaum suggests is the first step to understanding and gaining from (multiple) cultural differences (619).

Joyojeet Pal, et al. looked at the value of computer-aided learning in the minds of the Indian parents in India. They found that a computer (based) literacy held immense value because the parents believed that computer-based literacies positively impacted their child's interest in school as well as the status of the school in the eyes of the community at large (2). Their research was not on an immigrant population, but their findings hold value here because their final take-away argued for including parents in the planning and implementation of educational projects and saw this practice as indispensable (8). Traditionally and culturally, the importance and presence of the Indian parent in the lives of their children is tantamount to devotional reverence. For the Indian immigrant student walking the path between Indian roots and an American life and reality, this parental presence is unaltered by the fact of their physical location.

The inclusion of digital technology looks at the shifting interests of the students as a means of engagement, but it does not address the question of content that would enable *fixing difference*. To look at content, I propose that the teacher take the class and classroom

outside of the purview of the conventions of the traditional writing class and into the realm of multimodal composition assignments.

Multimodality in composition is both a recent concept as well as an old one (Palmeri). In *Remixing Composition: A History of Multimodal Writing*, Jason Palmeri repeatedly stresses the need to acknowledge and incorporate multimodality in composition studies if teachers are to stay relevant and engage their students in a meaningful way. Selfe calls for an acknowledgement of non-alphabetic composition across digital and print formats; Lunsford sees writing today as having moved from print conventions to writing that goes beyond the "black marks on white paper"; and Yancy holds the writing teacher responsible for fulfilling the students' need for multiple literacies (qtd. In Palmeri 4-5). Palmeri sums up this common "refrain" succinctly when he writes, "alphabetic literacy is our past; multimodal composing is our future" (5). By looking at multimodality as a guiding idea on how to conceptualize a writing course and looking at multimedia, which includes all the multiple forms of technologies that enable such expression, *fixing differences* might be successfully accomplished in the writing classroom.

To this end I recommend two models of assignments that can be easily incorporated in all kinds of writing classes and in varying degrees depending upon the discretion of the teacher: the incorporation of multimodal assignments, and the development of assignments that ethnographically engage the community. These assignment models will address the problems of connection and motivation, as well as contextualize the two worlds of the student. These models will consider the families from which these students come; they will look at difference (or lack thereof) as a stable thing as well as something that must be understood within a larger context. The students will see that in several ways their cultural differences fade away in the glare of a new technological reality that defines all students uniformly. They will also be able to understand and explain the two contrasting worlds they inhabit to themselves, their parents, their peers, and their teachers.

The effectiveness of moving outside of convention in engaging the students is not something new (Palmeri). Authors of composition

studies' first multimodal composition textbooks like Helen Hutchinson (*Mixed Bag*, 1970), William Sparke and Clark Mckowen (*Montage*, 1970), Kytle (*Comp Box*, 1972), James Miller (*Rhetoric of the Imagination*, 1972), to name a few, all argue that the composing process can only happen when the student is motivated, their imagination excited, and the course contextualized to their world beyond the writing classrooms. Hutchinson states the underlying assumption is that involvement precedes thought, and thought precedes writing. This to me is the underlying assumption of all writing, and it is nowhere more critical than in the first-year writing classroom, which is the beginning of the path where writing and critical thought are indistinguishably intertwined. The first model I present is adapted from the multimodal assignments outlined by Palmeri in *Remixing Composition*, and the second comes from Shirley Brice Heath's integration of ethnography into the writing classroom as seen in *Ways with Words: Language, Life and Work in Community Classrooms*. Both of these can be used in isolation, but they can be used as effectively when combined.

In *Remixing Composition*, Palmeri makes a case for the use of non-textual modes of first-year writing pedagogy that are both interdisciplinary as well as multimodal and employ a host of mediums—digital as well as sensory. Of his take-aways, the most significant in this context is the connections between the composing process across disciplines and mediums, which he demonstrates as having some inherently underlying, almost universal similarities. Palmeri uses studies that range from Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi who draw similarities between successful artists and "expert" writers, to Shipka who "offer[s] students more open-ended assignments in which they must actively choose which multimodality . . . they will employ to convey an argument" (qtd. In Palmeri 47).

As Palmeri examines these various ideas on how a composition class can become multimodal *yet* remain true to composition studies in concept, he finds that "students really enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to move beyond the alphabetic" (2). In terms of how these assignments can be employed towards *fixing difference*, each of his ideas lends themselves naturally to understanding difference

at several levels. For instance, Palmeri looks at the role of voice and how its various manifestations can be employed in creating a critical and creative awareness in the student. Through examining how voice, Rhetoric, dialogue, and dialect work in the composing process, Palmeri does two things: he demonstrates how the creation and transference of the written and the spoken language are both deeply interconnected social activities; and he gives us a means through which we can begin to understand the multiple voices in our classroom. By getting the students to record their voices and use these dialogues to fine tune their writing, we can understand the differences therein as well as understand difference from a whole new perspective outside of just their writing. Another idea is the use of audio-visual electronic media in the classroom to begin the process of composing outside of the alphabetic text. While this is a blend of Anderson and Palmeri, Palmeri spells out many ideas in his monograph on how such assignments can be designed and the technologies needed to do this. Technology has redefined categories in ways that have significantly challenged older categorizations, particularly for the students. By resorting to communicating in a language, albeit a digital one that is non-alphabetic, a teacher of composition can begin to connect with students on their own turf as it were.

Heath's study looked at various factors that defined and determined the language learning abilities in young children from the two communities of Roadville and Trackton. Heath defines the project as being primarily focusing on the "face-to-face network in which each child learns the ways of acting, believing, and valuing of those about him. For the children of Roadville and Trackton, their primary community is geographically and socially their immediate neighborhood" (6). In the course of her book, what is most significant in this context is not just the direct connection that she makes with language learning abilities and the role of immediate social context surrounding the child, but in the way in which she redefines the role of the teacher and the student in the assignment section of *Ways with Words*. As she defines a possible ethnographic project that has the students go out into the community and base their research outside of traditional classroom and textbooks, she labels the roles of the

teacher and the students differently. She calls the teachers "learners," and she labels the students "ethnographers." By calling the teachers "learners," Heath is *fixing difference* as the teachers approach understanding difference from multiple perspectives. By calling the students "ethnographers," she is giving students agency as well as a reason to invest in the assignment. In this way, Heath demonstrates how ethnography, or at the very least, ethnographically inspired assignments can take the entire class through *fixing difference* with the final aim being connection between writing student and critical composition.

Taking inspiration from the ethnographic projects that Shirley Brice Heath outlines in *Ways with Words* is the basis for the second model I put forward. One of the main ways in which we can understand and connect with immigrant students is to acknowledge and understand the worlds from which they come. A big part of this world is one that has their parents and the society that surrounds every individual household within that cultural universe, irrespective of its geographic location. This world is often far more real for an immigrant student than the writing classroom, grades and all. Ethnographic assignments as inspired by Heath's work will have students going out into their own worlds to critically analyze the realties from which they come and must return. This could find them engaged in the course material because it connects to their real life outside of the classroom in a meaningful way, but it could also result in their reviewing their multiple frames of reference with an intellectual authority that benefits them and their communities at large. They will begin to see that their worlds are not disconnected either in content or aim and can articulate this reflection to themselves and those around them. In the context of student experiences in the American high school, Jennifer McCloud argues that in order to understand their experiences in the ESL classrooms, she began to take all of their experiences and values into consideration, which in turn "presented new paradigms for understanding human experiences" (263).

Conclusion

The observations in this study are informed by firsthand experiences as an Indian immigrant composition student (Gita), teacher (Rashmi) and scholar (myself), and the recommendations I present also come from those multiple positionalities. The problem of getting the Gitas and Rashmis to connect across this intellectual divide must involve understanding the world from which such students come and understanding their parents who embody their larger realities. The recommendations aim to fulfill both these requirements: they aim to understand the different forces that define the educational experience for Indian immigrant students in the composition classroom through the students themselves. These multimodal, nontraditional methods that I present are conceptually outlined because designing writing assignments is, in my opinion, the privilege of the writing teacher and the students. I would argue that there is no one-plan-fits-all course plan in composition studies. In my own experience, each semester and each class is as unique as a thumb-print and each semester is customized to suit the students there. True, the course plans are based on a wide framework that contains the goals and routes forward, but the specifics shift based on where the class is and what the class needs. The uniqueness of each composition class negates any attempt to establish and present detailed course designs because specific context must be the main guide in crafting the day-to-day plans. Finally, we must remember that this classroom includes students other than the Indian immigrant students and their interests are as important as any other groups' interests. At the end of it all, it is the teachers and students in a writing class who will know what works best for them.

In closing, I urge all the Rashmis out there to acknowledge that this disconnect is a problem that is real but fixable; I urge all the Gitas to give themselves a chance to enhance their individual and their professional value by inculcating individual authority that can only come from engaging in a critically oriented writing class; and finally I urge all scholars and practitioners to think about this problem and share their observations, experiences and ideas. It is only by

collective recognition of this disconnect and collaboration to resolve it that we can eventually bridge this great divide.

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Making Meaning: Effective and Practical Revision Instruction

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When I was teaching ninth-grade English, I had a bulletin board dedicated to revision. It took up the whole back wall of my classroom and had multiple drafts of four different genres: a reading response for a graduate course, a blog post about sports, the first chapter of a YA novel, and the lede for a newspaper story about education. My hope was that by providing concrete examples of the significant changes in "real" writing from first draft to final draft, students would begin to understand that revision is not a punishment or evidence of incompetence, but just the opposite: revision is an opportunity and evidence of writing prowess.

Students frequently interpret significant revision— elimination or addition of content, essay reorganization, development of new ideas or evidence—as unnecessary added work, if they consider it at all (Sommers). They often think, "I already wrote the paper; I don't want to re-write the paper!" or perceive copy-editing as revision. It is challenging to coax students away from their one-and-done assumptions about writing processes—especially in an educational environment that focuses on timed essays—but it is critical to their development as writers. Our contributors to this issue's Teacher to Teacher column tackle this tricky issue: pushing students to revise for improved meaning rather than merely proofreading for correctness.

First, Katie Nagrotsky walks us through an imitation exercise and student-driven mentor text collection developed out of her

desire to shift students from answer-getting to problem-solving thinking during writing workshops. Although imitation has a rich history in rhetorical instruction (Abbott, Marrou), its usefulness in the classroom is sometimes overshadowed by concerns that it may be too formulaic or traditional to be effective (Butler). But in "Beyond 'Is This Good?': Rethinking Revision to Forge a Community of Writers," Nagrotsky capitalizes on the creative affordances of imitation and solves an issue of students looking to her for "answers" about their writing.

Anna Daley then explores six common problems of the student-writer revision process that stand in the way of meaningful revision in her piece, "Playing with a Healthy Revision Process in the Classroom." Daley considers issues such as feedback and student commitment to their writing, and throughout her practical approaches to all the issues she focuses on shifting student thinking from always proofreading for correctness to first revising for meaning.

In "Show Them How: Revision in the High School Classroom," Paula Uriarte looks to the ubiquitous but often-criticized practice of peer review as a site for developing strong revision skills in student writers. Paulson, Alexander, and Armstrong have noted the importance of explicitly teaching peer review skills in order to encourage meaningful feedback among student review groups, and Uriarte's article explicates a means for doing just that. Her approach focuses on high school students but could be adapted for students of nearly any age group.

Finally, Mark Latta takes a creative approach in pushing students to resee their own and each other's work in "Blackout Revision: A Strategy for Playful De/Construction of Student Drafts." Using the popular model of blackout poetry, Latta suggests a peer review exercise that has students blacking out one another's texts as a means of close reading and interpretation. This unusual strategy challenges students to seek out core concepts and meaning in an unexpected but powerful way.

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Beyond "Is This Good?": Rethinking Revision to Forge a Community

Katie Nagrotsky

"I don't know what to do. Can you see if this is good?" Leah (all names are pseudonyms) made her way across the classroom to the conference table. Her eyes were desperate. I was about to respond when another student appeared with her notebook.

"Me too. Can you check this," Rebecca begged.

Leah and Rebecca's requests unsettled the fragile focus of the workshop. I could feel it.

I have always believed in the power of conferring with students, but this was different.

In the first few weeks of school I realized that independent writing time could all too quickly devolve into a "deli line," with students dependently waiting for me to review their writing.

Somewhere along the way, my sixth-grade students had come to see writing as arriving at an answer. They were not used to generating their own ideas. They expected me to tell them what to write and perceived writing conferences as an opportunity to have their work checked.

In what follows, I will describe two structures I tried that helped to reframe students' attitudes towards writing as a recursive problem-solving process (Rief 31) and push us towards real revision.

Mining the Relationship between Talk and Writing

The first thing I did was try to help students see that they could grow and change their ideas through talk. There was a connection, I realized, between the dependency in writer's workshop and the "popcorn" conversations I kept hearing in book clubs. In these conversations a student would raise a question and instead of responding to that idea, another student would jump right to another topic entirely. These conversations quickly lost all dialogic quality and quickly became a chorus of disparate voices.

I had to change my teaching if students were going to learn how to hear one another and "extend and revise their thinking in the

company of others" (Santman 21). To help facilitate this rhythm, I asked students to pause after each of their book club meetings. This quickwrite reflection allowed them to consider how further reading, watching, or listening confirmed or added to their original thinking:

- What did you hear during the conversation?
- What are you thinking now?
- How did what you heard add to, change, or confirm your thinking?

A few students resisted this kind of thinking and reflection. After sharing an initial idea, they did not focus much on what other classmates said or how what was being said connected to or talked back to their own ideas.

I wasn't trying to force students to change their minds, but I did expect that they listened closely to one another. If they were learning to be open to the concept of talking to grow and change ideas, then they might eventually start to see how writing was thinking and that revision was part of the iterative process of developing ideas. These quickwrites helped build the foundation for writing as thinking and essay as "a journey of thought" (Bomer 178). I modeled how my own thinking evolved multiple times, and eventually I started to see a difference. Students were starting to talk *to* one another instead of at one another.

Using Mentor Texts to Fuel Revision

As the unit drew to a close, students began pulling from notebook entries to develop an idea into an essay. Once they had a draft, I decided to encourage revision in a new way. I gathered a group of students who were struggling with their introductions for a small group lesson on using mentor texts to guide their revision.

I handed them the first paragraph of an essay that we had read as a class. After I read the introduction aloud to refresh their memory, I asked them to imitate the writing but with their own book club book character in mind.

They took a few minutes to write out an imitation of the mentor paragraph on small white boards (see Figure 1). Suddenly, they all had richly descriptive paragraphs about their characters. As they went back to their essay drafts, I suggested that they read aloud to a partner to see if this new writing meshed with what they'd already written.

If it didn't match yet—more revision. Sometimes you have to add a new piece or stimulus to resee a draft and write into it from another angle. I started a binder full of mentor texts so students could use them as models for improving their own drafts.

The Mentor Paragraph

Super. That's what they call him now. Super Mario. There he is on magazine covers and cereal boxes and fan sites—red overalls gleaming, bushy mustache waving in the breeze, white gloved fist pumping in victory.

(Gratz 24)

Michael's Imitation

Courageous. That's what she is. There she is on the streets of Kabul with no man—boy's clothes blowing, freshly cut short hair gleaming, strutting around the market selling her products.

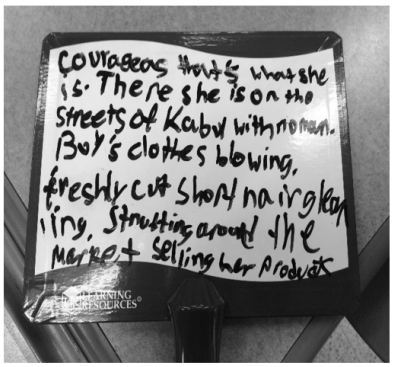

Figure 1: Michael's Imitation

But my best teaching ideas always come from students. One day during independent writing time, Natalie called me over.

"I made another mentor text binder," she exclaimed.

She showed me the cover page (see Figure 2) and opened the binder. She had imitated my directions, instructing her classmates to add to the collection with a poem, and asking them to write a short note about what they loved about what the writer did. She had added "Thumbprint," a poem by Eve Merriam that we had read a few weeks ago.

Why hadn't I thought of this?

Natalie's idea took off. Students started bringing in texts to add to her binder. By the spring, we had a library of six full binders full

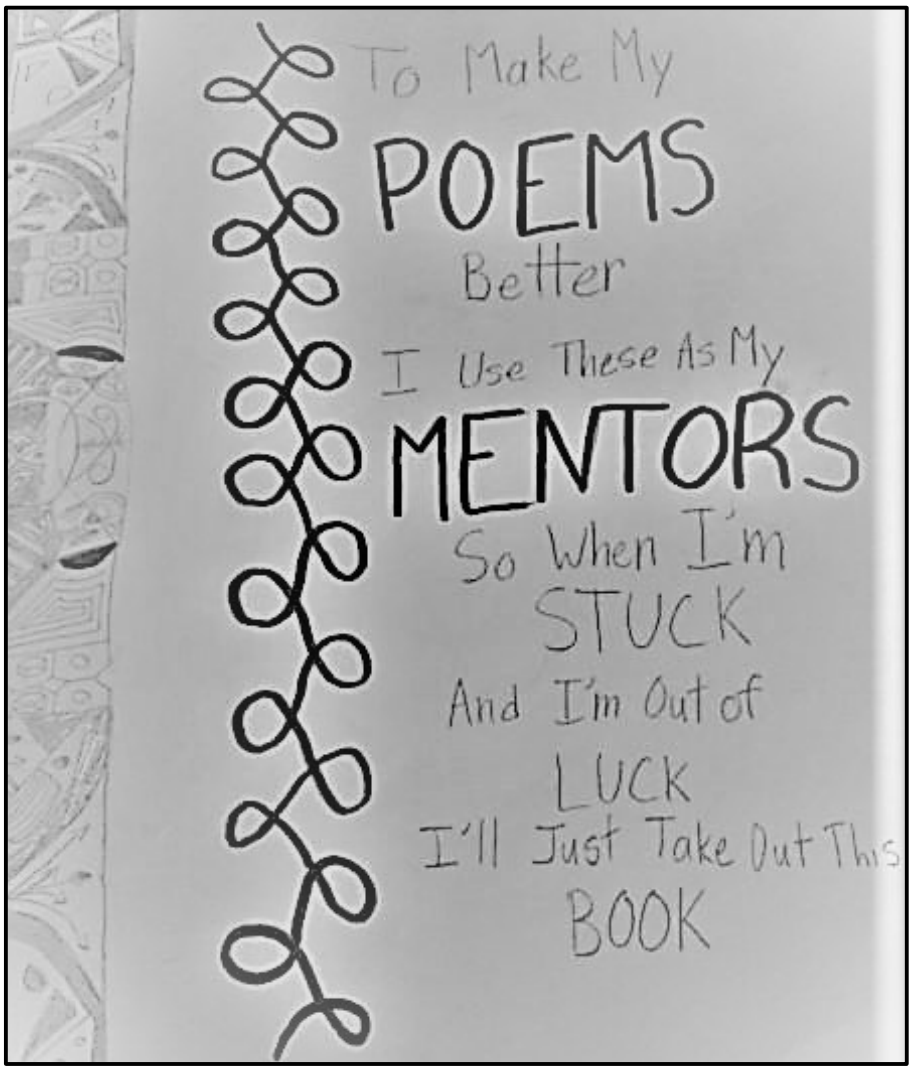

Figure 2: Natalie's Poetry Mentor Text Binder

of poems, articles, and short stories. I taught a few minilessons where we practiced writing off a line or borrowing the writer's idea or structure. After imitating some of the shortest pieces, students seemed more comfortable seeing these authors as guides.

They often grabbed a piece out a binder for inspiration when they had writer's block or revision block. As Marchetti and O'Dell note, mentor texts "can inspire students and teach them how to write . . .

mentor texts enable independence" (3). As a school we moved to Google classroom, and students posted mentor texts online so that they had a bank of mentor texts to access from home.

There were still some moments of frustration because writing and revising is difficult and messy work. But the "deli line" almost completely disappeared. Eventually, my students stopped following me around the room for help getting an idea and started consulting the mentor texts and one another when they wanted to figure out a way forward in their writing.

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Playing a Healthy Revision Process in the Classroom

Anna Daley

Those of us who teach writing to young people are intensely familiar with the struggles students experience in our classes. But we also know the transformative power of writing, of re-examining what we think and communicating that thinking to others, and of owning our stories and using our voices. So how do we apprentice our students to move beyond the "one and done" routine of cranking out a first draft, editing it, and turning it in? How do we cultivate a rich practice of process-oriented writing, with students returning to their writing to dig into their meaning, reorganizing purposefully and editing for effect, not just correctness? Although I currently teach dual credit, college composition to seniors, I've used the following strategies with grades 9 through 12.

First, a necessary preface: we cannot induct students into a rich thinking and writing process if they do not feel safe and respected. Creating the classroom culture may be a topic for another time, but without this context, many students will find it next to impossible to write meaningfully, a condition of a healthy revision process.

Here are common problems I face after students have a first or second draft, and the solutions I've developed in response.

The Problem: Students can't break out of the formula because the formula is easy, reliable, and they just don't know other ways to compose.

My Classroom Solution: Schedule for a hearty revision process in your lesson plans. I used to plan for about three days of revision—during this time in my career, revision was something students did as a homework assignment. But I quickly realized that without rich feedback and suggestions, students didn't know what to do besides edit and use the thesaurus. Now, I allot roughly two weeks of lesson plans for every writing project for students to re-see, re-think, and revise.

During these two weeks, we conduct writing workshops in class. I can monitor the feedback they are giving to each other and add my own suggestions. Students still revise at home as a homework assignment, but they have helpful feedback to take home with them which leads to global revisions as opposed to the editing I used to see.

The Problem: How do we keep revision or workshop activities fresh and useful while teaching students how to develop helpful feedback for each other?

My Classroom Solution: I've developed a variety of activities that fall under two major types of workshops. "Working Workshops" guide students to re-see, re-think, dive deeper into, develop, flesh out, analyze, re-organize, or try a new approach. Students operate on their own draft right there during class time, developing their writing as I'm giving them step by step instructions. It feels a lot like coaching.

I have "Working Workshops" that help students develop content, try different ways of organizing that content, and play with local language revisions. One such workshop is called "Explode a Moment." Students have an early draft on their table; I coach them to find a single moment in their writing that most illustrates the point they are trying to make. Once they've identified this spot in their draft, we conduct a five-minute "quickwrite" to develop sensory details, add internal monologue, dialogue and other "fiction" techniques. These details slow down the pace, much like when the camera "zooms in" on a scene in a movie, which tips readers off that this moment is important. It's a great strategy when students are blending narrative with arguments or when they are trying an implied or delayed thesis.

"Feedback Workshops" are guided group protocol designed to help students develop useful feedback for each other. These workshops ask students to read each other's work, talk about each paper as a group, develop written feedback (so the student author can use it at home) and prioritize that feedback. We prioritize global issues (developing a topic, content, and organizational structure) before local issues (spelling, grammar, and local language issues like syntax, word

choice, etc). This is not to say that global issues are *more important*, but I believe global writing issues are a *prerequisite* to improving local issues.

One Feedback Workshop I've developed asks writers (operating on an early draft) to identify three lists: "What I Know" about my draft, "What I Don't Know" about my draft, and "My Specific Point of Feedback." Students list all the things they already know (*I know my intro paragraph is no good, I know I need to add more evidence, etc.*), what they don't know (*I know how to hook a reader into the essay, I know if my point is clear, etc.*) and their specific feedback request (*I need ideas to engage my reader and keep them engaged*).

I've used ideas from Bruce Ballenger, Barry Lane, Jeffrey Wilhelm, Michael Smith, William Zinsser, to name a few, as well as the brilliant public school teachers I've had the honor of collaborating with in developing these revision activities and workshop protocol. I've developed my own protocol when I see a specific need. Some of the protocol are similar in purpose or in nature, but it's important to keep things fresh for students and offer them many processes to figure out what works best for them. By the time they are conducting workshops for the final portfolio, students *choose* which workshop protocol will work best for their needs.

The Problem: Writing is an inherently creative process and that is hard to grade.

My Classroom Solution: Find an appropriate balance between rewarding effort (participating in the process) and providing realistic, objective assessments of the qualities in their writing. Both are crucial. Students can't get in the game if every step, every draft, every workshop is graded for quality. Like any other creative endeavor, it has to be fun and safe to try.

For example, I took a week-long music camp this summer as a novice mandolin player. If my teacher had corrected every mistake or pointed out each of my deficiencies, I would have wanted to quit. I might get the idea fixed in my head that I'm just not a musician. It certainly would hurt my growth mindset and stunt my learning process.

"Playing" with writing is crucial, so be sure to reward students plenty for just getting in the game. On the other hand, students deserve to have enough objective feedback leading up to a summative performance that they are not surprised by their grade. I will often give students full points for, say, a fourth draft if it's complete and they can show me the changes they made from the third draft. In addition to the grade that goes in the gradebook, I might also mark a score on a 5-point scale, giving writers some targeted feedback on a particular skill we are developing in this unit. I teach college composition to seniors; I weight classwork and participation in revision activities (completion grades) 50% because I know if they get in the game and participate, they will grow as writers; the summative writing portfolio is weighted 50% and is graded objectively against my learning objectives and standards.

The Problem: It feels like there is not enough time in the day to provide feedback to individual students.

My Classroom Solution: Individual feedback is a key practice to assist students in their development as thinkers and writers. Provide specific, individual feedback to every student early in the year, particularly as you are training the class to develop the language to talk about writing, an eye to spot good ideas and beautiful language, and the tools to couch their critiques gently and helpfully. Don't feel obligated to comment on *every* paper throughout the year, though. We should gradually release responsibility to them. I give students options in their feedback, which cuts down on my time. For example, I let students choose between comments on Google Doc, comments in a letter, a personal conference, or a 3x5 card. Some students just want the 3x5 card because it's limited and straightforward. During those weeks of workshops, keep track of which tables you sit at each day so you can at least see every student's project and provide feedback in person; be sure to check in on the quality of the workshop group, and monitor and adjust as needed. Later in the school year, release responsibility to students to provide feedback. Try to avoid only providing rubric feedback or group feedback. Students are individuals and deserve to be treated as such.

The Problem: Students don't want to risk being critiqued for something they care about, so they write about things they don't actually care about.

My Classroom Solution: Set the right conditions for a creative process. Community building early and regularly is essential because you will be asking students to open up, be vulnerable, show their "crappy" first drafts to each other and give and receive feedback. This requires a safe environment that supports risk taking. Build writing groups, preferably at tables shared by 3-5 students rather than at individual desks. Groups should shuffle regularly but not randomly; I always allow students to choose their first group of the year and I give students some measure of choice in who they are with or who they need to avoid. Students need to feel safe to write meaningfully, and every educator should understand how motivating choice is for students. Emphasize what professional writer Anne Lamott calls a "shitty rough draft," what many teachers call quickwrites, freewrites, or completion assignments. Allow students to take the pressure off a first (or second or third) draft having to be "correct" or even immediately receive feedback. Let them "write their way into" things. In other words, reward effort. I give my students "full points" for completed assignments in my instructional sequences so they feel they can take risks, try a new approach, explore a tangent, or get ideas down without having to wonder if their teacher thinks those ideas or attempts are "correct." Ask student groups to read each other's writing and name what *is* working. At the end of that small group reading, ask every group to "nominate up" a composition from their table that was interesting, different, beautiful or provocative. Invite a few nominees to share their writing and then invite the group to name what they appreciated about the composition. This process cultivates the habit of noticing and naming what works in writing, builds confidence in young writers, cultivates a positive classroom community, all while apprenticing students in discussion about writing.

The Problem: Students just don't care about their writing.

My Classroom Solution: When we find that our students are producing writing they really don't care about, then we know they are writing toward a product (a paper that will receive a good grade) rather than a process of developing meaningful ideas. Teach through inquiry pedagogy.

Frame instructional units and individual lessons with open ended "essential questions" that invite students into the unit of study. My first unit essential question is "Who are you as a thinker or writer?" This question often prompts students to consider how often they have written for a grade, or written things they don't really think in a timed-write setting. This unit also helps students consider the type of writing that is most often honored in schools (short fast thinking) and the ways in which they fit or don't fit that model.

Guide and assist students in developing their topic, substance, and form. Gradually release responsibility to students along the way. End the unit with a culminating writing project in which students develop their own response to the framing question (or address some aspect that fits under the Essential Question). Using inquiry methods also means that we assist students in *developing ideas that they care about*.

Let's be honest, timed writes and formula writing have taught a generation of students that their first idea is the only idea to pursue. My students really struggle with developing original ideas that they care about. But I know how painful it will be when they are revising an essay they don't really care about for the 6th time. Help them develop ideas through group discussion, group brainstorming, and plenty of freewriting. I use a process I call the hotseat, in which each student names the topic they are thinking of writing about in a whole class discussion. I can coach them on their topics right then and there; additionally, every other student is able to hear dozens of example topics. I encourage them to shamelessly steal good ideas that resonate as true for them. Remind students *often* that the most important thing they can do to improve their writing is to write what they care about, no matter whether the writing task is personal or academic.

Show Them How: Peer Review as Part of Process

Paula Uriarte

The writing process is often taught as linear because there are so many students in a high school classroom. It is easier to lockstep through together than to acknowledge that each student's process is unique and often messy. In Idaho, we even had a multiple choice question on one of our standardized state assessments that asked what the steps of the writing process were—in order. Traditional approaches to writing instruction as a process that looks something like assign a writing project, return to the student with comments, and then ask students to revise by a deadline eliminates the very powerful learning that can happen in peer review.

Introducing peer review requires a teacher to slow down and make process explicit for students. In my classroom, we spend a lot of writing time thinking through ideas in a variety of ways. For example, this might be a structured and timed freewrite or brainstorm that leads students to discover what they want to say. There's also time for talk—sharing with a partner or conferencing quickly with me, whether at my desk individually while the class is working on something or as I move table to table and talk informally with small groups. Students might "pitch" ideas before beginning a draft to me or to the class. Just these small steps in the beginning help students see the malleability of ideas and how things might change as we talk or think more, and how to trust talk as part of the process.

Once students have ideas, we move to drafting and a fixed date to bring a draft to class to share with their writing groups. These groups are crucial to success and I usually choose them. Before students ever look at each other's drafts, we do some team building and create commitments (I will bring my draft to class on time; I will be open to suggestions) so they begin to feel comfortable with each other. They may spend part of a class period playing a get to know you game, or they may participate in a conversation starter activity not at all related to writing.

An important part of the peer review process is helping students know HOW to respond to each other's work. Like any other skill, this one needs to be taught explicitly if students are to become helpful partners to each other. Before our first draft deadline, I ask for one student volunteer to bring a draft a day early. On this day, I ask for two other volunteers and as a class, we go through a structured protocol for responding to a draft. I sit in on this first conference with the writer and two volunteers to model the process, and the rest of the class surrounds us in a fishbowl set up. Students have a handout (see Figure) and we discuss how to frame our comments before the model conference starts.

- We will be honest and fully engaged.
- We will be specific and kind in our feedback.
- We will have our drafts on time.
- We will be active listeners.
- We will have a positive attitude about workshop.
- We will be open minded in listening to feedback.
- We will stay focused (stay off phone, not work on other things).

Figure: Period 2 Commitments

This protocol begins with the writer reading the piece aloud, with copies of drafts that students in the writing group read along with. In early stages, the reading out loud bothers some students, but when they hear awkward wording or other errors, they notice things they didn't when just looking on the page. Depending on the genre of the writing, one person in the writing group summarizes the gist of the piece, the plot of the story, the claim, the thesis, etc. The rest of the group adds to this or amends it. The ensuing discussion is listened to by the writer, who is not allowed to speak until the end of the conversation. The group then discusses strengths in the piece, pointing to specific evidence, and then opportunities for revision.

All of this is done using the very specific language on their handout. The focus is on what the writer did. So instead of platitudes like, "This is great" or "This needs work," students are encouraged to say things like, "When you [name something the writer wrote or a move

the writer made], it had the effect of. . . ." In other words, what did it do for you as a reader? Our goal in these conversations is to help the writer make the piece what he or she wants it to be. Therefore we avoid language like, "I would . . ." or "You should. . . ." This is very cumbersome at first. There are pauses and silences as students look at the handout, thinking about how to frame the feedback. I point out in our fishbowl the importance of taking this time and not worrying about awkward silences. Once the small group has finished the conversation, the writer can ask questions or get clarification about comments made. The writer can also bring up specifics that may not have been addressed. For example, "I really struggled with the conclusion. What do you think of it?" This is a crucial part of the process, because when I then conference individually with students, the first thing I might ask is, "What feedback did you get from your writing group?" If the student says nothing, I would follow up with, "What questions did you ask your group to help you know what you need to do next?"

Because I am sitting with students for this practice session, I can help them with the language they use in talking with each other and model it for them. We end with asking the writer if he or she has a sense of what can be done to revise before submitting the assignment. I've never had a student say no.

A benefit to each member having a copy of the drafts is that students can make editing comments and notes as they listen to the draft being read aloud. When the draft is returned to the student, he or she can compare editing notes and make decisions from there. I model and emphasize that unless editing issues distract from understanding, they don't need to be discussed in the peer review. The listeners can also capture their initial responses so they don't forget them for the discussion, and the student has a record in case he or she forgets feedback when returning to the draft to revise.

When we finish the model conference, we open up the discussion to the whole class and have them debrief about what they noticed in the conference and share what they think of the process. This often results in questions about the feedback. I tell students that ultimately, the decisions they make about whether to accept or reject suggestions

should depend on their intent for the piece. They also comment that other benefits of the conferences include hearing where others are in their drafts, getting ideas from each other and feeling better about where they are in the process.

The next important step is for me to observe conferences, especially early in the year and continue to nudge students toward productive conversations. Usually by the third piece of the year, they are functioning independently. My one-on-one conferences with students after they've submitted a paper or before the final draft help me to see if any of the groups are struggling as well. I keep writing groups together for the course of the semester so they build rapport. If I thought things weren't going well, I would re-mix the group, but thankfully I haven't had that experience.

I do not assign a grade for these conferences or the drafts, but I note if a draft was not present for conferencing because it is part of a process category on the final rubric. Students quickly see a correlation between their participation and their "final" drafts. Even after a score, I let students continue to revise after conferences with me until the end of the grading period, which may overlap with other writing assignments. For students who are struggling, this might be a requirement, but framed as helping the writer improve and get the targeted instruction necessary to do so.

We also do some focused work with specific revision strategies so students know what to do with the feedback they are given. If I am told I need to slow down and give the details of something that's happening, I might try Barry Lane's "Explode a Moment." If organization is an issue, I might try a reverse outline or cut and paste revision to reorder. Revision that is embedded in a course empowers students to do their best work, but it is a skill that must be taught and modeled explicitly.

When I first used peer review in the classroom, I didn't see its effectiveness because students would not focus on the task because they didn't know what to say. They would read each other's drafts and say, "That was great," and move on to the next person. I tried an online platform once and the result was a student crying about harsh feedback. The results were no different than the days when I

would grade a paper, give it back to a student and ask for revision, receiving instead a freshly edited copy of the same material. Now I see significant differences from draft to draft and students taking more risks because someone said to them, "What would happen if?" instead of "You should. . . ."

Blackout Revision: A Strategy for Playful De/Construction of Student Drafts

Mark Latta

This revision strategy emerged from a workshop that Michael Jackman, senior lecturer of writing at Indiana University Southeast, recently led at the Flanner Community Writing Center in Indianapolis. The workshop discussed blackout poetry and invited participants to a process of creating blackout poems from news articles and IRS manuals. I attended the workshop and found blackout poetry so enjoyable that I decided to integrate the practice into my writing classroom.

One realization I had while creating blackout poems was how the process forced me into a close-reading gaze and invited me to re-see the text in new, previously unexplored ways. Blackout poetry encourages the reworking of texts by locating and noticing various centers of gravity, themes, and linguistic structures. Based on this insight, blackout poetry seemed well suited as a revision strategy for student-authored drafts in addition to its use as a remixing technique for published texts.

What is Blackout Poetry?

Blackout poetry (also called erasure poetry) is created through the erasure of words and letters in previously printed works. Using newspaper clippings or other published works (books, menus, and even IRS manuals work well, too), authors black out words and letters with a Sharpie marker to rework the text. Through the erasure and removal of text, space, and punctuation, writers create blackout poetry "like a wood carving where the excess wood is removed to reveal the hidden object inside" (Ladenheim 46).

This process can be replicated digitally as well, as the Figure demonstrates. Here, a passage from the IRS Taxpayer Bill of Rights, "The Right to Challenge the IRS' Position and Be Heard," is reworked through the blackout process to create a poem, "The Challenge to Be Heard." The resulting poem is revealed using the highlight feedback in Microsoft Word. By setting the highlight color to black,

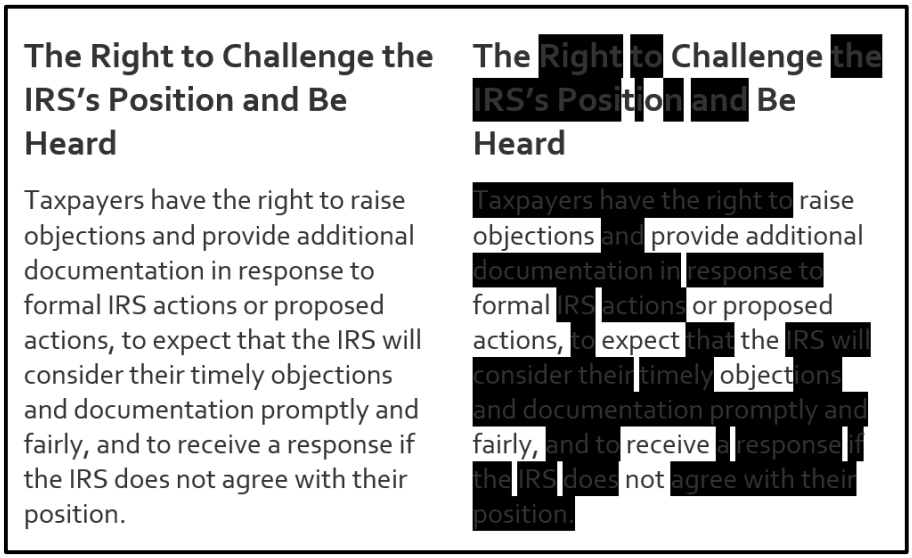

Figure: Creation of "The Challenge to be Heard" through Blackout Poetry

students are able to generate blackout poems digitally. "The Challenge to Be Heard" reworks text from the IRS to say something about the difficulties and frustrations of attempting to be heard and being treated unfairly.

The process of composing blackout poetry invites writers to create through erasure and removal: "What's exciting about the poems is that by destroying writing you can create new writing. You can take a stranger's random words and pick and choose from them to express your own personal vision" (Kleon xv). This version of text rendering through creative destruction requires the author to look closely at letters, words, spaces, and punctuation in order to reimagine other arrangements. It is this close reading and de/reconstruction that make blackout poems ideal as a revision activity.

Blackout Poetry as a Revision Activity

This revision exercise assumes the high school or first-year college class has previously spent some time composing blackout poetry (perhaps as an idea generation activity) and that students are familiar with the process. As a revision technique, blackout poetry is well

suited to help writers locate centers of gravity within their writing, identify themes and thematic connections, and help reveal allegorical possibilities. While I find this process most helpful for personal, persuasive, and creative nonfiction essays, I have also used this activity within research writing and have been pleased with the results.

When I incorporate blackout poetry as a revision activity, I prefer to time the activity to occur when students are working with drafts that are somewhere between developed and nearly complete. Ideally, drafts are between one and two pages in length, although completing this process with paragraph drafts is also possible. Although Figure 1 demonstrates the creation of a blackout poem with a concise text, the process of creating a blackout poem with longer works is manageable within a 50-60 minute block of time.

To complete a blackout revision, I ask students to bring two printed copies of their working drafts to class. Students first work in pair-and-shares. Before exchanging drafts with their partner, each student spends one to three minutes describing the main ideas of their draft. Then, students exchange drafts and read them silently. After each member of the pair completes a silent reading, I then pass out black Sharpie markers and ask each student to compose a blackout poem, using their partner's draft, that will help reveal something important about their partner's draft's main idea. In other words, can they create a blackout poem from their partner's draft that will help reveal something from under the surface of the text? While it is certainly possible to develop more specific suggestions, I find the ambiguity of this prompt usually helps to provide creative space for the text rendering the blackout poetry process requires.

After 20 to 30 minutes, I ask students to return the then-draft, now blackout poem to their partner. After a few minutes to read the result of the blackout poetry process, I will ask if anyone would like to read their poems aloud if time allows. This share-out portion of the blackout revision process helps foster connections between seemingly disparate ideas. Finally, after the share-outs are complete, I ask each student to write a brief, one paragraph reflection on the blackout poetry revision process. What was revealed? What did they

like about the process? What new ideas are developing? How did this process feel? How did it feel to read a poem created from your draft?

Often, the close-reading and deconstruction required to generate blackout poems activates the students' imagination and fosters a desire to rework the essay. The process helps students to see and imagine new possibilities for their text. To help capture these emerging ideas, I ask students to get messy with their remaining clean copy of their draft (the second copy each student brought). Students are invited to draw arrows between related ideas, create additional blackouts, draw pictures, or highlight passages in different colors. I also encourage students to write notes in the margins or interact with the second draft in a way that will allow a playful reveal of ideas. The goal of this step is to identify a core theme or allegory revealed through the blackout poetry process that students wish to develop further.

Additionally, this stage in the blackout poetry process is useful in highlighting that the writing process can look and feel playful and inventive. To underscore this point, I often bring in revision drafts of my writing which have gone through a blackout poetry reveal. Using my past drafts as a guide, I can point to the areas on the page in which core ideas were revealed, highlighted, and developed.

Blackout poetry as a revision strategy encourages students to re-see and rethink their work, while also revealing connections to the work of their peers. It is also fun. Because of this, I find a less rigid structure within the process of blackout poetry revision to be more helpful than developing too many rules and suggestions. This activity provides an opportunity to see writing as playful and full of potential. More importantly, blackout poetry encourages authors to see beyond their current work and imagine additional possibilities.

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Glenn, Cheryl. *Rhetorical Feminism and This Thing Called Hope: Studies in Rhetorics and Feminisms*. Southern Illinois University, 2018. 296 pages. $40.00 paperback. ISBN: 978-0-80933-694-4.

Reviewed by Wendy Piper

These are fraught political times. Economic inequality has been on the rise for decades, and chronic injustices, such as those concerning race and gender, persist. These social problems make their way into the classroom as teachers see their effects in the students they teach. Children from impoverished backgrounds come to school hungry, and students of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds struggle for acceptance among peers and a curriculum that addresses their needs. While various efforts at reform have been made, such programs as "No Child Left Behind," "Race to the Top," and "Common Core," ultimately mandate standardized testing as a measure of student and teacher success. This leaves teachers feeling that they have to "teach to the test," and often sacrifice their better judgement to the need for high test scores. In the face of all these challenges, everyone seems today to be looking for "hope."

A senior scholar in Rhetoric and Composition has written a new book that offers such "hope." Cheryl Glenn, Distinguished Professor of English and Women's Studies Director at Pennsylvania State University and 2019 winner of the CCCC Exemplar Award, brings her career-long record of administration, teaching, and research interest in equity to the task of reforming our classrooms in a way that empowers students and teachers alike. In *Rhetorical Feminism and This Thing Called Hope*, Professor Glenn introduces her concept of rhetorical feminism, a theoretical concept intended to bring the ideology of feminism to bear on the field of rhetorical studies. Her goal is to make the traditionally male field inclusive of women, people of color, the disabled, and diverse Others. As the field becomes more inclusive, Glenn intends that her theoretical concept will also render the field more democratic and vibrant for future scholars of rhetoric.

Glenn's study is divided into eight chapters:

- Activism
- Identities
- Theories
- Methods and Methodologies
- Teaching
- Mentoring
- (Writing Program) Administration
- This Thing Called Hope

As the titles suggest, the chapters range from a history of activism, to a survey of theories rhetorical feminists have used as they seek to energize the field, to methods and means of bringing such theories into our research and teaching. By applying the theoretical concept of rhetorical feminism to such different rhetorical contexts, Glenn's book revises the field so as to create equality and agency in our classrooms. In the paragraphs that follow, I will focus on selected chapters of interest to the *Journal of Teaching Writing* readers.

Chapter One provides a history of feminist activism in the United States, beginning in the 19th century and including black and white women rhetors who worked for the causes of both abolition and universal suffrage. Names of several high-profile activists are put forth in the chapter, but her discussion of Sojourner Truth stands out for the way in which she exemplifies key features of Glenn's theoretical concept. Glenn writes that the "dignified black woman," standing six-feet tall, moves and challenges her white audience as she redefines the concept of woman in her "Aren't I a Woman" speech at the Woman's Rights Convention in Akron in 1851. As Truth describes her work in the fields, Glenn writes that the speaker's reliance on personal experience as evidence, vernacular language, and her physical embodiment of an alternative reality work to subvert the dominant paradigm of the dainty, helpless white southern woman. This introductory chapter provides needed groundwork for the sophisticated theoretical concept that Glenn will later develop, as

it displaces the art of persuasion with the feminist values of collaboration, silence, and emotion.

Chapter Three provides more helpful examples of the feminist rhetor, this time within the realm of academic theory. In "Speaking in Tongues: A Letter to 3rd World Women Writers," Glenn argues that Gloria Anzaldua transcends accepted models of argument by utilizing the epistolary form; the letter is not unilinear or "finished" as, by its nature, it calls for response. Expressing herself in earthy, vernacular language, Anzaldua writes directly to her "sister rhetors," those third-world women who might be writing in multi-lingual texts and under socioeconomic and cultural situations not shared by "the white man." She thus embodies Glenn's rhetorical feminist strategy of purposeful "disidentification" with the dominant tradition. This example will help readers to think creatively about form and about diverse identities in the classroom. Writing instructors will recognize in Anzaldua's "unfinished" form the emphasis on process rather than product. The example from this professional writer will be useful to teachers focusing on reflection, or the metacognitive moments that enable our students to "transfer" their writing knowledge from one context to another.

The focus on diversity, inclusion, and agency in our classrooms is developed further in Glenn's chapter on "Teaching." Her practical concern for our students is impressive. Glenn notes that "Americans know that having a good teacher is linked to higher income as well as to a range of other social results" (128). In a way that echoes her discussion of Anzaldua, she puts the current concept of "intersectionality" to use in this chapter that mixes theory with practical teaching advice. Rhetorical feminist teachers focus on the cultural location of students in their classrooms; they acknowledge Linda Martin Alcoff's concept of "positionality" that accounts for "gender, race, class, ability, sexuality, language, religion, or other features of our identity that mark relational positions rather than essential qualities . . ." (131). Similar to her example of Anzaldua as a writer on the margins who manages to move herself as "subject" from the periphery to the center, Glenn's treatment of identity and intersectionality encourages teachers to help students to discern their own cultural

positions. By empowering students in this way, we can help them to have the confidence to join with their teacher and others/Others in making meaning or constructing knowledge.

While Glenn's final chapter on "Hope" is inspirational regarding the possibilities of the concept she has introduced, her chapter on Writing Program Administration provides a final reflection on the progress of the movement of rhetorical feminism. As it reflects on the success of WPAs in implementing feminist ideals into the real-world environment of the programs that they administer, it's the only chapter that gives me pause. Speaking as an Administrator in a very large Composition program at Penn State, Glenn laments the status of "beleaguered" feminist WPAs, who oversee "a cadre of equally overworked, often underappreciated writing instructors, most of them women" (176). She cites feminist WPA scholar Sue Ellen Holbrook as she argues that the "professionalization of composition was actually a 'feminization' of composition" (176). "Composition's embrace of feminism . . . 'with its values of nurturance, supportiveness, [and] interdependence,'" has normalized "writing instruction as 'women's work'—neither serious, rigorous, or intellectual" (Schell 76, qtd in Glenn 177). This is a convincing argument, and I'm not sure how this irony that Glenn notes, this task of rhetorical feminism as both a celebration of "the feminine, the margins, while actively working against such a code" (177) is able to be accomplished.

My own perspective here comes from my work experience. As an instructor of writing at an elite liberal arts college for the past fifteen years, the conditions described above that have been attributed to the "feminization" of composition prevail. The writing faculty at Dartmouth is a "cadre" primarily of women, most are at the rank of lecturer, and almost overwhelmingly, we're non-tenure-track. We are collegial and collaborative. (We drew up the "Outcomes" for our required first-year writing courses together, for instance.) We share office space. For the most part we are non-hierarchical, egalitarian, and democratic. As we all know, the teaching of writing as process is labor intensive. Much of our time is spent in commenting on drafts and meeting with individual students. The labor intensiveness

of teaching writing alone is prohibitive to publishing for most of us. It's difficult to see, then, how the prestige of a writing department can rise within an academic environment that values research. Indeed, writing programs are often made up of graduate students, adjuncts, trailing spouses, and often individuals without the PhD. The interest of many hard-working instructors lies primarily in teaching rather than in research in Writing Studies, and with that interest no doubt comes the feminine values of nurturance and supportiveness toward students. I wonder, then, if we can ask—at the same time that we celebrate these values—that writing departments move out of their subaltern status.

Glenn does acknowledge that despite the efforts of feminist WPAs, the continued conditions over which the WPA presides have not changed much. A constellation of factors, including the very "feminization" of the field that Glenn reports, prevents rising in that hierarchy. The book ends on "Hope," however, as its final chapter. Glenn's intention is to offer not a "conclusion," but to "pause" on "a sense of openness that includes contradictions, incompleteness, and hope" (193). These are days when such "hope" is especially needed. The inequities that plague our society and provide easy slogans for political campaigns show up in concrete and often distressing forms in our classrooms. We need to be able to address the needs our students bring us. Cheryl Glenn's new book helps us with this task. She asks important questions, and it is up to readers to give serious thought to the intellectual project she poses. How is it that we go about breaking down conceptual barriers that have caused women, people of color, LGBTQ, the disabled, the global poor, the marginalized, to be left out? Glenn offers a theoretical vision as well as practical suggestions for teachers in the classroom that possibly provide an answer.

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Denny, Harry, Robert Mundy, Liliana M. Naydan, Richard Sévère, and Anna Sicari, eds. *Out in the Center: Public Controversies and Private Struggles*. Utah State University Press, 2019. 280 pages. $27.95 eBook/$34.95 paperback. ISBN: 978-1-60732-782-0.

Reviewed by Eliana Schonberg

There's a moment in Tammy Conard Salvo's "Naneun Hangug Samal-Ibnida: Writing Centers and the Mixed-Raced Experience," her contribution to the recent edited collection, *Out in the Center: Public Controversies and Private Struggles*, that demonstrates how of-the-moment this collection is. Exploring the challenges of navigating the world as a person of mixed race, of feeling "othered" in all communities she inhabits, she writes honestly and openly about her prior decisions to keep identity politics out of her professional life and, specifically, out of her work as a writing center administrator. She describes the complications of choosing photos with which to represent herself online, torn between appearing too serious or being accused of having her eyes closed, a physiological manifestation of the Korean portion of her mixed racedness. "I called the one person I thought would understand, my sister," Conard Salvo writes. "I thought she would sympathize and commiserate, but she gave me no solace or comfort because her own exhaustion—the entire country's exhaustion—with identity issues has boiled over into anger over political correctness and the constant state of offense in which everyone is mired" (98).

The comment is one of several moments throughout Harry Denny, Robert Mundy, Liliana M. Naydan, Richard Sévère, and Anna Sicari's book, in which readers are grounded—some might say brusquely dropped—in the present-day reality of American politics. As a reader, this timeliness gave me pause; I wondered if this collection will feel as fresh and exigent a decade from now or if it will take on the interest of a valuable fossil. Will we assign the text to consultants for insights into still-pressing questions or as an historical artifact of a particular political moment?

But then I realized the question is moot, because, not three weeks after finishing reading the book, I assigned Talisha Haltiwanger Morrison's "Being Seen and Not Seen: A Black Female Body in the Writing Center" as reading for my annual pedagogy seminar—an intensive workshop for undergraduates, graduate students, and professional tutors. The article sparked a lively and engaged discussion about issues of race, but also, and even more so, about how tutors make decisions to bring their personal identities into sessions with writers, about what sense of personal and emotional safety they risk, and when those risks are worth it and when they might not be. My students and colleagues talked about how to approach writers with an openness to shared humanity, an optimism about the potential for change and growth, and also a clear-eyed sense of the inequities built into the social fabric in which tutors and writers operate. "Who cares if this lasts," I thought, "we need this now!"

And it is precisely because we need this now that the collection is such an important addition to any writing center's shelves—even if some of the essays are less inspiring than others, even if some identity questions are less-than-adequately represented within the covers. The editors acknowledge these failings, especially when it comes to the section on "(dis)ability," a section with only one contributor, a fact that "only highlights the need for the field to do more research on students with disabilities" (237). But in a project of such ambitious scope, with pieces on race, multilingualism, religion, class, and of course, (dis)ability, there are bound to be areas that are less fully realized. Overall, these essays consider various questions of identity sensitively and with attention to current scholarly conversations, and the interweaving of thoughtful editors' review essays contextualizing each section fills in any gaps.

In the best possible way, one might say this is Harry Denny's book. His first book, *Facing the Center: Towards an Identity Politics of One-to-One Mentoring*, is cited in a large percentage of the articles, a fact that is appropriate and not at all surprising given the paucity of scholarship on these topics in writing centers. But also, a glance at the author bios reveals strong professional links between Denny and many of the contributors (a third of the essays were written by his

current or former students), and several authors explicitly describe learning from Denny's mentoring style and teaching in their own deployments of identity politics in their work.

I raise this lineage not to suggest that the editors cast their contributor net too narrowly, but rather to note that if Harry Denny can find three of his student tutors to contribute essays on religion in writing centers (concerning Christian, Jewish, and Muslim identities within writing center settings), then each of us should also be able to find three tutors to fill the religion section—and if we can't, then either we're hiring badly or not looking hard enough, and this collection reminds us exactly why we should change both of those things as quickly as possible. It also reminds us why we should be reading and assigning these essays to our tutoring staff so as to expand our possible identity conversations beyond whatever confines our institutional demographics might impose upon our staff makeup or hiring possibilities.

I found myself reading and noting the ways that *Out in the Center* highlighted previously overlooked elements of my own positionality as a writing center director. When I was asked to review this text, my first response was, "You want *me*? I'm cisgendered, straight, white, and not a first-generation university student—surely I'm not the appropriate reviewer here." I have often enjoyed the privilege of having my identities be treated as normative in professional settings. But then, as I reflected on the essays in this collection, I realized that for years my out-of-office messages have identified the Jewish holidays I'm observing—precisely because I wanted to make my students feel less guilty about taking time away for their own religious observances. And for the past two years that I closed my office door at least once each day to pump breast milk for my daughter, I would place a sign on the door that read, "If you see this sign, it means I'm pumping milk for my baby. I will be happy to help you by phone or email until I reopen the door." Several people asked if I might not prefer a sign to simply say I was "in a meeting," but that would reinforce the invisibility of the labor of parenting, specifically for working mothers with young children. And how would my "in a meeting" sign help graduate students argue for

better parental leaves or help administrative assistants without an office door argue for better arrangements than trekking across campus to a hard-to-reserve pumping room, using break time to do so?

I say this not to valorize my choices, but to point to the ways in which I found unexpected identities of mine also present in *Out in the Center* and to the ways it might help other writing center directors, teachers, and students think more broadly about what identities they might choose to "out" in various educational settings. In the next offering of my consultant pedagogy class, I am assigning Sami Korgan's essay "On Guard!" and Ella Leviyeva's "Coming Out as Jewish at a Catholic University" alongside readings on racial literacy. Both Korgan and Leviyeva's essays provide well-written personal reflections on evolving religious identities (Christian and Jewish, respectively) during the college years. I expect my undergraduate writing consultants will find the essays relatable and that the topics addressed will hit home for some. These are also essays that complicate the often-dichotomous understanding of religion in contemporary discourse, and, as such, they might also make interesting points of departure for discussion among high schoolers and their teachers. In putting together my syllabus, I struggled with not also assigning Hadi Banat's "Floating on Quicksand: Negotiating Academe While Tutoring as a Muslim," a nuanced reflection on navigating the complicated religious and national identities of a Palestinian Muslim in Lebanon, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States, both in the classroom and in the writing center. Banat addresses the difficulty of not fitting in easily in expat communities in any location, as well as the politically loaded nature of being Muslim in the United States right now. The essay would make an excellent addition to any pedagogy reading group for teachers interested in finely tuned insights into the complexity of the identities with which their students and colleagues may be struggling. Overall, the religion section is prompting me to introduce the topic with my student staff as part of our larger conversations surrounding diversity and inclusion, something I had heretofore been hesitant to do.

And at some point this semester I will have my entire staff read Richard Sévère's "Black Male Bodies in the Center," for its frank portrayal of how hard it is to navigate the cultural assumptions surrounding black male bodies, especially within writing centers where questions of power and authority are already fraught. As Sévère reminds us, "in writing center practice . . . physicality—one's immutable traits—is the first point of reference that unconsciously, or perhaps consciously, sets the tone for our interactions. And thus how we go about the work of the center is inherently rooted in a discourse that intersects with perceptions associated with race and gender" (46). If this quote—and this collection—argue nothing else, it is that addressing these topics is fundamental rather than tangential to the work of writing centers. Harry Denny's essay, "Of Queers, Jeers, and Fears: Writing Centers as (Im)Possible Safe Spaces," located in the center of the collection, grounds the risks of the work in personal narratives that map out, in chilling detail, how easy it can be to end up, as he puts it, "on the wrong side of a game of identity politics" (115). Denny's essay pulls no punches in both articulating the risks (personal and collective) of advocating for change and social justice through considering identity in writing center work and in reminding us that we should take up the challenge regardless:

> Writing centers, of course, don't exist in a vacuum; the wider world seeps in, whether through the mindsets of those working there, the assignments writers bring with them, or interaction that forces interpersonal dynamics that might not otherwise happen. Some might argue our business is exclusive to the teaching and mentoring of writers, that we ought to save the world on our own time, as Stanley Fish (2003) once claimed. The reality is that writers and writing exist in a social world involving communicative transactions among people who represent complex dynamics, histories, and identities. The interaction intrinsic to the everyday teaching and learning in writing centers requires negotiation, and that negotiation

invites conflict that must be owned and mitigated, if possible. (121)

Denny's words point to the value this collection holds for teachers and students of all kinds, within and without writing centers. Writing conferences between classroom teachers and students (at any level) are never just about the text any more than those that occur in the writing center. Certainly those working outside a center may choose to skip certain essays or work to translate them to external contexts. Some, such as Alexandria Lockett's "A Touching Place: Womanist Approaches to the Center," Nancy Alvarez's "On Letting the Brown Bodies Speak (and Write)," and Anna Rita Napoleone's "Class Division, Class Affect, and the Role of the Writing Center in Literacy Practices," while thought-provoking and engaging, are truly aimed at a writing center audience. Others, such as Anna Sicari's "Everyday Truths: Reflections from a Woman Writing Center Professional," which takes up the challenges of leading-while-female in academia, considering the challenges through lenses of personal reflection, Adrienne Rich, and still more contemporary political vignettes, will resonate with women in leadership positions across educational settings. Also, in the section on Gender and Sexuality, Robert Mundy's "The Politics of 'I Got It': Intersections, Performances, and Rhetorics of Masculinities in the Center" is a nuanced consideration of the intersections of maleness and class in academia. It took me two readings to appreciate the complexity of the argument, but I was glad I returned to it—as a woman in the academy, it was an important reminder that identity politics are fraught in different but no less complicated ways for my male colleagues and students. Similarly, Liliana Naydan's "Academic Classism and Writing Center Worker Identity," provides intellectual fodder for any academics concerned with questions of class and labor broadly understood. While the essay speaks specifically to the challenges of occupying a writing center leadership position (one that, by its definition involves managerial labor and the expenditure of funds) as a contingent faculty member without institutional authority or budgetary control, its cautionary tale can be appreciated by multiple

audiences—I would argue, in fact, that it should be required reading for graduate students about to enter the academic job market. So should Beth Towle's "Other People's Houses: Identity and Service in Writing Center Work," a lyrical personal essay reflecting on writing center work as service work. The piece eloquently articulates what it feels like to be a first-generation graduate student choosing to enter academia as a long-term career and identity. Perhaps this essay should be required reading for upper administration as well.

Where the collection grounds itself most firmly in writing center studies is in the editors' review essays at the end of each section. Here writing center professionals will find other sources to consider, suggestions for future research questions and research methodologies, and questions to pose in discussing these topics with tutors as part of ongoing tutor trainings. These are also the places where newer members of the field may look for some guidance as they decide how to incorporate these questions into their administrative and scholarly agendas and identities. For example, the Review essay on the "Gender and Sexuality" section asks writing center professionals to consider the following questions, among others:

> What happens when we enforce dress codes in the writing center? Who are we excluding and what bodies are we further marginalizing? Are we empowering the women who are in our centers and preparing them for leadership? What does male leadership look like and how do we respond to it? . . . How have we been complicit in policing sexualities and genders in our centers? How do we create an inclusive pedagogy for all genders and sexualities? (142)

A first step towards an inclusive pedagogy would be working from this collection, because regardless of whether it ends up being timeless, it is certainly both timely and necessary.

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The Journal of Writing Analytics

The Journal of Writing Analytics (*Analytics*) is a peer-reviewed, open access journal published by Colorado State University Open Press. Additional support for the journal is provided by the University of South Florida.

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Publication of *Analytics* is annual and coincides with the conference of Writing Analytics, Data Mining, and Student Success hosted by the University of South Florida. When the conference is announced each year, solicitations will be open for both the conference and the journal. Researchers may submit a manuscript without attending the conference.

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