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"I Get to Choose What I Want to be Done with My Paper": Teacher Revision Pedagogy, Student Revising Practices, and Student Agency

Megan L. Titus

Most university English departments feature a bookshelf where they keep the books that instructors may use for freshman composition courses. If one were to peruse these books, one would find that the majority of them contain at least some information on revision and peer review. Indeed, revision and peer review have become such a part of the pedagogy of composition studies that to publish a writing textbook *without* addressing those issues would be strange. In "What's in a Textbook?", Robert Lamphear points out that revision is "usually embedded at the end of a discussion of the writing process" (88). Revision is thus important enough to include in a textbook, but not necessarily important enough to spend any substantive time on.

The idea that revision is a necessity also permeates writing pedagogy. Teachers are expected to teach revision; students are expected to practice revision as part of their writing process. However, as teachers and as students, we each bring different perspectives to the revising process. While many instructors value revision in their own work, they may not necessarily use their own revising practices as the basis for their pedagogy. For instance, some instructors may teach revision as more of an "editing" process that is linear rather than a "re-seeing" process that is recursive, even if the latter is how the instructor might define it. As teachers, we should consider how we value revision,

and how to package that value for students. Ultimately, how do we get students to understand a more complicated perception of revision, one beyond editing and fixing grammar? And, how do we get them to enact it as well?

This essay presents a case study of one classroom, which was taught by an instructor named Ray, and an analysis of how Ray teaches his definition of revision, which he described to me as a metaphor:

> *It's rebuilding the house, taking out what doesn't belong, adding what's needed, making connections. Sometimes, it involves the entire structure; sometimes, just a room or two.*

In order to teach his students this definition, Ray's pedagogy includes revision as part of the daily class schedule. Through surveys and interviews with both Ray and his students, this case study examines the extent to which Ray's revision pedagogy had the desired effect on students—whether or not they saw revision as process, as a building and rebuilding of a text. Furthermore, it explores the connection between Ray's definition of revision and his use of daily peer workshops, and the effect that connection had on student perceptions of writing and revision. Based on these findings, I argue that the tension between how we as instructors understand revision and how we enact that understanding in the classroom affects our students' revision practices. Because writing instructors continue to see revision as an important pedagogical framework for writing, instructors need to make explicit for themselves—and their students—the connection between their own beliefs on revision and their pedagogy. Students hear what we say, and watch what we do, and if we model thoughtful revision practices in our speech and our actions, we can help students develop revision practices that strengthen their own agency as writers.

Revision, Peer Review, and Student Agency: Common (Mis)Conceptions

Peer review is one of the most frequently used methods for mobilizing students' revision of their writing. It is also one of the more researched and discussed topics in the field of writing studies—how to get students to successfully enact peer review for revision has been a topic of discussion for scholars such as Anne Ruggles Gere, Thomas Newkirk, Alice S. Horning, and countless others. However, while much of the literature focuses on *how* to teach revision effectively (such as through peer review), it doesn't emphasize teaching students how to value that practice, or how to use revision in other ways, such as to forward their agency as writers. The literature often presents exercises in revision, but does not discuss how those exercises might change students' understanding of revision as a process. The case study presented in this essay, of Ray's class, hopes to address this question of how students come to value revision, and the extent to which instructor pedagogies impact that reflective process.

There are several revision and peer review concepts that we aim to impress upon students.[1] One is the idea that revision leads to better, more interesting, and more complicated written texts. Scholars in composition studies have historically debated the accuracy of that statement;[2] more currently, scholars have offered specific teaching strategies for helping students generate that "better writing." In her essay "Practical Guidelines for Writers and Teachers," Cathleen Breidenbach draws on the work of Donald Murray to argue that not only does revision lead to better writing, but that revision itself is what sparks inspiration and creates knowledge. For Breidenbach, "Sometimes, the words we write reveal truths we didn't know we knew; language can create knowledge; revision can facilitate discovery" (200). According to Breidenbach, revision can foster writing to learn as much as drafting, if not more: "the business of revising can be revelatory, inspiring, and deeply satisfying" (200). Breidenbach offers some specific strategies and metaphors to help students "fan [the] feeble flame" of revision (200), such as asking

students to make rhetorical decisions and consider point of view. Her essay includes advice similar to Ray's in this case study; she has a clear idea of what she believes revision to be, and offers writers and teachers strategies on how to enact that idea beyond editing.

Although we may value revision as writers and teachers, as Breidenbach and other scholars do, it is something that many of us struggle to teach effectively. Even if instructors feel they understand the goals of revision, they might still worry that students will not grasp why it is an important part of the writing process. More specifically, writing instructors may worry that, despite encouraging students to use the drafting process as a vehicle to think through one's ideas in new ways, students will see revising simply as editing in order to get a better grade. In short, final drafts look much like first drafts, with only minor grammatical and spelling changes made (if that). Or, instructors may worry that students will simply continue adding to their writing, as opposed to including new material, cutting material that is no longer relevant, and gaining an understanding of revision as a recursive process. Catherine Haar and Alice S. Horning argue that students who are trained to focus on grammar and style will "sometimes notice a symptom of a problem, like an obtrusive repetition of a word, but rather than deal with the underlying coherence and sequence-of-ideas problem, they replace the offending word with a synonym here and there" (4). According to Haar and Horning, students tend to opt for the "safe" route—instead of looking for the reason behind repetition, they will simply swap out the word. Rather than looking closely at the meaning behind their sentences, "if a passage seems disconnected … [students will] add in a transition word like *moreover* or *however*" (5). Students are likely to avoid taking risks, and are inclined to follow the instructor's feedback, adding if necessary, but mostly just correcting the grammar. Haar and Horning give several reasons for this: students may worry that taking a paper completely apart will make it "worse," instead of "better"; or, students see the instructor's comments as closely linked to a "good grade," and so they make only the changes the instructor suggested, in hopes of achieving that "good grade," and not in hopes of improving their

writing. This is typically because they are either not invested in the writing itself, or because they feel little agency to make changes that reflect their own writing goals.

Although instructors may include peer feedback as part of the revision process and may value feedback in their own writing lives, that value may or may not transfer to students' understanding of writing and revision, even as peer feedback is often considered a vital part of the composing process. Muriel Harris has argued that peer collaboration helps students craft "evaluative responses or suggestions for revision while sharpening their own critical reading skills" ("Collaboration" 375), while Carol Trupiano adds that peer review "encourages students to participate in the conversation of writing and revision" (184). In both instances, Harris and Trupiano make clear the importance of peer feedback in students' composing and revising processes. We also see the significance of this belief in learning outcomes for first-year writing programs; for freshmen composition courses at the midsize Midwestern university where this study takes place, one of the rhetorical competencies students must fulfill is "Respond to and assess student writing rhetorically." This includes objectives such as:

- Learn to develop their own ideas in relation to the ideas of others.
- Identify and understand their peers' rhetorical purposes, audiences, and situations and the relationship among these throughout the drafting and revision process.

Scholars have also noted the importance of peer response to the development of a student's agency as a writer, because students are developing an understanding of writing as a social act through peer review practices. Trupiano notes that dialoging in peer review groups can help students "also become more aware of their audience" and thus "become aware of their strengths and weaknesses in writing" (185). As students recognize their writing abilities, they also understand how to better use their abilities to reach their audience. Scholars add that instructors must be careful to foster this feeling of agency;

Bruce Horner argues that in English Studies, we have typically perceived the Author as a "quintessentially autonomous (masculine) individual" (508) and that "to recognize writing as a social practice would be to undermine the autonomy of both the author and the 'work' of writing" (509). Despite the belief that the Author is a lone individual, writing pedagogy encourages writing as a social act. Students see this disconnect and may feel confused about their own agency as writers if they are continually writing and revising in the social space of the classroom. In Candace Spigelman's case study of a freshman composition writing group, she argues that instructors need to "give students textual authority by encouraging them to invest in their compositions and to develop their texts according to their own authorial intentions" instead of trying to please the teacher (70). The four students in the writing group all had fraught notions of textual ownership, Spigelman contends, largely because of institutional and discipline-specific values, such as good grades and the privileging of individual work. Spigelman notes that the students in her study, and students in general, often perceive themselves as "novices without real authority, commitment, or confidence in their writing" who are "more ambivalent about their own authority as readers and writers who could offer or accept helpful feedback" (110). The mixed messages that students receive from their instructors about revision can lead students to have complicated relationships with both their own texts and their peers' texts. This can make it difficult for students to assert agency over their writing.

This lack of ownership may further have its roots in writing pedagogy itself. Kelly Ritter adds that "even strategies such as process pedagogy, which clearly privileges the trajectory of work toward a more cohesive end, may backfire in debunking the myth of 'perfect' writing" (86). This may especially happen when students are being taught to write in social settings while the instructor demonstrates preference for the Author as individual, completing final drafts, not Author as inspired by dialogue and conversation, who constantly writes and revises. This dichotomy between how the students are taught to write (social) and what they are taught to

value about writing (individual) leads to what Spigelman calls "complicated theories of textual ownership" (111) that can impact a student's ability to effectively write and revise.

Further complicating student agency in writing is the role of the instructor. Chris Gerben notes that "[al]though peer review is designed to value student experience, and to support student feedback and critique, the final role of authority and expertise is almost always perceived as belonging to the instructor" (33). When instructors try to encourage students to take ownership for their writing, students recognize that instructors have the ultimate authority, and so may revert back to doing whatever it takes to get that good grade. Laurie Grobman adds that in order to foster student authority, we as teachers and scholars need to help students see themselves as experts on a subject; for Grobman, that means including undergraduate research on a continuum of scholarship (from undergraduate to graduate student to experienced researcher). As Grobman argues, "attributing authorship to student scholars means that even though all discourse is social, writers *do* write and have agency. Further, student writers, like others whose voices have been silenced from knowledge-making, deserve to be *author*ized" (179). According to Grobman, part of the instructor's job is to help surface student voices, not silence them, or make them secondary to the instructor. When instructors allow students to share in the power of knowledge-making, this helps students assert agency over their writing and revising processes.

In the following study, Ray clearly believes that revision leads to better texts and that peer feedback is an important step of the revising process. He also advocates for student writers as authors (as opposed to an Author) who make decisions about their writing based on peer feedback, their understanding of that feedback, and their own ideas that are inspired by their revising processes and evolving knowledge bases. He asks students to share in the knowledge-making that is writing. We will explore how he applies those concepts to help students better understand the purpose of revision and approach their own writing with greater agency.

Methods

This essay is based on the analysis of a case study of one freshman composition class at a midsize Midwestern university. Students take one first-year composition course in order to fulfill their first-year composition requirement. In each section of this first-year writing course, students must demonstrate the rhetorical competencies established by the English Department in order to pass. The first-year composition course has a class size of 20 students; the size of Ray's class approximately matched that number.

The observation of Ray's class is part of a larger study that I conducted in which I examined six first-year writing classrooms. For the overall study, I collected a variety of materials from both students and instructors.[3] From the students, I collected pre- and post-surveys, first and final drafts of student essays, and taped interviews. The surveys were a combination of single-answer multiple-choice questions, multiple-answer multiple-choice questions, and short-answer questions. The multiple-choice questions on the student surveys were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS). I coded the short answer questions by focusing on key words in order to derive patterns in the students' responses. Question one on both the introductory and concluding surveys (How would you define "revision?") was coded according to the definitions of global and local revision from John D. Ramage, John C. Bean, and June Johnson's *Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing Concise Edition* . This text defines global and local revision as follows:

> You revise *locally* whenever you make changes to a text that affect only the one or two sentences that you are currently working on. In contrast, you revise *globally* when a change in one part of your draft drives changes in other parts of the draft. Global revision focuses on the big-picture concerns of ideas, structure, purpose, audience, and genre. (275)

I coded student definitions of revision based on their similarities to Ramage, Bean, and Johnson's definitions of global and local revision. The other short answer questions were similarly coded by

identifying and categorizing key terms appropriate for the question. In this article I will refer to the students' survey short answers by their instructor's first initial (R) and the subject number generated by the students to protect their anonymity. For example, R3164 refers to the student from Ray's class whose subject number is 3164 (see Appendix A for the beginning and end of term student survey). Finally, I recruited students for interviews by asking instructors to give recommendations and by visiting classrooms and asking students to volunteer. The students recommended could choose whether or not they wanted to participate; although the faculty supplied me with students' names, they did not know which students I contacted, nor did they know which students agreed to be interviewed. This further helped to insure the students' anonymity.

For this study, I also collected materials from the instructors. I collected surveys, classroom materials such as syllabi and peer review forms, and taped interviews. The instructor survey is similar to the student survey distributed at the end of the course term so as to determine the extent to which students and instructors share similar beliefs on revising practices by the end of the term (see Appendix B for the instructor survey). Ray was an instructor who answered a call of participants via email. One student from Ray's class, Stella, was chosen for her interview based on Ray's recommendation (see Appendix C for interview topics).

Ray's class stood out among the others because his students demonstrated the greatest difference in their understanding of revision from the beginning to the end of the course. Students in Ray's class made more changes to their writing beyond grammar than any other class, and a greater percentage of Ray's students claimed that their definition of revision changed from the beginning to the end of the course. As I investigated by reading the surveys in greater detail and conducting interviews with Ray and Stella, I began to see a clear connection between Ray's beliefs about revision, how he enacted those beliefs in class, students' perception of Ray's beliefs, and the influence of this perception on their writing. The interviews with Ray and Stella further illuminated the connections that Ray asked his students to make between his theory of revision

and their own writing, and the students' ability to make that connection and develop agency over their writing.

"Separate [the Bad Advice] from the Good Advice": The Benefits of Whole-Class Workshops

Ray's classroom pedagogy fully integrates revision by creating a discourse community centered on revising. Ray's classroom practice aligns closely with what George Hillocks calls "environmental instruction," where instructors "select and organize materials and activities which can engage students in the processes which are important to prewriting, writing, and editing" (393). In line with Hillocks' definition, based on the needs of the students, Ray creates class activities designed to help students become more engaged in the composing process. According to Ray, the most important of those connections were the whole-class and small-group workshops, which took place over a week of class (class met five days per week) several times during the semester. For each class, students first spent time in a whole-class workshop where Ray modeled the kind of feedback he wanted students to provide each other. Then, students moved into a small-group workshop enacting the same principles. The students' open-ended survey responses, combined with Stella's interview responses, show that Ray's whole-class and small-group workshops allowed for freedom of conversation and feedback that enabled students to develop a sense of agency. Because Ray dedicated a week of class to revising each essay, students were able to have some aspect of each essay workshopped in either the whole-class or small-group workshops.[4] In order to overcome student skepticism and create a non-threatening environment where students felt safe sharing their work, Ray asked for volunteers to participate in the whole-class workshops. He also modeled both praise and constructive feedback for students to show them how to create this safe space themselves.

At the time of this study, Ray was an adjunct faculty member with about ten years of experience teaching writing. He is a former high school science teacher and a current fiction writer; the focus

on revision in his class suggests that much of his teaching practice is an extension of his creative writing practice. Ray brought revision explicitly into the classroom through the whole-class and small-group workshops, and he required revision to be a major aspect of the students' thinking and writing processes. In order to show how this class resulted in an increased alignment between instructor and student values regarding revision and granted students agency over their own writing, we will look at student survey data and student essay drafts, my interview with Ray, Ray's course syllabus, and my interview with his student, Stella, a first-semester college student who, despite having taken AP English in high school, did not feel prepared for college writing.

Examining Ray's teaching practices during the peer workshops in conjunction with student survey responses and one student interview (Stella) reveals how Ray created a collaborative atmosphere for writing in his classroom that made his students more receptive to revision as beneficial to their growth as writers. This seems to be especially true because Ray's class was structured around writing as a collaborative, social act. As indicated in their survey responses and Stella's interview, the collaborative atmosphere helped Ray's students demonstrate the largest change in their perspective on revision of any students who participated in this study: 77% of students who submitted pre- and post-surveys claimed that their definition of revision changed towards a collaborative, recursive process. Using what I have identified as a series of five steps, Ray built a community of revisers where students worked socially on their writing and revised their own intellectual practices as writers, thinkers, and even as students. Although the students may have felt skeptical on their pre-surveys with regards to the value of peer review when beginning the class, through the following steps, we will see how Ray created a non-threatening environment through the whole-class workshops, which enabled students to find value in the peer review process. As they learned to listen to their peers and assess the extent to which their peers' feedback aided in the revising process, students in Ray's class also learned to assert more agency over their writing.

Step One: Overcoming Skepticism

Student and instructor skepticism about peer review exists across the teaching and practicing of revising strategies. Scholars have argued that student skepticism can lead to poor student feedback; for example, Haar and Horning note that "untrained peer reviewers in a classroom peer review session may produce impressionistic and vague responses on whether a topic per se is interesting and use badly-understood and vaguely conceived terms of criticism" (5). If we listen to students like Stella from Ray's class, we learn that students' struggles with giving and getting effective peer feedback lead to student skepticism on the value of peer feedback. Through modeling and the whole-class and small-group workshops, Ray was fairly successful at helping his students appreciate peer feedback.

Stella was a student who appreciated the whole-class workshop because of her skepticism regarding small-group peer review. When I asked her about the difference between the small-group and whole-class workshops, she stated:

> *It's kind of mean but … you don't know how good of a writer these two people you get are [in small group workshop], and they could tell you something that actually isn't what the teacher would want you to do. And it's easier to get the whole room and say, I think you should do this, and then somebody else will say no, I don't think that's right, you could do this instead, and then I get to choose what I want to be done with my paper.*

Stella expresses the idea reflected by Haar and Horning that other students may not be good essay readers. Her main concern is pleasing the teacher, and in this case, she worried that in small peer review groups, other students' advice could lead her away from what the teacher wanted.

As the instructor, Ray did not disagree with Stella's concerns. He admitted that students probably come to the peer review workshops skeptical; however, he encouraged students to take in the multiple perspectives offered by their classmates. Ray asked the

students *not* to dismiss ideas, or simply dislike peer review because of their lack of faith in their classmates. Ray elaborated:

> *I think one of the hard things about peer editing … is that some people give bad advice! And you have to sit there and listen to it and separate that from the good advice, and your feelings about having to do something that to you sounds stupid, although it may turn out to be a good suggestion. So I think that's sometimes frustrating. I try to address that in class. I do let them know, you're going to get different advice, and some of it is not always good.*[5]

Ray's idea of surfacing the concept of "bad advice" for students is related directly to his students' peer review workshops. Instead of ignoring student skepticism, Ray chose to discuss it in class and offered suggestions for his students to critically engage with peer feedback.

Ray attempted to move students beyond simply going through the motions of peer review. Instead of the typical grumbles about the quality of the feedback, Ray encouraged his students to listen to *all* feedback, to get a sense for how *all* readers might experience their texts, and to think about their revision choices from a reader's perspective:

> *I tell them to be open minded: don't judge the advice just because the person isn't what you would consider to be a good writer, or because they have a personality conflict. You have to listen to the advice. When one person is saying something, really consider it. Maybe even rewrite the paragraph or the page to try and take that advice and see how it works. But also, don't just take advice. What's the reason behind it? Does that reason make sense? Because … if I say, cut this sentence, there's got to be a reason I'm saying "cut it." If you don't see why, you better ask. If it makes the paragraph stronger, then okay. If it's a confusing sentence, redundant, try rewriting it. And if they have no idea why someone suggested something, don't do it.*

Ray's comments demonstrate how he invited students to think critically about the feedback they received. Ray connected listening to all feedback with the students' abilities to make choices about their writing. Instead of rejecting comments from peers whom students might consider "weaker" writers, he asked that students consider all comments in order to see how those comments might work. This mirrors the practice of writing to a real audience; not every reader is a "strong writer," yet those readers' opinions matter to our written work. Ray believed that students needed to not take all advice blindly; instead, they needed to carefully consider the "why," or purpose, of a comment, and think critically about their own work. He also aimed to empower his students by asking them to try out, and either accept or reject, peer comments. In this way, students could perhaps overcome their skepticism about peer review, and assume agency over both their own writing and the feedback they received.

This approach seems to have helped alleviate student skepticism toward peer review. On the survey at the end of the course term, students in Ray's class averaged a 4.36 (between "Somewhat" [4] and "Very Important" [5]) for the survey question of how useful peer review is in the revising process; this number was up from 3.93 at the beginning of the course term (between "Neutral" [3] and "Somewhat Important" [4], albeit closer to "Somewhat Important"). In response to Question 12 on the survey distributed at the end of the term: "What classwork have you found beneficial to your revising process and why?", 13 out of 17 students mentioned peer review. Students responded:

> R1172: *Looking at my paper on the projector [Blackboard] is beneficial. I can see the problems with my paper.*

> R9120: *I really enjoyed going over each other's papers on the overhead [Blackboard]. It showed me others' mistakes and how to correct them. It also encourages me to work harder on my own piece.*

R9850: *Having other people read my essay so we can compare ideas [is beneficial]. I am fairly skeptical of other students reading my work; however, their comments can be helpful. I'd rather have a closer friend (with better writing skills) edit my paper.*

R9672: *Peer editing, by far. It gives other voices to my paper and lets others see what I fail to notice is wrong.*

R1813: *Any time we've looked at a paper as a class and revised it, I felt like it helped. Seeing other papers being revised gives me better ideas about my own paper.*

R6811: *Having the entire class/teacher give positive and negative feedback [is helpful].*

These student voices show that the students did find the peer review workshops beneficial to their revising process; R1813 notes that "*seeing other papers revised gives me better ideas about my own paper*," while R9120 states that going over others' papers on the overhead "*encourage[d] me to work harder on my own piece*." This focus on ideas, not editing, suggests a shift in their understanding of revision from fixing grammar to a more global concept. Note, however, that R9850 still holds onto their skepticism, showing ambivalence in the response. As R9850 states, they would "*rather have a closer friend (with better writing skills) edit my paper*," as opposed to the students in class, even though students can give "helpful" feedback. R6811 also mentions both the "entire class" and the "teacher" in their response, thus demonstrating concerns in the literature that students will always privilege the teacher's voice most. While the students overwhelmingly found peer review helpful and useful, some skepticism did still exist.

Steps Two and Three: Ask for Volunteers and Give Praise

One way that Ray helped students overcome their skepticism was to ask for volunteers. This was Ray's attempt to create a safe place for students to both share their work and comment on the

work of their peers. Ray created what he called a "non-threatening" environment for the students, so that they felt comfortable volunteering for class workshops. During the workshop, all of Ray's students could express their ideas; the students whose essays were workshopped were invited to consider the ideas of all their peers, and choose the advice that seemed to work best for their intentions in writing the essay. As both Stella and her classmates expressed above, they did find it beneficial to listen to multiple perspectives about their work.

In the workshops, Ray employed Donald Daiker's classic idea that teachers need to praise their students' writing. Daiker argues that "an instructor should use praise and positive reinforcement as a major teaching strategy" (104); this is exactly what Ray did in his class workshops. In our interview, Ray stated that he always tried to praise the students who volunteered to have their papers workshopped for some aspect of their essay, whether it was the formatting, the strength of the introduction, or something else. This praise did seem to positively benefit the students. For example, when the class reviewed the introduction to Stella's second essay (a summary and rhetorical analysis paper on Richard Wright's "The Library Card"), the praise she received was beneficial to her confidence writing the essay. Stella recalled:

> *This [essay] is another one that I got put up on the projector, and I was told that it was amazing, and that I didn't need to change it, so, I was like, I'm good!*

I included an exclamation point to indicate Stella's excitement when she discussed her summary. Knowing that she had a strong summary allowed Stella to focus on heavily revising the rest of the paper. This was especially helpful because she did not feel comfortable with the skills she needed to employ in this particular assignment. Stella admitted that she didn't know how to write a rhetorical analysis:

I feel like I didn't really know much about rhetorical analysis, so I was just sort of writing down what I felt ethos and pathos were. And at the time, I was like, do I have to use logos?

Even though she had a strong summary, Stella revealed that she had difficulty applying the rhetorical strategies of ethos, pathos, and logos. The high praise her summary received gave her encouragement with the rest of the essay; for example, when she didn't know if she needed to use logos, she asked her instructor. She also listened to the comments from her peers. As a result, she did some intense revising before submitting a final draft to Ray. Stella reflected:

As you can see, my final draft is much longer than my first draft. So once it was explained more what ethos and pathos and logos were, I was able to incorporate it more and use more examples from the essay.

The praise Stella received for her summary allowed her to focus more on the elements of the essay she was less sure about—in this case, the rhetorical analysis. Stella moved paragraphs and ideas around, wrote a new conclusion, and moved her old conclusion into the body of the essay. Ray's idea of revision as "rebuilding a house" is certainly applicable—to quote Ray, Stella is learning to "*tak[e] out what doesn't belong, add what's needed, [and] mak[e] connections*," gaining both confidence in and agency over her writing.

Step Four: Use the Whole-Class Workshop as a Space to Model Revising and Peer Review Practices

Ray's use of praise and the impact it had on students is an example of the modeling he used in whole-class workshops to teach students how to ask questions of both their peers' and their own writing. Ray's most important goal in modeling was to get students to constructively critique their peers' papers. He wanted students to think about the higher-order concerns of a paper, such as focus and use of evidence, as opposed to lower-order concerns, such as word choice. Here Ray describes his framework for modeling:

Initially it seems that the students will almost always say, it looks good. Or if they find anything, it will be, shouldn't there be a comma after that word, or before that conjunction? … [I want them to say] well, let's take a look at the whole paragraph. Maybe there is a need for a comma there, but this whole paragraph can get talked about. You may want to rewrite the whole thing, so let's worry about that first. [I want] to sort of shift their thinking towards the big issues. You know, like the paragraph form.

Ray's comments identify several issues that are vital to the whole-class workshop process. He addresses the idea that students are usually reluctant to give any kind of substantive feedback; they would simply say, "*it looks good*," or situate their comments in a grammatical context, neither of which serves the whole-class workshop. At the beginning of the class term, Ray's students didn't have the knowledge base from which to craft constructive comments. His goal in modeling was to try to give his students that knowledge so that they could discuss "the big issues" in their peers' writing.

Stella's discussion of the feedback she received on her essays seems to exemplify the impact Ray's modeling could have on the students' ability to effectively respond to papers in both a whole-class and small-group workshop. As Stella discussed her first two essays in our interview, she hinted at peer feedback's importance to her revising process. With Stella's first essay, a response to the prompt, "Why do people need art?", she related how the class workshop helped with her thesis statement. However, she completed most of the revision for that essay without relying on small group peer feedback, even though, as Ray described earlier, small group feedback was where students implemented the techniques learned in the whole-class workshop. Stella described the changes to her essay as ones facilitated by personal realizations:

I realized that the two paragraphs for each section was sort of childish, in a way, so I tried to incorporate at least some of it into one big paragraph. The one I really changed a lot was the music part, which was the second part. I realized that I didn't really know the

differences between some of the things that I said. Like, I was sort of just making stuff up for jazz because I know very little, actually. And then I started to look more up, and I decided that I needed to make jazz and hippie music go together.

Instead of using feedback she received from her small-group workshop peers, Stella critiqued her first essay on her own; outside of the thesis statement, revising the first draft was a personal experience. Stella's knowledge formed the basis of her revisions; she commented that the concrete examples she used, such as Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* and the work of Alvin Ailey, were either her own ideas or examples from other classes she was taking at the time. Once Stella began to research her examples, she found more relevant information and discovered how the examples she used fit into her argument. For example, she realized the origins of jazz and hippie music were similar, and that she "*needed to make jazz and hippie music go together*." Stella did this revision on her own; the only mention she made of peer review was the whole-class workshop, which she said helped her with the "opening paragraph" and the "thesis statement."

As the semester progressed, the students' integration of Ray's modeling into their feedback on their peers' writing became more apparent in Stella's reflection of her revising practices. As I have noted, Stella preferred the whole-class workshops to the small groups; however, with her second essay, her small group gave her valuable advice. While she was told that her summary was well-written in the whole-class workshop, Stella was having difficulty with the rest of the essay. For the second essay, a rhetorical analysis of Wright's "The Library Card," Stella's small-group workshop helped her figure out how to revise:

We pretty much looked at the summary when it was up on the screen, but then we went into our little groups and we looked at it. And I was really told that I needed more examples, more analysis of what I was talking about. And then I decided … I just needed to fill the

paragraphs, really. When I think about adding more examples, I need to make them longer. That's really how I think about it …

For Stella's summary and rhetorical response essay, she was not sure how to proceed after the summary. However, in her small group workshop, where all the students were writing on Wright's essay, Stella received some good advice. Her first draft of this essay was less than two pages; as a result, her peers suggested that she use "more examples" and provide "more analysis." These suggestions inspired Stella to revise further. She moved her conclusion up into the section of the essay analyzing Wright's use of pathos, and included some researched history on Jim Crow laws to give her analysis some historical context. Here, though, instead of coming up with these changes on her own, Stella acknowledged the more focused feedback of her peers; by this point in the term, it is possible that Ray's modeling of peer review during the whole-class workshops was impacting the students in their small groups, and students were asking more effective questions and giving stronger feedback.

Ray's use of modeling in the whole-class and small-group workshops influenced the students in several ways. First, it allowed students to observe an "expert" giving feedback in the whole-class workshop, and second, it demonstrated how to model that "expert" in the small-group workshop. Third, students could see an "expert's" writing practices when Ray showed the class his own revision practices. By showing them how he revised, Ray hoped that students would see "the way the process works":

Once in a while I'll bring in something I've been writing that I've marked up, to show them that I'll scratch out an entire page. Then I'll pass it around—a white page that has a red line through it, sentences are crossed out, so that they can see that revision is not just putting in punctuation, and that I have to revise too. And I'll tell them that this is the 8th or 9th draft, whatever it happens to be. And [it] usually surprises them that I revise something that many times.

This aspect of modeling may have also helped students shift their definition of revision. In response to Question 12 on the survey distributed at the end of the class term, "What classwork have you found to be beneficial to your revising process and why?", one student specifically referenced Ray's modeling of revision:

> R4536: *Seeing the prof[essor] revise helps. He has showed* [sic] *me that sometimes you have to delete large sections of a work and rewrite them.*

As this student described, seeing Ray model revision for the students by bringing in revisions of his own writing helped them understand that revision is, as Ray said, "*not just putting in punctuation*."

Based on these modeling processes, the students also learned a variety of methods for offering feedback. They learned to praise, they learned to look beyond grammar to the whole paragraph (and the whole essay), and they learned to give specific feedback to their peers. As Stella's example illustrates, by following Ray's model, the students seemed to be improving not only as writers, but also as readers of each other's writing. Trupiano notes that through modeling, "students … learn how to approach and talk about a piece of writing" (194). When an instructor models peer review sessions, students learn "how to focus on a draft that needs revising by learning what questions students should have about their writing and how to respond to those questions as peer reviewers" (194). Ray's modeling how to respond to student essays "provide[d] [that] needed information" (Harris "Modeling" 80) during the whole-class workshops that enabled students, who may have been unsure how to respond to their peers' writing, to give constructive feedback.

It is important to note that Ray's practice of modeling may not work for all instructors; not all instructors may feel comfortable sharing drafts of their own writing with students and using those drafts as models for revision. Instead, by highlighting this particular practice and the impact it had on students' abilities to provide focused, constructive feedback to their peers, I would argue that

we should all look more closely at our own writing and revising processes, and how we might best use those in teaching students. For instance, we might show students how we take notes on a text and offer a metanarrative of how those notes took shape; or, we might walk students through the way that we use evidence in an essay. Regardless of the direction we choose, as Ray's class shows, the process of modeling our own writing and responding processes for students can be very beneficial to their understanding of writing and revision.

Step Five: Students Assert Agency over Their Writing

Students in Ray's class also asserted that revision gave them more power over their writing. In response to Question Two on the survey distributed at the end of the class term, "Do you believe that your definition of revision has changed? Why or why not?", students gave the following responses:

> R9105: *Yes, I think revision is very important to developing a well written paper. I learned that revision is one of the key ways in catching your mistakes.*

> R6811: *[My definition has] probably [changed], because I've become so used to revising my paper and not just making mechanical changes, but really taking things apart and reading them.*

> R1813: *I believe [my definition of revision did change] a bit. When I used to think of revision, I used to only think of the small things to fix such as spelling, grammar, and mechanics. Now I think about revising the paper as a whole.*

Ray's students seem to indicate that they see a connection between revision, peer feedback, and agency. Because Ray structured the whole-class workshops around certain parts of an essay each day (e.g., one day students focused on introductions, and another day, their conclusions), students became accustomed to, as R6811 says, "*taking things apart and reading them*." The students practiced

deconstructing and analyzing texts during each peer workshop, both as a class and in small groups; these practices seem to have translated across to students' abilities to effectively critique their own writing.

Ray also acknowledged that it was important for the students to transfer the skill of reading others' work critically to reading their own work critically. Ray stated: "*I really want them to get to the point where they're making these judgments on their own, what works, and they see the reason for it. That's the big thing*." Ray accomplished this reflective process by encouraging the students to think rhetorically about their work and to listen to the thoughts of others (and to his own feedback), but ultimately, to take agency over their writing. Like Joseph Harris in "Revision as a Critical Practice," Ray hoped his students would "*carve out [spaces] for [themselves] as [critics]*" that rely on "*a style of assertion, of close and aggressive reading*" in order to "*set [their] own agenda[s] as writer[s]*" (587). My analysis of Stella's essay drafts, and subsequent discussion of those drafts with her, demonstrates that she developed as a critical reader of her own work who learned to "*set [her] own agenda as a writer*." For example, for her first essay in defense of art, Stella recognized that she needed to create a more sophisticated argument and organization for her essay. She "*realized that the two paragraphs for each section was childish*" and organized her paragraphs more around ideas, and less around single, isolated topics. As a result of her revising practices, she "*felt really good about this [essay]. It was just something new, and [she] could see how it got better*." Stella's reflection on the process of composing her first essay shows her, even early in the course term, developing into a writer who possesses agency. Her second essay reveals a continuation of that agency, now with the ability to carefully consider the advice of others and apply it to her own work.

Empowering Students and Student Writing

In this observation of Ray's class, four important findings emerge. First, teaching practices influence students' perspectives about revision and whether or not they value social versions of it; second, teaching practices influence students' valuing of peer feedback and

revision; third, teaching practices can help students to see revision as a key element in helping them improve their writing; and finally, teaching practices can aid students' development of agency over their own writing. While this study looks at Ray's pedagogy in particular, I would argue that a range of different teaching practices can accomplish these goals if the teacher attends to the connections between his/her definition of revision, pedagogical practices, and how students experience those practices.

Ultimately, this study shows that students are savvy interpreters of instructors' teaching practices. In his essay "Academic Work," Walter Doyle acknowledges that students "face the initial problem of understanding what task a teacher expects them to accomplish, and they are typically sensitive to task-related information" (181). Students thus look for "hints" that reveal to them what instructors expect. The findings of this study suggest that instructors need to be aware of how students read *all* their teaching practices as indicative of teachers' expectations. For example, if a teacher begins class with a focus on correctness and style, the students might predict that the teacher values style and correctness most and perform accordingly. This could happen whether or not the instructor attempts to get students to value revision as a global re-seeing of their work; the seeds of correctness are already planted. In contrast, instructors like Ray might integrate collaborative learning and global issues in writing and revising into daily class activities, such as whole-class and small-group workshops. The students would then be able to apply the theories of collaboration and global revision into their own writing practices. Instructors thus need to be aware of how all aspects of their pedagogy might influence students' perceptions of revision and the writing process. As teachers of writing, we can consider the strategies that speak most to our own core beliefs about writing and revision, and how these strategies can best be used to express those beliefs to our students.

Notes

[1] The scholarship on revision reached its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s with the work of researchers such as Nancy Sommers, Linda Flower, John Hayes, Anne Ruggles Gere, and Peter Smagorinsky. Revision largely shows up only in peer review scholarship, and then it's not until 2006 that we get Alice S. Horning and Anne Becker's edited collection *Revision: History, Theory, and Practice*.

[2] See, for instance, the debate between Sharon Crowley and Barbara Hansen, who doubt revision's value, and Sommers and Betty Bamberg, who advocate for its worth.

[3] This study received IRB approval.

[4] Over the course of the semester, all students had their essays workshopped in the whole-class workshops at least once.

[5] It is important to note that Ray calls his peer review workshops "peer editing"; however, his workshops much more closely mirror revision work writers do on the global level, as opposed to the work writers do on the editing, or local, level. To honor Ray's terminology, I will quote Ray's use of the term "peer editing" as appropriate.

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APPENDIX A
BEGINNING AND END OF THE TERM SURVEY—REVISION

Please answer all questions as honestly and as fully as you can.

1. How would you define "revision?"

2a. Please describe your previous experiences with revision:
[Beginning Survey Only]

2b. Do you believe that your definition of revision has changed? Why or why not?
[End of Term Survey Only]

3. On average, how much time do you spend revising a paper? (all drafts included)

0 hrs. 1 hr. 2 hrs. 3 hrs. 4+ hrs.

4. How many drafts do you typically write (including the one you turn in for a grade)?

1 2 3 4+

5. What kind of prewriting do you do? (circle all that apply)

None Outlining Webbing/Mapping Freewriting/Notetaking

Thinking Aloud/to Self Other (please specify):

6. In general, how much time do you spend prewriting?

0-15 min. 15-30 min. 30-45 min. 45 min.-1hr. 1hr.+

7. When you write a first draft, how would you describe your writing? What are your goals when you write a first draft?

8. What areas of your writing do you focus on when revising from a first → second draft? If you typically don't revise your first draft, please note that as well. (Please circle all that apply.)

Ideas Thesis/Focus Evidence Analysis/Development

Organization Grammar /I don't revise Other (please specify):

9. What areas of your writing do you focus on when revising from a second → third draft? If you typically don't revise beyond one draft, please note that as well. (Please circle all that apply.)

Ideas	Thesis/Focus	Evidence Analysis/Development
Organization	Grammar /I don't revise	Other (please specify):

10. How important are peer review comments as feedback for your revising process?

5 – Very Important	2 – Somewhat Unimportant
4 – Somewhat Important	1 – Very Unimportant
3 – Neutral	

11. How important are teacher comments as feedback for your revising process?

5 – Very Important	2 – Somewhat Unimportant
4 – Somewhat Important	1 – Very Unimportant
3 – Neutral	

12. What classwork have you found to be beneficial to your revising process and why?

13. Outside of the classroom, what services do you utilize in your revising process? (Please circle all that apply.)

My Own Ideas	Friends/Peers	Writing Center
Spellcheck	Family Member/Guardian	Other (please specify):

14. When you submit a draft for a grade, how satisfied are you with your writing?

5 – Very Satisfied	2 – Somewhat Unsatisfied
4 – Somewhat Satisfied	1 – Very Unsatisfied
3 – Neutral	

15. How helpful is the multiple-draft process in allowing you to produce your best work?

5 – Very Helpful	2 – Somewhat Unhelpful
4 – Somewhat Helpful	1 – Very Unhelpful
3 – Neutral	0 – I Don't Write Multiple Drafts

16. After this quarter, how likely are you to continue the drafting process in writing essays, even if it is not required?
[End of Term Survey Only]

5 – Very Likely	2 – Somewhat Unlikely
4 – Somewhat Likely	1 – Very Unlikely
3 – Neutral	

17. Please circle your gender.

Male Female

18. In order to use this survey for my research, I would appreciate you reading and marking the following statement. (All results will be kept anonymous.)

I agree to allow the researcher to use my answers to this questionnaire in future presentations.

Yes □ No □

APPENDIX B
END OF THE TERM INSTRUCTOR SURVEY – REVISION

Please answer all questions as honestly and as fully as you can.

1. How would you define revision?

2. For this class, how many drafts do you require students to write per paper (including the one they turn in for a grade)?

1 2 3 4+

3. Are students allowed to resubmit a paper after receiving a grade?

Yes No

4. On average, how much class time (in hours) do you spend per paper covering the subject of revision? (from first to graded draft)

0-1 hrs. 1-2 hrs. 2-3 hrs. 3-4 hrs. 4+ hrs.

5. What kind of prewriting exercises do your students do? (circle all that apply)

None Outlining Webbing/Mapping Freewriting

Other (please specify):

6. In general, how much class time (in hours) do you spend per paper prewriting?

0-1 hrs. 1-2 hrs. 2-3 hrs. 3-4 hrs. 4+ hrs.

7. What kind of in-class revision exercises do you and the students do?

Workshops Peer review Scaffolding Informal Writing

Other (specify):

8. Are there certain assignments where you spend more or less time covering revision than others? If so, which ones?

9. What are your goals when students submit a first draft? What do you ask students to achieve, and what do you look for?

10. What areas of student writing do you focus on when revising from a first → second draft? If students don't revise, please mark that as well. (Please circle all that apply.)

Ideas	Thesis/Focus	Evidence
Analysis/Development	Organization	Grammar
Students Don't Revise	Other (please specify):	

11. What areas of your writing do you focus on when revising from a second → third draft? If students don't revise, please mark that as well. (Please circle all that apply.)

Ideas	Thesis/Focus	Evidence	Analysis/Development
Organization	Grammar	Students Don't Revise	

Other (please specify):

12. How important do you believe peer review comments are as feedback for the revising process?

5 – Very Important
4 – Somewhat Important
3 – Neutral
2 – Somewhat Unimportant
1 – Very Unimportant

13. How important do you believe teacher comments are as feedback for the revising process?

5 – Very Important
4 – Somewhat Important
3 – Neutral
2 – Somewhat Unimportant
1 – Very Unimportant

14. Outside of the classroom, what services do you encourage students to utilize in the revising process? (Please circle all that apply.)

Their own ideas	Friends/Peers	Writing Center
Spellcheck	Family Member/Guardian	Other (please specify):

15. How helpful do you believe the multiple-draft process is in allowing students to produce their best work?

5 – Very Helpful
4 – Somewhat Helpful
3 – Neutral
2 – Somewhat Unhelpful
1 – Very Unhelpful

16. How likely do you think students are to use the multiple-draft process independently in future classes?

5 – Very Likely
4 – Somewhat Likely
3 – Neutral
2 – Somewhat Unlikely
1 – Very Unlikely

17. In order to use this survey for my research, I would appreciate you reading the following statement and checking the appropriate box. (All results will be kept anonymous.)

I agree to allow the researcher to use my answers to this questionnaire in future presentations.

Yes □ No □

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW TOPICS FOR STUDENT PARTICIPANTS

- Demographic information: student's year, major, etc.
- Previous experience with writing before taking course
- Previous experience with revision before taking course
- How the student arrived at the final definition of revision on the post-survey
- How much time the student typically spends working on a paper and what process the student goes through in writing the essay (for example, does the student write a full draft first, or work on the essay in bits and pieces?)
- The extent to which the student feels revision is a valuable asset of his/her writing practices—that is, how much does the student rely on revision to aid him/her in writing, and what other practices does the student utilize?
- How much does the student anticipate writing to be part of his/her college career: what kinds of writing does the student anticipate doing, and how much does the student think revision (or other) writing strategies will be part of that writing?

INSTRUCTOR FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW: INTERVIEW TOPICS

In the instructor follow-up interview, I aim to gain some feedback from professors on the results of their class study, and to ask instructors to discuss why they think the results came out the way they did. In order to do this, we will cover the following topics:

- Discussion of the results of class study: what are the instructor's reactions to the results? (For example, if the results show that students still rely heavily on local revision practices, and the instructor taught revision on a global level, what is the instructor's response to this?)
- Comparison of instructor's survey with results: based on the way revision was taught in the class, what insights can the instructor provide further about the results?

"BUT THAT'S NOT HOW I WRITE": WRITING, TEACHING WRITING, AND ENGLISH LEARNERS

Tracy Spies, Ed Nagelhout, and Cristina Reding

Across the nation, writing teachers continue to struggle with teaching secondary students to write effectively, with only about 27% of these students demonstrating writing proficiency (National Center for Educational Statistics; NCES). More importantly, standard writing proficiency of English Learners (ELs) is persistently below that of their native English-speaking peers, with ELs scoring 28 to 58 points lower than their non-EL peers on national writing assessments (NCES). As writing teachers, we must acknowledge these numbers as an indictment on the ways that we think about writing and the ways that we teach writing, especially with our EL students. We can, and we must, evaluate our assumptions, our practices, our pedagogies, and our personal attitudes about writing.

This evaluation becomes even more critical as a growing body of empirical evidence shows that the learning during professional development activities and the subsequent implementation of instructional practices are filtered and possibly impeded by teachers' belief systems (Han 265). Since school leaders utilize professional development opportunities as the most common avenue for improving teacher practice (Correnti 263), the beliefs that teachers hold when participating in professional development —including beliefs about their students and families, assumptions about how their students learn, and values about education in general for the students they serve (Pajares 316)—must likewise be interrogated and addressed in more systematic and comprehensive

ways: not as oversight, but as potential pedagogical tools for improving teacher development and student outcomes.

For the purposes of this article, we believe that it would stand to reason that in teaching writing at all educational levels, teachers' personal beliefs, assumptions, and values for writing would heavily influence their teaching of writing. And, at the same time, the beliefs teachers hold about their students and the assumptions they make about how their students learn will also influence their teaching of writing. Contrary to the body of literature highlighting the linkage between teacher beliefs and practices for writing, we argue that teachers' personal writing processes have little influence on their teaching of writing to ELs. We contend the focus on standards-based instruction coupled with deficit-based views of language proficiency more strongly influence their teaching of writing, even more so than teachers' personal beliefs and self-efficacy as writers.

Our goal is to offer a new perspective on the ways that we think about and teach writing. For us, this means acknowledging the inherent differences between how we write and how we teach writing, how we write and how we learn writing.

- How do our beliefs and assumptions (and biases) about writing and learning influence our teaching of writing?
- How can we overlay our own self-efficacy for writing with our own self-efficacy for teaching?
- How does this align with our students' self-efficacy for writing? For their self-efficacy for learning?

Learning to Teach Writing in Local Professional Development

A collaborative between TESOL, technology, literacy, and English faculty developed a series of professional development workshops at a large minority majority urban district in the Southwest United States. In the participating district, English Learners (ELs) made up approximately 18.5% of the total student

population. The EL population grew rapidly and the effects can be seen in significant achievement gaps between ELs and their non-EL peers on state assessments, particularly at the secondary level.

To address writing achievement of ELs, the district participated in a federally-funded professional development grant targeting schools with a high percentage of ELs. The professional development project focused on the use of blended learning to differentiate standards-based writing instruction for ELs based on their English language proficiency strengths. A recursive writing process served as a foundational tenet for each of the professional development trainings. University faculty collaborated to develop the essential knowledge teachers needed for teaching writing with ELs, and lead teachers from the participating district developed model lessons integrating the knowledge with differentiated technology apps. Figure 1 displays a sample of one session's professional development activities.

Training Topic	Prewriting with English Learners
Objective	By the end of today's session, participants will be able to design a prewriting lesson supportive of ELs using differentiated apps.
Pre-Reflection Online	How do you prepare to write? How do you prepare your students to write?
Knowledge Development	*Focus Question:* How do you support ELs of varying proficiency levels in the prewriting process? *Key Concepts:* Importance of building background, relevancy of the topic; use of native language; oral language opportunities; differentiation of approach based on language proficiency skills
Technology Development	Lead teachers present various apps that support differentiated prewriting for ELs. Integrating knowledge and technology development, teachers develop a differentiated prewriting lesson.

Post-Reflection	Based on your experiences today, what do you need to consider in preparing your ELs to write?

Figure 1: Prewriting Professional Development Activities

Some Nagging Questions from Our Professional Development

The year-long, voluntary professional development workshops were a combination of face-to-face interactive trainings, participation in online activities and discussion boards, implementation of and reflection on project activities in the classroom, and coaching from a school-based teacher-leader. The participants enrolled in the professional development were English language arts and special education teachers serving a high percentage of ELs in sixth, seventh, and eighth grade in the participating school district.

Throughout the professional development (PD), these teachers were asked to reflect on various topics as they related to writing and the teaching of writing with ELs. The questions were designed to encourage participants to reflect on their beliefs about writing, teaching writing, and the strengths and challenges of their students. These reflective questions served to prompt participants to situate their current beliefs within the context of new learning and experiences. The project faculty reviewed teacher-written reflections and engaged in ongoing reflective dialogue with participants. More importantly, teacher reflections guided the content and activities of subsequent PD trainings.

However, over the course of the PD, our conversations with the teachers and their posts indicated an unexpected trend: an apparent discrepancy between themselves as writers and themselves as teachers of writing. Seeking to better understand this seeming disconnect, especially as it related to teaching ELs, we kept returning to some nagging questions:

- How do teachers see themselves as writers?
- How do teachers see themselves as teachers?

- How do teachers see themselves as teachers of writing, especially to ELs?

Since we had a variety of artifacts from the ongoing PD activities, we decided to look more closely by employing homogeneous purposive sampling. The seventh-grade teachers were selected as the focus for this analysis. In the participating district, secondary schools range from grades six to eight. Sixth grade traditionally focuses on moving students away from elementary skills and curriculum while eighth grade focuses on the transition to high school. As such, seventh grade allowed us to isolate teachers' beliefs related to practice void of the challenges associated with transitioning students.

We selected five seventh-grade teachers from the participating district to study. All five of the teachers were female and had graduated from traditional teaching licensure programs. Teaching experience of the participants ranged from two to twenty years. Two of the participants held an endorsement to teach English Language Learners. All of the teachers held positive views about their students and teaching and spoke highly of their students in terms of work ethic and drive. Most noted that their students were motivated to learn. Many participants highlighted how much *"they [students] have grown"* during the school year.

In analyzing the artifacts, each member of the research team independently read all of the written reflections and searched for emerging categories across participant responses. We then compared and narrowed categories collaboratively. Responses within categories were independently read and coded for emerging themes. Afterwards, team members compared and narrowed themes and codes. Reflections were independently coded a final time and compared.

Self-Efficacy and Teachers Writing

For more than three decades, Albert Bandura has been arguing that a person's beliefs in their ability to succeed in an activity, self-efficacy, is "the foundation of human motivation, performance

accomplishments, and emotional well-being" (1,534). In other words, as Pajares articulates, self-efficacy in a given domain accounts for the choices we make, the amount of effort we put forth, and our persistence in the face of obstacles (140). Obviously, domain-specific self-efficacy is highly complex, but we want to use these ideas as a backdrop to help us understand the beliefs, attitudes, and self-efficacy that teachers have for themselves as writers and teachers in the writing classroom, to account for the (sometimes stark) differences between teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and self-efficacy about their own writing practices and their beliefs, attitudes, and self-efficacy about their teaching writing.

Self-efficacy has been a particularly rich vein of research for writing studies, primarily because most people develop their perceptions of self-efficacy, according to Pajares, by interpreting information from four sources: 1) interpreted result of one's performance; 2) experience observing others; 3) verbal messages and social persuasions from others; and 4) physiological states, such as anxiety and stress (145). Even if writing research does not explicitly incorporate these four sources into their discussions in terms of self-efficacy, they align in many respects with the ways that writing researchers describe pedagogy, process, interventions, and activities (see Bruning et al. for a more complete literature review of self-efficacy for writing over the past 30+ years). Likewise, whether writers are students in a classroom or professionals in a business context, "self-efficacy judgments will affect both whether they attempt specific tasks and their continuing engagement when they encounter difficulties" (Bruning and Kauffman 161). These findings would imply that teachers who define themselves as "writers" would also describe themselves in these self-efficacy terms.

In the reflections that we reviewed from our PD, all of the teachers indicated that they appreciated the *"messiness"* of their own writing process. While this shows a lack of anxiety about their writing, at the same time, each one also stressed the importance of developing precision and clarity to effectively communicate their message in the final stages of the writing process. All stressed the

critical role of revision at this stage, although they practiced a wide range of approaches to revision. A few of our participants discussed the importance of feedback from others. Data indicate that our participants did not seek feedback for specific reasons (e.g., areas they may be struggling with), but rather they sought the general opinion of others on their writing or help in lower-order editing concerns. One teacher pointed out, *"I ask another person to proofread for corrections or ideas."* As we will discuss in the next section, this use of a term like "proofread" to define a more open-ended practice like revision indicates for us that to these teachers writing may be more about "correctness" than rhetorical development.

This point is heightened by the centrality teacher responses placed on clarity in writing. They believed that clarity in their writing evolved in the process as they moved from drafting to revising. One teacher related, *"I write the basics first and then elaborate more when I am revising."* Similarly, another teacher confirmed, *"After these words, ideas are down on paper, I then go back and I reread what I wrote. At this time, I am able to add, erase and add more details to my writing."* Another teacher noted the importance of time, particularly to think through the writing, *"Before I finalize any of my writing, I let it rest for a while. Just like when one makes homemade bread. Bread needs to rise before it is to be put in the oven to bake."*

Terry Locke, David Whitehead, and Stephanie Dix offer quantitative data from their study that reveals positive and significant effects in terms of self-efficacy as writers and teachers of writing. Teachers in their "writing project" professional development workshops generally self-reported assurance in both their skills as writers and as teachers of writing, but, importantly, changes in self-efficacy could be moderated by the way individual teachers cognitively processed "source" data (55). In other words, the ways that teachers interacted with materials as both writers and as teachers of writing mattered, which could have both positive and negative effects in both domains, leading to self-reported success, apprehension, and anxiety. This aligns with findings from Margarita Huerta et al. who found that self-efficacy is a statistically significant and large predictor of writing anxiety (1).

The majority of the teachers in our PD acknowledged that their writing is a process. Interestingly, however, the teachers we reviewed had varying applications of a recursive writing process. Each of them began with some sort of brainstorming and prewriting focused solely on getting their ideas on paper. Teachers referred to brainstorming and prewriting interchangeably but viewed these stages as essential to the writing process. Participants noted this stage as crucial in simply transferring seemingly disconnected thoughts to paper. During these stages teachers did not focus on form and at times noted that effective communication was not important at this stage. Each of these prewriting sessions led to the development of a messy first draft.

Teachers were comfortable with the fact that their initial drafts may not be well organized. The teachers asserted that these initial drafts were about initial stages of effective communication. Many teachers indicated that they utilized or returned to their brainstorming and prewriting during the drafting stages. One teacher pointed out, *"I try to get all my ideas on the paper. I know what my paragraphs are going to be about, but they may not be in the best order when I first write."* All of them acknowledged that their first drafts may have issues with focus. Interestingly, they did not worry about focus in their early drafts.

Most of our teachers highlighted the importance of feedback from others to refine and further shape their drafts into a final product, noting the critical role of revision to shape and tighten the focus of their message: *"I ask others to read what I have written and take their opinion into consideration when revising."* Teachers viewed revision as the time to slow down and think deeply, to clarify their message, and make their language more precise, whereas prewriting and drafting seemed as almost a race against the speed of their thoughts rolling around in their minds.

While there were varying degrees of teachers' application of the writing process in their own writing from linear to recursive, many teachers noted that their writing process was far from linear. Teachers emphasized that their initial ideas, including the initial messages of their writing, could rarely be found in the final stages

of their writing. One teacher emphasized, *"Though I might start off with a minor plan, I often hit several detours before the final product is written."* Another noted, *"Often, what I think I'm going to start with isn't what I end up with."*

According to Mary Brindle et al., elementary teachers in their study were generally confident in their ability to teach writing, their competence as writing teachers, and their own skills as writers (929). And this positive attitude, this self-efficacy, is further correlated by teachers who "enjoy creative, relevant, and personal writing throughout their lives" and generally had positive experiences of their own in middle and high school experiences (Norman and Spencer 29). These positive experiences carry over to their attitudes toward teaching writing, and, interestingly, as this study also points out, teachers generally find personal and/or creative writing to be the most meaningful and interesting kinds of writing. Results from a similar study support the notion that beliefs about writing could possibly be used as a leverage point for teaching students to write (Sanders-Reio et al. 9). As we will discuss next, the personal writing processes of these teachers seem to have little influence on their teaching of writing to ELs.

Self-Efficacy and Teachers Teaching Writing

It's easy to see that teacher beliefs and attitudes about the nature of writing can have a profound influence on their writing instruction and writing pedagogy; likewise, a relationship also exists between teachers' understanding of second language learning and their practices when teaching ELs in the mainstream classroom, and this relation will influence their practices in the classroom (see Gilliland). As Pettit describes in her literature review, certain factors, such as years of teaching experience, training in teaching ELs, and exposure to language diversity, are predictors of those beliefs (123). Unfortunately, there remain educator misconceptions regarding how second languages are learned (Reeves 137), which arises, some argue, because the lack of teacher preparation to teach ELs effectively is widespread, particularly at the secondary level (see Rubinstein-Avila and Lee; O'Neal). Thus, it is not surprising

that secondary teachers feel under-prepared to meet the language and academic needs of their students, especially their EL students.

Still, when considering teaching writing to second language learners, a range of studies show similar findings for the ways that teachers' understandings of second language learning influence their practices in the classroom. Based on teachers' implicit theories about teaching, learning, and language deficit, one study showed the ways teachers nuanced their writing instruction (Berry 11), while another described the ways pre-service teachers adapted their lessons for ELs in varying degrees of language and content support (Uzum et al. 7-10). Still another suggested that a teacher's belief that language is best learned inductively through exposure to models indicates an emphasis on writing instruction focused on essay structure and correctness (Gilliland 291). Finally, one study implied that literacy beliefs dictate reading and writing routines for teachers in the classroom (Bingham and Hall-Kenyon 22).

As previously noted, the teacher participants in this study viewed their students very positively. They noted their students' perseverance and positive attitudes about learning. They viewed their students' work ethic from an asset-based perspective. However, as teachers were asked to examine and respond to student writing, there was a notable shift to a more deficit-based view: meaning, teachers first noted what students were *not doing* as writers rather than what they were doing.

When we asked our participants to describe their students as writers, most of them noted that students' writing was improving, that their writing was understandable, and that they had good ideas. Some of our teachers highlighted students' struggle with organization. However, these comments were quickly overcome with notations of students' linguistic deficits. The majority of the teachers focused on student errors as a result of developing English proficiency. Overwhelmingly, teachers highlighted students' grammatical errors, ongoing issues with subject-verb agreement, spelling, and punctuation.

We would argue that focusing comments on lower-order issues, such as grammar and punctuation, arises both from a deficit view of

student writing and from a lack of rigorous and/or comprehensive training in responding effectively to student writing. In fact, according to Brindle, et al., three out of every four teachers indicated that their college teacher preparation programs provided no or minimal instruction on how to teach writing (940). Therefore, our review of the literature shows us that discrepancies exist not only for second language learning and mainstream classroom practices, but also between their perspectives about writing development and their instructional practices in the writing classroom (Brindley and Jasinski Schneider 331). More importantly, this lack of preparation not only limits the choices that teachers are aware of for teaching ELs to write, but even when reflecting on their own writing practices, Claudia Peralta Nash and Celia den Hartog King describe different factors that may be responsible for why teachers may not implement strategies and techniques in their instructional practices that they believe are useful in their own practices, such as teacher education programs, prior teaching experiences, life experiences, personal experience with linguistic diversity, and previous teaching experience with linguistic diversity (72-74). Graham et al. found that four writing interventions for scaffolding or supporting students' writing produce statistically significant effects: prewriting activities, peer assistance when writing, product goals, and assessing writing (886-88).

Our review of teacher reflections showed a top down, teacher-centric writing process, focused primarily on the product, student language deficits, and correctness. In their reflections, the majority of the teacher participants perceived teaching writing to ELs as a linear process and product-centered. Similarly, as we described above, they also focus their attention on what students are not doing, a deficit-based view that seems to organize much of their thinking about teaching writing to ELs. They primarily focused on the writing products students produced. This was evident in the way teachers prepared students to write, the ways in which they reflected on students' writing abilities, and how their students responded to feedback. It appears to be a kind of bottom-up approach

to teaching writing with little acknowledgement of higher-order considerations.

When teachers were asked what they do to prepare students to write, it was evident that teachers were preparing students to produce a particular type of writing, not to develop students as writers. Many teachers *"began with the end in mind"* as a way to prepare their students to write. For example, many teachers reported beginning writing assignments with a review of the rubric highlighting the writing expectations as a way for students to organize their work and "self-check" upon completion. Teachers also reported providing students with completed exemplars of writing and collaboratively *"dissected the essays with them [students] prior to writing,"* not as a model to build an understanding of various genres, but as a means for strict emulation.

While teachers provided students multiple scaffolds and supports in preparing them to write, these scaffolds and supports were specifically aligned to help students develop a writing product with the intended outcomes. Teachers provided students with specific outlines that included the essential components of the writing product. In other instances, the teacher would provide skeleton paragraphs for students to complete.

In preparing students to write, teachers also reported preparing students for the amount of text that must be produced. For example, teachers noted that they told students how many sentences they expected in each paragraph. In instances in which students were encouraged to talk about their writing prior to drafting, the purpose was for students *"to be able to think and decide whether they have enough information to write a good, detailed paper."* This, however, appeared contradictory in that the teachers also describe ultimately making the final decisions for whether students have enough information.

As the majority of teachers viewed the teaching of writing from a product-centered perspective, the writing process, consequently, was presented as a linear rather than a recursive progression. When asked about their students' writing processes, teacher responses highlighted a series of sequential steps leading students from

prewriting to completion of a final draft. None of the responses indicated an acceptance of the "messiness" or the "back-and-forth" nature of a recursive approach to the writing process in which feedback from readers brought the writer back to various components of the writing process to strengthen the argument, refocus on the audience, or reorganize for the purpose of clarity of communication.

While all of the reflections described classrooms that provided feedback from both peers and the teacher, the feedback sessions were also linear in nature. Feedback was somewhat evaluative, a one-way conversation from the reader (e.g., peer or teacher) to the writer. In most instances, after the rough draft, students received feedback from a peer in terms of how well they were approaching the targets of the rubric and the best ways to "fix" the paper. After feedback from a peer, students received feedback from the teacher. This took place through either one-on-one conferencing sessions or through explicit corrections on the students' papers. In both instances, however, the focus of these sessions was primarily on "correctness" —moving students to a polished piece of writing. It was evident in all responses that the teacher was in control, especially, of this stage of the writing process. At this point the teacher determined a priority area to address that moved the writing toward more acceptable levels of a finalized piece.

This consideration of the ways that teachers assess student writing and how they are trained to assess student writing, especially for ELs, is an important one. Our review of teacher reflections indicates that too often assessment focuses on lower-order issues because teachers don't feel particularly prepared to address higher-order issues. This coupled with EL student apprehension about mechanical errors creates a consistent negative variance in student writing (Sanders-Reio et al. 6). Based on a fairly comprehensive survey of second language teachers, Deborah Crusan et al. argue that the bulk of the workload for second language writing teachers can be directly attributed to assessing student writing (43). Further, they report that most teachers receive the majority of their training in writing assessment through graduate courses, workshops, and

conference presentations, but more than one-quarter of teachers surveyed admitted to little or no training in writing assessment. This means that too many teachers often fall back on whatever linguistic background and teaching experience they have to supplement their limited knowledge, beliefs, and practices in writing assessment.

We found that teachers' focus on writing as product-centered, coupled with an examination of student writing through a deficit lens, led to writing instruction with a heavy emphasis on lower-order concerns, particularly at the revision stages. Most of the teachers noted two revision stages. In the first stage, students revised with a peer and in the second stage, with the teacher. During peer revision, students were prompted to use checklists to evaluate writing and provide feedback based on the components indicated on the checklist. These components focused primarily on spelling, punctuation, and subject-verb agreement. The checklist also included the elements that must be present in an essay, but no indication as to the quality of presentation.

In subsequent revision stages with the teacher, although there was some indication of feedback related to organization and clarity, there was a strong indication that the revision process was focused on "correctness." Correctness in these instances was characterized as elements that make a paper look polished. For example, one teacher noted,

> *After the first draft, I will ask all students to check their writing for punctuation and to make sure uppercase letters are used in the right places. Some students use an online dictionary or translator to check their spelling. Then I will check their writing individually to give feedback for corrections toward the final draft.*

In another example, the teacher notes how well a student responds to revision support, specifically, how little support is needed.

> *Jessica [pseudonym] does the best with feedback. I do not have to be super specific. I can say go double-check your spelling, or go check*

your punctuation, and even if she misses a couple of things, she will dramatically improve her paper.

Future Considerations

For these teachers, overwhelmingly, writing is a recursive process in which effective communication is the primary outcome. Their reflections highlight their process as writers, rather than the development of a single text or piece of writing. Writing is kairotic, for they note the importance of the journey to the message, that it can be timely and discoverable; more importantly, their writing, their journey to the message, is rarely linear. Critical feedback from peers is central to both the development of a piece of writing as well as to their overall development as writers, for these teachers prize the give-and-take between reader and writer as a key to achieving purpose in writing. In short, being a writer, becoming a writer, is a recursive, critical, and reflective practice that they develop for themselves over time. And yet, it is evident in some of their reflections that their writing is about strategies they use, but not necessarily based on an understanding of the thinking behind those strategies.

At the same time, while these teachers view the development of their own writing from within, they appear to have a very different perspective on teaching writing. While their instructional practices are grounded in good intentions, their responses to the reflective prompts indicate a necessity for oversight, that a teacher should seemingly control every stage of the writing process. Rather than co-constructing examples and rubrics with their ELs, these teachers overwhelmingly believe in establishing appropriate writing topics, but also determining prompts and invention activities. They do not describe providing opportunities for students to write about things that are important or relevant to them, a known pedagogical strategy for effectively developing ELs into better writers; instead, they provide students with outlines, paragraph starters, even paragraph frames, to use in drafting a specific piece of writing that targets essential essay requirements. In this respect, they establish strict content parameters and dictate criteria for evaluating writing

quality. Any revisions, or, more accurately, any edits, are prescribed by the teachers to aid students directly in producing a polished piece of writing.

As we used teacher reflections to modify and plan our PD, we began to see teachers grappling with the apparent contradictions between teaching *writing* and teaching *writers*. They began to reflect on their personal development as writers and their practices in developing writers. They began to question and to wonder how to create meaningful recursive writing opportunities for ELs who are struggling to attain higher levels of English proficiency.

Although our time with teachers and research data was limited, we find it compelling enough to warrant future research. While teachers held positive views of their students, why was the revision process focused primarily on lower-order concerns? Was the revision process focused on lower-order concerns because the writing process was linear and teachers were looking towards a "clean" finished product? Was the revision process focused on lower-order concerns because teachers looked at student writing from a deficit view due to developing English proficiency? Could teachers not see beyond the grammatical errors? Does standards-based instruction and a focus on accountability influence the way teachers teach writing to ELs?

Given the large number of teachers who feel ill-prepared by their institutions to teach writing, especially to ELs, this PD opportunity also empowered us to look closely at our preparation programs. Do we ask teachers to reflect on their own writing practices and self-efficacy as writers? Do we prepare them to create recursive writing programs for the range of academic and linguistic abilities they will have in their classrooms? Do we teach future teachers how to allow students to be in control of the writing process in an era of standardized testing and high levels of accountability?

Undoubtedly secondary ELs across the nation are struggling to develop as writers. We opened with a challenge that we, as writing teachers, evaluate our assumptions, our practices, our pedagogies, and our personal attitudes about writing. And we close with a

challenge for those preparing writing teachers—what are our assumptions, our practices, and our pedagogies in preparing teachers to develop ELs as writers?

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A LOCAL LISTENING TOUR: ONE FRESHMAN CLASS'S FIRST-DAY WRITING SAMPLES

Kelly Blewett

> "Intensive listening opens a space or path for our own speaking and invention to emerge. Listening to the ecology means intuitively linking ourselves to the lines of flight that are emerging."
>
> – Byron Hawk

It's the first day of a new semester at the University of Cincinnati, and in 114 McMicken Hall twenty-three students are hard at work answering a prompt on a sheet of paper whose heading reads "First Day Writing Sample." The students are asked: "Of all the kinds of writing that you have done, either in a classroom setting or outside of class, what kind have you enjoyed the most? Why? What has this kind of writing taught you about writing in general?" Across the University of Cincinnati, *fifteen hundred* students will pen responses to this question.

Collecting a writing sample is a typical first-day activity. I've worked at three institutions, ranging from small liberal arts colleges to state universities, and all participated in the tradition. A perusal of the scholarship about the first-day sample, though, comes up surprisingly short. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College* offers half a dozen articles about how to implement successful first-day activities, usually collected under the section "What Works for Me" (e.g., Levy, Minor, Pearce). As the name indicates, this section features highly individual, almost informal, teacher self-reports about pedagogical successes, rather than scholarly investigations into any of the aspects of the first-day sample that may warrant further thought, such as how first-day samples could be used

beyond the first-day, and the role that this first writing exchange plays in setting up a working relationship between the students and their teacher.

The students continue at their desks, scratching their pens to the paper. I keep my head down, trying not to be distracting. I've only briefly skimmed the prompt before issuing it to them. For me, it's just one more piece of bureaucratic business to hustle through on the first day of class. A first-year Ph.D. student in Rhetoric and Composition, I'm just trying to do what I'm told to do, much like my first-years. Of course they don't know that I was issued this prompt by the Director of the Writing Program. They only know what the prompt tells them: that they are writing to me, and the stakes are high: if they respond poorly, they may be removed from the class. The prompt reads: "The purpose of this writing assignment is to confirm your placement in this class."

Although students are, in fact, rarely pulled from the course based on their writing sample, the explanation above the prompt makes such a possibility patently clear. While this writing situation is not a placement exam, the implicit threat of removal from the course is an important condition of the writing situation. Other conditions are also significant. For this particular class, the prompt was issued on a Tuesday of the students' first fall term of their first year, their second day enrolled in college. I handed out this prompt to my students for the last thirty minutes of the class with little fanfare or introduction. Aside from an introductory game intended to help everyone learn each other's names, this prompt was the students' first chance to participate all day. It was certainly their first chance to talk about their writing and to introduce themselves to me, their instructor, in any depth. In an important sense, this writing sample *is* the introduction of the student to the teacher.

As a combination of both presentation-of-self and reflection-on-writing, Kathleen Blake Yancey would call this type of sample a "reflection-in-presentation." The thing to remember about such reflections, she writes, is that they are "*prepared for an audience*" (71, emphasis hers). Thus the "self" that emerges in the text is "multiple, is *shaped*, is constructed; is necessarily contingent, transitory, filled

with tension" (73). Her words speak well to the sample of student work I will shortly analyze. Because students are performing their identity-as-writers for their future writing instructors, they are shaping their words and selves into positions in relation to their audience. To do that, students are likely trying, as best they are able, to imagine what their instructors want to hear. These samples are "necessarily social: audience-oriented in very specific ways" (93). Students work with—or against—perceived audience expectations.

I was also operating under the press of institutional expectation. I was expected not to worry over the content of the responses too closely, but rather to read them diagnostically in order to determine whether the student writer was capable of producing a comprehensible flow of language. I was told to read for outliers, for students who could not conceive of or execute an appropriate response to the prompt. "You'll know a problem essay when you see it," the Writing Program Director told my class of incoming graduate students in practicum. "It will be *far* too short or just make zero sense." Accordingly, that night, I read through the samples, spreading them across my dining room table and marking on them in blue pen. "Ok" I wrote next to Adam's first paragraph about not liking research papers; "True!" I wrote next to Jamal's comment about the complexity of composing. Similar short phatic comments line the margins of all twenty-three samples ("Interesting;" "Wow!"; "Thanks for sharing"). I intended my comments to indicate my reception of the students' words, to show students that I "heard" what they were saying about writing. I wanted to start the semester on a positive note, instructor-as-reader rather than instructor-as-grader. Even the color of my pen (purple) was chosen to convey non-evaluative ethos. I read quickly, and I read for competence. I did not report back to my Writing Program Director about anomalies. I did not find any outliers. But, as I look back on it now, I also did not really hear my students. This study is, in part, an effort to remedy that "not hearing" and to suggest that there was, after all, something valuable to be found in the content of the student samples. I suspect many other instructors may be as I was at the beginning of the term, skimming through a stack of rapidly

composed student writing and feeling as though they have done their due diligence. By showing what I missed in my initial reading, I aim to provide a rationale for instructors to use different reading practices when they approach these first-day samples—and a variety of potential uses for the samples following the first day.

I no longer see the issuance of the prompt as an irritating administrative task, but rather as a strategic first move that will introduce me to my students and assist me throughout the term. In the last section of this article, I'll offer five strategies for using the first-day samples throughout the term, all of which I have used in the intervening years between the present and the fall of 2014 when the initial content analysis was conducted. I perceive all five strategies as ways to listen to student voices. Listening has always been a paradox in composition studies, at once valued and marginalized as Krista Ratcliffe has described in *Rhetorical Listening*. Central to Ratcliffe's conception of listening, and as Byron Hawk describes in the epigraph to this essay, is what happens afterwards: invention. These pedagogical inventions are ways that I've found myself responding to the lines of flight that have emerged in my classroom in recent years. And content analysis provides a tangible and not terribly complex methodology for putting listening into action.

Methodology

> "And once we have a vocabulary for explaining what we do when we listen, it is easier to convince others to listen the way we do—and to change the way we listen ourselves."
>
> – Peter Rabinowitz (qtd. in Ratcliffe)

In order to understand what students were saying and how patterns emerged across the samples, I conducted an informal content analysis of the samples. Thomas Huckin describes the method: "Content analysis is the identifying, quantifying, and analyzing of specific words, phrases, concepts, or other observable semantic data in a text or body of texts with the aim of uncovering some underlying thematic or rhetorical pattern running through these texts" (14). He notes that such an approach is necessarily limited in

scope. Still, the method can "serve to provide empirical grounding" (14) that may lay the foundation for future study. So as I sought to trace certain patterns in the student responses—patterns of pleasure and displeasure, favorite genres and anxiety-producing ones, and what kinds of lessons about writing the students learned, I began by reading the samples several times and copying out certain kinds of information. Eventually, this information made its way onto an Excel grid. I listed the genres the students wrote about in response to the prompt, and indicated whether or not the student embraced a role of expert-writer. I put in biographical data, such as the sex of the writer and their proposed major. I copied in quotes that stood out to me, and made a note of the type of "lesson" the student claimed to have learned through their writing experience. After sifting through the data and transplanting the most interesting segments into the grid, I experimented with pulling out passages into Word documents and putting them next to each other in order to see how certain trends were repeated across several student samples. It was through this work that I realized the most interesting aspect about the data: the students frequently situated their response in relation to the research paper. In other words, the research paper played a role across several of the samples, even when other kinds of writing were the focus of the essay. I hadn't realized this pattern when I first read through the material in my home, or after the first close read a few weeks later. So, for this study, the method seemed to yield interesting and discussion-worthy results.

Still, the approach is certainly open to critique, beginning with the decision to explore the samples at all. Textual analysis of these kinds of rapidly composed student writing samples is rarely done anymore, although it was once taken up by leaders of the field like Mina Shaughnessy and David Bartholomae. Shaughnessy and Bartholomae each studied thousands of student placement essays for various purposes, treating the student text as an artifact to be analyzed and evaluated. Their attraction to student samples may have been more for convenience than genuine usefulness. Both were criticized for the approach. The samples, critics claim, are not

appropriate for analysis because students produced them under significant time constraints and did not have the opportunity to revise. Shaughnessy responded by arguing that for a population of basic writers, there wasn't much difference between an essay produced in forced conditions and an essay where the writer had time to revise. Similar critiques could be made about the samples I reviewed.

But perhaps the quick turnaround and general messiness actually work in favor of finding out a certain kind of student perception. Rather than looking at these samples as formal, polished prose, I am looking at them for evidence of something more like an improvisational performance. How do my students position themselves as writers? What do they seem to expect from the class? What knowledge do they think is really important to show me they know? By looking at these samples impressionistically for content rather examining them for surface-level characteristics, my study may actually be assisted by the quick turnaround of the sample. Further, because my sample size is so small—only twenty-three to Shaughnessy's 4,000 (Shaughnessy 4)—I am able to explain the context of some of the more contentious passages. Huckin explains that the ability of the researcher to put textual information into its original context is a strength of the methodology.

A second critique would certainly be that I did not have a clear "guiding question" when I began my content analysis. Without a guiding question, some of the quotes that attracted my attention because they were "interesting" seem arbitrary and biased—not an example of content analysis as it is intended to be employed. I acknowledge this weakness to my study, and the study is to be at best an initial exploration of the kinds of information available in these student samples. It gestures toward some areas that could be picked up and explored further, much like the NCTE sponsored national "Listening Tour" to which my title alludes. This survey, administered to 2,200 incoming students in the fall of 2013 (coincidentally the same fall that my student samples were collected) provided, as Lorna Collier puts it, "a window into young people's attitudes and beliefs about writing" (10). One insight from the NCTE national survey was that "students believed college

writing would be … 10-page research papers, correctly MLA-formatted" (13). As will become evident in the next section, my class's responses were also fixated on the research paper assignment —some with confidence that they could tackle the paper successfully, others resenting the paper before the class even began. An underlying assumption of both listening tours is that paying attention to student voices is important. Student voices are saying things that we need to hear, and by paying attention to our students, by taking them seriously, we will improve ourselves as teachers.

What Are Students Saying?

Responses to timed writing situations are fairly predictable in the sense that they follow the prompt closely. The prompt is the choreography for the dance writers are trying to perform, and they move in relation to the instructions. Therefore, when the prompt asks students "Of all the kinds of writing that you have done, either in a classroom setting or outside of class, what kind have you enjoyed the most? Why? What has this kind of writing taught you about writing in general?", we can expect four moves: a list of the "kinds" of writing students have done, a discussion about what kind they prefer, an explanation as to why they prefer it, and a generalized lesson about the nature of writing. My analysis of the student samples demonstrates that these moves were closely followed (22/23 students, for instance, had a quotable "lesson"). More surprising are the patterns that emerged, particularly with regard to the research paper.

Notice that nowhere in the prompt does the phrase "research paper" appear. This is not, in fact, a prompt about research writing at all. Yet the prevalence of the research paper in the student responses is illustrated in Figure 1, which tracks the "kind" of writing that the students wrote that they "preferred."

Preferred Kind	Student Respondents (n 23)
Research	6

Opinion	3
Creative Writing	3
Poetry	3
Speech	2
Journalism	1
Informal Writing	1
None listed	3

Figure 1: Preferred Types of Student Writing

The research paper genre garnered twice the number of votes to any other "kind" of writing (unless one conflated poetry and creative writing, in which case it received an equal preference). Even the students who didn't write about the research paper explicitly still often situated their preference in relation to research writing. In other words, students responded to the prompt by either embracing or rejecting the "research paper" genre. For instance, Morgan created a binary between two types of writing, expository (which included research) and journalism (which was personal and conveyed the opinion of the writer). Her favorite was journalism. Zane contrasted research writing with creative writing, and said "everything doesn't have to be a boring research paper." Why is this significant? Simply put, as students situate themselves as either "for" or "against" the research paper, the tension between their desires for their writing and their perception of what the class will be comes into sharp relief. In the introduction to *Collision Course* Russel Durst writes, "students and teacher often have very different—and in many ways opposing—agendas in the composition class, that these differing agendas lead to significant conflict and negotiation throughout the course" (2). I want to suggest these writing samples are the beginning of that negotiation, on the first day of class, before students can remember each other's names.

Students are writing with a very specific audience (their instructor) and with a very specific exigency (they know they will be writing a researched argument for the class). And they *should* think this—the description of the course on the University of

Cincinnati course guide makes the research focus very clear. The course guide reads: "This course emphasizes critical reading, writing, and textual analysis with particular focus on argument and research-based writing." Even if they haven't read the description, students are likely prepared for the research component of English 1001 by high school teachers who emphasize that college writers do "research," or perhaps from their friends, campus tours, university literature, websites, or a host of other possible sources, including the course syllabus, which was distributed and reviewed in my class shortly before the prompt was issued.

After looking at the course description, though, certain lines of the student samples start to look awfully interesting. It is evident, I argue, that students are engaging with their perception of what the class *will be* and situating themselves as writers in relation to it. Consider these words:

- "*This is my favorite aspect of writing—the ability to express myself freely,* unhindered by the parameters of a project or assignment. *I have fun writing outside the classroom."* (Ned, emphasis in plain type mine)
- "*I loved that in journalism you can feel the passion and personality of the author* as opposed to the straight facts that come out more in research writing." (Morgan, emphasis mine)
- "*I like writing when* everything doesn't have to prove a point." (Natalie, emphasis mine)

While these students attempted to distance themselves from the conventions of research writing, a closer look at their samples suggests a deep ambivalence to what college writing requires. As a teacher reading these samples, I initially didn't see the way the students drew lines between "kinds" of writing that enabled them to distance themselves from the central assignment in the course. In this snippet that follows, Reggie differentiates between what he calls "opinion writing" and "research writing." He explains:

> *An opinion piece differs [from research writing] in letting your voice not just shape the words shown, it also allows you to mix in your thoughts more directly … Instead of only using the voices of established persons in literary fields, others can be vaunted in[to] the subject. This adds new depth contributing to the ability of the writer while, personally, making it much easier to write about. The new figures, that are otherwise unapproachable, become important.*

For Reggie, "new figures, otherwise unapproachable, become important" when he is able to approach them by "vaunt[ing]" his own voice into conversation with theirs. He says that such writing is actually "easier" than research writing because it is "personal" and that by going through the process he can add "depth" to his writing. What I think Reggie ought to realize is that he is describing the ideal research experience. Keith Hjortshoj in *Transition to College Writing* says a student writer *must* personally engage with his research topic in order to take a position on it (189). Joseph Harris argues the student writer must "come to terms" with other writers, which for Ryan would mean "approaching them," and then differentiate himself from them. Even the University of Cincinnati's own *Student Guide* describes writing the research paper as "Entering the Conversation." Essentially Reggie is articulating what I, his instructor, perceive to be valuable about the research essay, but he doesn't see it that way. Reggie comes in with preconceptions that research writing does not allow the writer to "mix your thoughts" in directly with others and that research sources are likely to feel "unapproachable."

He wasn't the only skeptic. Slightly more than a quarter of the class (6) identified a form of creative writing as their favorite genre and did so by explaining that it taught them something about writing that wasn't accessible in critical writing, including that writing was enjoyable, that writing enabled them to explore their own emotions, that writing evoked a real response from the reader:

- *"Creative writing is a way to put my emotions behind the words."* (Natalie)

- *"[poetry] allows me to express myself by putting my deep thoughts and emotions onto a blank sheet of paper."* (Jamal)
- *"[poetry] has taught me that writing in general can be exciting and fun."* (Carrie)

An especially well-articulated response of this kind of comment came from Nathan, who said:

> *I saw that writing was a chance to express one's opinions, one's imagination, and, most importantly, oneself. From then on, writing went from being a hassle, to being my idea's way to freedom.*

For Nathan, creative writing was personal, and thus writing went from "being a hassle" to being imperative to "freeing" his ideas. The "lessons" emphasized that trend repeatedly. Further, students who described themselves as preferring creative writing tended to have more creative responses to the prompt; many told engaging stories about assignments they loved and what they learned. I suggest that students who chose to write about creative writing did so experiencing a certain degree of tension knowing that this course is not likely to cover similar material. Their words often indicated that critical writing (research-based argument writing) doesn't allow the self-expression of creative work. They do not see intersections between creative writing and composition, though Doug Hesse argues that overlap does exist: "To share, to learn, to feel valued. Here is where creative writing now intersects composition. For most writers, writing fulfills personal and social interests … many aspire simply for readers, however few" (42).

In contrast, other students (6) embraced the research paper as their favorite kind of writing. But the lessons they drew from it differed from those described above. Rather than being about personal revelation or pleasure, these lessons tended toward organization and focus, argument and logic:

- "Research papers have taught me that whenever I write *I need to have a plan*, and not just write whatever is on my mind in

unorganized fashion … I've also learned that it is *very important to write in chronological order and not jump around throughout the entire thing*." (Karen, emphasis in plain type mine)

- "The research part of the paper, arguably the most important in my opinion, has taught me the *value of organization* … Simply put, the information would be lost if one doesn't keep good track of it, so all the time spent on research would be wasted. *I noticed that as I learned to better organize my notes, the quality of my writing increased*." (Mark, emphasis mine)
- "One of the most important things I have learned about writing papers is *the thesis and how your paper revolves around it*. The next would be making sure to back up your thesis, the point you are trying to get across to the reader, with *well-cited* facts to develop the argument. Lastly, to *make sure your paper flows* smoothly from beginning to end." (Thad, emphasis mine)

These students are imagining a research assignment and telling us how they would go about doing it: they would have a plan, take careful notes, use "well-cited facts" to develop their argument, and so forth. Rather than telling us what they know about writing, these lessons are telling us how they write a good research paper.

Looking at the samples overall, a few trends are worth noting. First, students tend to associate *pleasure* and *personal investment* with non-research writing and *organization and argument* with research writing. The "lessons" yielded from non-research writing are, on the whole, more personal, more vibrant, and more engaging than the lessons yielded from research writing. Further, students who are attempting to situate themselves as anti-researchers often do so with the understanding that their reader will be later teaching and evaluating writing styles they tend not to enjoy. To do this, they must take on a sort of "underdog" position and challenge the authority of their composition instructor.

For me, realizing that students were creating such complex written responses to a fairly generic first-day writing sample was something of a revelation. By not reading the samples closely, I would have missed an opportunity to hear some very interesting,

ambivalent information from my students about what kinds of writing experiences they value, their perceptions of themselves as writers, and their nascent perceptions of my class.

Discussion

> "How do we translate listening into language and action, into the creation of an appropriate response?"
> – Jacqueline Jones Royster

As a new doctoral student in Rhetoric and Composition, my reaction to the experience of listening was to turn to the literature in the field to see what others have said about the research assignment. In 1982, Richard L. Larson wrote a critique of the research assignment in *College English*, asserting that the research paper was a "concept without an identity" (185). He explained:

> I would argue that the so-called "research paper," as ordinarily taught by the kinds of texts I have reviewed, implicitly equates "research" with looking up books in the library and taking down information from those books. Even if there is going on in some departments of English instruction that gets beyond those narrow boundaries, the customary practices I have observed for guiding the "research paper" assume a procedural identity for that paper that is, I think, nonexistent. (182)

Actual research, Larson contended, uses far vaster methodology to arrive at argumentation, and English teachers who pretend otherwise "show our provincialism and degrade the research of many disciplines" (184). Further, the research paper makes a false binary between writing that requires research and writing that doesn't require research. *All* writing, Larson says, actually requires some kind of research.

Thirty years later, Geoffrey Sirc voiced his dissatisfaction with research writing: "Official composition has persisted as a bland, sanitized pedagogy, teaching clear, correct, citation-based essay

form to students, using a literarily thin corpus of nonfiction reading as prompts. This is so limited, it's unbearable" (514). For Sirc, there is no benefit to teaching research writing that outweighs the costs. Other genres could (and do) take their places in his classroom. He writes of their viability by connecting them to student pleasure:

> I see the gleam in students' eyes when they hear I want them to write an annotated mixtape setlist or a hip-hop top ten list or a manifesto. (All are easy, serial genres with rich possibilities; students love doing them, and why not? We've all got at least one manifesto in us, and music remains a passion.) These are genres that allow short, focused writing, but writing that lets us discuss rhetorical figures and how they lend sublimity and vibrancy to one's writing (so yes, of course, we read Longinus and Shklovsky). "I couldn't believe we got to do that kind of writing in class!" is a recurring comment I'm grateful to hear. (514)

I can imagine that my students, too, would love to leave the research paper behind, would welcome the chance to take up different genres that allow them to access subjects in an academic setting that they previously wouldn't have dreamed of. Jody Shipka's *Toward a Composition Made Whole* features half a dozen writing assignments, and none are the straightforward "research paper." For Sirc, Shipka's writing assignments are "dazzling occasions for writing," assignments that make him believe in the viability of teaching composition (514). Reading these samples seriously entails thinking through assignments that students are dreading and questioning, honestly, whether they should be retained in the curriculum.

What would happen if a primary goal of the composition classroom was that students continued writing after the course was over? To position writing as "a part of life"? I would suggest that we would see more assignments like the one described below:

> *In my sophomore year of high school, I took a class entitled "Effective Writing." My favorite assignment was one where we explored the*

> *school to find a place that we liked. We had to creatively describe that place to the class to see if they could guess where we'd gone. Although I only got a B- on my description of the school's art room, this project taught me so much more than what a B- is usually worth. Previous to this assignment, a great majority of my writing had only been timed, structured five-paragraph essays. Our small class project was the key that opened the door to the possibilities for writing I had never seen previously.* (Nathan)

For Nathan it was in an assignment that required creative expression and audience participation that "opened the door to the possibilities for writing" as opposed to a "timed, structured five-paragraph essay." Notably, though, Nathan wrote about this experience in the context of a timed essay, ironically underscoring the difference between the "creative writing" he said he enjoyed and the work he was producing for the course. T.R. Johnson suggests that students don't expect to find pleasure in the composition classroom: "As far as authorial pleasure goes, many [students] likely assume, quite simply, that you can't-get-there-from-here and that writing in school essentially means chewing on a rock" (62).

At the same time, of course, resistance to writing assignments will always be part of the equation in a composition classroom—the very assignments that Sirc found "dazzling" in Shipka's book have prompted resistance from dozens of students. And there are many reasons that the research assignment has been a staple of composition—to do the paper well requires students to evaluate sources, arrange information, and balance their perspective with the perspectives of others. And, as the instructor, whatever my pedagogy, part of my job will be to see how the assignments connect to what the students want to get out of the class. The negotiation of curriculum will always be part of the process of teaching, especially for new graduate teaching assistants who are not necessarily in a position to design their own curriculum.

My job, with this class, was to persuade my students that when writing in this form, their readers could feel the *"passion and personality"* of the author (as Morgan wants), that they could be able

to *"relate everything back to me"* (as Gayle wants) and *"write about topics I am fond of or that I feel strongly about"* (as Craig wants). What I felt reading these samples, then, was a call to persuade. Such persuasion calls for building relationships with individual students, a topic Lad Tobin addresses in his book *Writing Relationships*. He argues, "writing students succeed when teachers establish productive relationships with—and between—their students" (6). A productive relationship is not conflict-free; on the contrary, Tobin suggests "a student and teacher can relate productively only if a certain amount of tension exists between them" (16). This tension existed in my classroom, as these samples make clear. My job was to turn these reflections-as-presentations into opportunities to deepen my professional relationships with my students and my reflexivity about the curriculum I was teaching. Reflexivity and listening lead, as Ratcliffe and Hawk remind us, to invention and intervention. Three years after this initial exercise in listening through content analysis, here are five ways I use the first-day samples when I teach today.

Using the Samples beyond the First Day

I've come to five ways that first-day samples can be used throughout the term: revision, reflection, reframing, right turns, and reaching out. These uses for the first-day samples are now so embedded in my practice that I cannot imagine teaching a class without them. I no longer read the samples to confirm students' placement in the class—and, in fact, in years of teaching I have never had a first-day sample that indicated a poor class placement—but to unlock information with rich pedagogical potential. I did not develop all five of these uses on my own. In fact, the first use for the samples emerged during the question-and-answer session following a conference presentation. A graduate student specializing in linguistics uses the samples from the first day to inspire a discussion of revision during the following class.

Revision

Rather than having the students turn in the first-day samples after they are completed, send them home. For homework, students must mark-up their first-day samples, noting what they would change about them if they were to write it again. A prompt for this exercise may read, "Now that you've had some time to consider your first-day writing sample, what do you think of it? How would you revise it?" Use this writing during the following class to discuss the role of time and revision in the writing process. Such a move usefully foregrounds the process model of composing that forms the backbone of many writing classes—and it uses student writing and impressions of revision rather than lectures or research to get the conversation going.

Reflection

While using the first-day samples to emphasize revision early in the term, using them to prompt reflection seems to happen best late in the term. I usually offer many ways to approach an end-of-term reflection, and one of them has always been to return to the first-day sample. I pose questions like, "Do you still stand by what you wrote on the first day now? How have your experiences in FYC confirmed, challenged, or expanded the notions of writing expressed in this piece?" I often have a few students that will return to the first-day sample as a point of departure for their last piece of writing in the course.

Reframing

My favorite way to use the samples is to reframe the curriculum in their words. One of my first impressions while doing the content analysis was, "Wow, these students already know so much about writing!" Several classes later, I continue to be impressed by the knowledge students bring to my class. I like to use their words throughout the course. For instance, when introducing a lesson about choosing a research topic, I might put a quote like this up on the screen to emphasize the relationship between motivation and investment in one's topic: *"English may not be my best subject, and I*

may not really want to come to class, but I know that I still get enjoyment from writing about my passions." Similarly, when teaching research writing, the following quotations might helpfully frame various lessons:

- *"There isn't just one way to write a paper, but so many. Having different writing styles is actually an advantage. Not only did it teach me of writing styles, but more so that you can make a paper more interesting by taking the same information and just putting your own spin on it."* (Becky)
- *"Persuasive writing has taught me a lot about writing in general. Along with strong words that keep a reader interested, a writer must use good evidence to persuade someone reading the essay."* (James)
- *"Research-styled writing teaches writers like me a lot about writing in general. The words on the paper must be as well written as possible, yet engaging. The audience must stay involved with the paper, from the introduction to the conclusion. This idea has taught me to make a research paper full of rhetoric, in order to cause the reader to ask more questions which will cause the reader to continue reading the paper."* (Karen)

These twenty-three samples, like most sets of first-day samples I receive, present lessons that address a wide range of topics, including: motivation, syntax, reader expectations, risk taking, persuasion, perseverance, creativity, organization, and grammar. Using student lessons to frame curriculum is fun, perhaps most fun because of its affective results. Students like to see their own words on a PowerPoint slide. I sometimes will not put the writer's name, and they all look around the room, as if to say, "Who said that?" or "Did I say that?" This is, for me, translating listening into action.

Reaching Out

Usually in a batch of first-day samples, even ones that explicitly ask students to reflect on writing they've enjoyed, some students disclose past struggles with writing, such as these:

- *"English has been, for the most part, my worst subject."*
- *"Writing has always been a sore topic for me."*
- *"I do not consider myself good at writing."*

These disclosures are, of course, purposeful. I've found that these students are likely the ones who will slowly disengage with the class, to show up late, or to fail to complete homework. Understanding these students as individuals with a history of difficulty with writing has helped me respond sensitively and enabled me to build more informed and thoughtful relationships with these students. I've also brought up quotations from samples to attempt to motivate a student to persist in the course. This usually happens after the withdraw date has passed and a student has started to disengage—a sure sign that we are headed toward a very low or failing grade. I use voice memos to respond to research steps midterm, and for struggling students I've occasionally "read back" their first day sample, saying something like, "I know you have had trouble with writing, as you mentioned on the first day that English has been, and I quote, 'my worst subject.' I really want to encourage you to stick with this class." While these kinds of interventions have had mixed results, I do feel as an instructor that demonstrating that I see the struggle and acknowledge its history is meaningful.

Right Turns

Another use for the samples is to "right turn" from the intended curriculum into a variation that responds to student interest, or as Byron Hawk would put it, aligns with "lines of flight that are emerging" (233). Occasionally a content analysis of a set of first-day samples will reveal unexpected clusters of students—like the cluster in this class that favored poetry, for example. When possible, I will look for ways to include the kinds of texts students have most enjoyed in the curriculum. I've played around with an assignment that explicitly asks students to bring in texts they admire to figure out what makes them work as a variation on this theme (see Laura Micchche's "A Case for Rhetorical Grammar" where she offers class activities similar to the ones I have tried). I find that

responding to student interests in explicit and transparent ways seems to engage the class. This is not a surprising finding, but it is a rather good use for a first-day sample that eluded me for many semesters.

Conclusion

Finding uses for first-day samples beyond the beginning of the class is beneficial. When I now read my first-day samples, I do so with some eagerness, wondering what lessons about writing the students will have foregrounded, what unexpected genres they might enjoy, and who in the class might be at risk for not completing the term. Understanding what I'm looking for has led to a more purposeful and engaged posture for reading.

In reflecting on this research story, I also see a rationale for teachers, especially new graduate teaching assistants, to spend time researching their own teaching practices, even (or especially) ones they have inherited from their institutions. Investigating what happens in the classroom assists new teachers in better understanding both their own teaching and the larger context of composition studies. There are many research methods, like videotaping and content analysis, that assist in such informal research endeavors. This project taught me how to move from my own classroom to the larger discussions that have taken place in the field over curriculum (Larson, Sirc), which is a useful way to encounter research in the field and to situate myself as a teacher in the broad disciplinary landscape of composition—an important task for any new graduate student.

Finally, I see in this work that listening is part of what keeps teaching and learning fresh for both teachers and students. Excellent instruction calls for engagement with student words. Composition Studies is a field predicated on valuing student voices. When NCTE leaders launched their national "Listening Tour," they explained why:

> National and state policies are being implemented based on a particular vision of what it means to be college and career ready. It appears that these policies haven't been informed by

> important statements from our professional community (see the "Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing") or by the actual experiences and expectations of college students themselves. We need to change that … ("Listening Tour")

The "actual experiences and expectations" of students matters to our field, and leaders in the Conference on College Composition and Communicaiton believe that their perspective should influence the "vision." These first-day writing samples, or presentations-as-reflections, offer instructors the opportunity to do a local listening tour rather than a national one. The first-day samples, produced in many classrooms at the start of every term, give instructors the chance to hear student voices, and to let them impact instruction. To be passionate about both our students and our content is, as Peter Elbow has said, what it means to be complete as teachers ("Embracing the Contraries" 65).

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REVIEW ESSAY

HIGHER EDUCATION, WRITING STUDIES, AND AUSTERITY: HOW WE GOT HERE AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

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Fabricant, Michael, and Stephen Brier. ***Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education*****. Johns Hopkins UP, 2016. 320 pages. ISBN 978-1-42142-067-7.**

Stenberg, Shari J. ***Repurposing Composition: Feminist Interventions for a Neoliberal Age*****. Utah State UP, 2015. 176 pages. ISBN 978-0-87421-991-3; 978-1-60732-388-4.**

Welch, Nancy, and Tony Scott. ***Composition in the Age of Austerity*****. Utah State UP, 2016. 240 pages. ISBN 978-1-60732-444-7 (paperback); 978-1-60732-445-4 (eBook).**

Professional habitats and practices in education are increasingly shaped by austerity. Yearly budget crises, declining tenure-track faculty positions, continued reliance on marginalized contingent labor, and soaring student debt are only some troubling conditions of education in the age of austerity. Although these realities of teaching in contemporary higher education may appear to be inevitable, they are the intentional result of neoliberal ideologies realized through austerity measures. Writing educators must constantly articulate the value of their work and justify its cost or risk further cuts that

undermine the purpose of writing education and the best practices known to support student writers.

In this review essay, I examine three recent texts that represent the status of higher education and composition in austere times: Michael Fabricant and Stephen Brier's *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Education*, Nancy Welch and Tony Scott's edited collection *Composition in the Age of Austerity*, and Shari J. Stenberg's *Repurposing Composition: Feminist Interventions for a Neoliberal Age*. Each text illustrates the impact of neoliberal ideologies and austerity policies on higher education at the national, institutional, and classroom levels. The three texts occupy different professional positions and incorporate ranging disciplinary theories, methodologies, and pedagogies to address the same set of questions: How did we get to this moment of austerity? How is austerity changing the work of education and writing? And most importantly, What do educators do now? *Austerity Blues* presents the broadest perspective on austerity as it historicizes the emergence of neoliberal ideologies in education through the twentieth century and documents changes in higher education due to austerity conditions. Adopting a narrower focus, the contributions to *Composition in the Age of Austerity* detail the impact of austerity on writing education in K-12, postsecondary, and community writing contexts. Finally, *Repurposing Composition* presents methods to resist neoliberalism and austerity measures through composition studies disciplinary scholarship and pedagogical practices.

Regardless of their differing perspectives, the texts make it clear that allowing the neoliberal austerity agenda to continue unchecked will have a devastating impact on higher education and students, especially those from vulnerable communities. Just as importantly, the texts identify individual and collective resistance methods, many located in the writing classroom. In this review essay, I address the following questions that are at the heart of each of these texts:

- What is austerity, and how is it affecting education?
- How is austerity impacting composition scholarship and practice?

- How can educators, especially writing scholars and practitioners, confront austerity policies?

It is my hope that this review essay will help writing instructors identify the impact of austerity policies in their own professional contexts and transform inequitable social-economic structures by starting in the writing classroom and disciplinary practices.

What is austerity, and how is it affecting education?

Today's austerity conditions are not isolated incidents but rather the culmination of decades of neoliberalism. *Austerity Blues: Fighting for the Soul of Public Higher Education* presents the rise of neoliberal ideologies through the twentieth century and the subsequent implementation of austerity policies throughout society including in public education. Authors Michael Fabricant and Stephen Brier draw on a wide range of higher education histories, social and political theories, and economics to contextualize the impact of austerity policies on the mission and practices of higher education. The book is divided into three major sections: Part One contextualizes the neoliberal shift in society and austerity policies through a re-reading of higher education history; Part Two illustrates the impact of present-day austerity policies on higher education institutions; and Part Three offers some concluding thoughts on resisting austerity.

Fabricant and Brier define austerity as a set of ideologies and policies implemented in a neoliberal society to respond to uncertain economic and social times. Neoliberalism is an economic theory that believes the free market is better able to create wealth and serve the public than the state, which at best is viewed as less efficient than the free market and at worst as actively obstructing the market and therefore progress (Fabricant and Brier 14). Neoliberalism has widespread social and political consequences as it fundamentally changes the relationship among the state, its citizens, and the market. Neoliberalism shifts public goods and services away from

the government by privatizing the state's goods and services, so citizens must access previously public services through private means. However, the market does not necessarily meet the needs of society's most vulnerable populations (including poor people, people of color, people with disabilities, the elderly, and the young) because the market follows a "survival of the economic fittest" philosophy. In a neoliberal society, vulnerable populations that had previously received support through public programs like welfare or public education must instead find market-based alternatives, which are scarce or cost prohibitive as the market is more concerned with generating profit than serving the public good. Neoliberalism views the inability for some individuals to survive in the free market as the result of an individual's personal failings, not as the failure of the market and state to provide needed public services to support citizens.

The neoliberal transformation of the state, economy, and social systems creates the conditions for austerity. Fabricant and Brier describe the process by which neoliberal theories become austerity practices. Austerity policies often begin with a crisis such as the 2008 global economic recession. The state responds to the economic crisis by implementing austerity measures such as rationing resources and disinvesting from public services. Public services must adapt to austerity conditions by competing for limited resources and stretching their available resources through increased efficiency, productivity, and accountability. Public services search for ways to reduce costs, often by using technology to reduce labor costs, and to generate profits by privatizing public resources. Because public services are less able to meet the demand for their services, industry may step in to offer a private, market-based alternative. As public resources are reallocated to private holders and public agencies reduce their services, society's most vulnerable citizens receive substandard services, resulting in a growing sense of disenfranchisement and desire for large-scale change. Finally, as economic and social inequality continue to grow amid social and political unrest, there is a greater public and private investment in surveillance, control, and

repression technologies that disproportionately target and harm the vulnerable communities.

Fabricant and Brier's description of the rise of neoliberalism and austerity policies explains much of recent challenges to higher education. The 2008 recession precipitated substantial public disinvestment from education across all grade levels and institution types. Educational institutions searched for funding from private sources, which often tied funding to educational excellence and efficiency as measured by standardized tests. Fabricant and Brier argue that the emphasis on excellence and efficiency reshapes education by defining "excellence" based on students' performance on standardized tests; as such, curricula emphasizes test preparation rather than critical thinking, reading, writing, and civic engagement. In addition to the curricular changes, education's material conditions deteriorate resulting in degraded educational quality. Class sizes grow larger, part-time instructors teach the bulk of classes under poor working conditions, and massive content delivery models replace interpersonal pedagogical methods. These changes to education disproportionately impact poor students and students of color who do not have the market resources to access other educational opportunities, resulting in a segmented educational system that reproduces social inequity. Education has long been viewed in the United States as the great equalizer, but the impact of decades of neoliberal austerity policies causes Fabricant and Brier to question if education is achieving social transformation or further entrenching social hierarchies rooted in discrimination and inequity.

The current austerity crisis provides the immediate context for *Austerity Blues*, yet austerity has been a movement in progress since the last half of the twentieth century. The greatest strength of *Austerity Blues* lies in the authors' careful tracing of neoliberal ideologies and austerity policies in a larger social and political context. The historical methodology reveals a limitation to most current discussions of austerity: Focusing only on the current austerity conditions of education risks perpetuating an ahistorical and decontextualized perspective that naturalizes austerity. Fabricant

and Brier repurpose Margaret Thatcher's famous capitalism maxim "There is no alternative" to describe the representation of austerity as natural and inevitable. Naturalizing austerity or suggesting that austerity conditions are inevitable, which ultimately serves neoliberal interests by maintaining its inequitable social-economic structures. Yet Fabricant and Brier argue that austerity policies are "neither accidental nor natural, but rather the product of conscious political and economic decision making to redistribute public resources upward and remake public institutions into diminished, quasi-private offerings" (205). People enact austerity policies informed by neoliberalism, and therefore it is possible (albeit difficult) to adopt a different social, political, and economic orientation and initiate new policies. By adopting a sociohistorical perspective on neoliberalism and austerity policies, educators can draw on histories of public education and institutional activism to inform current resistance strategies to neoliberal austerity conditions.

To provide this sociohistorical context for future resistance, Fabricant and Brier historicize contemporary higher education in the United States, focusing specifically on public investment in education and traditions of campus activism. Throughout Part One, the authors present federal and state governments' responses to previous economic and social crises like the Industrial Revolution, the Great Depression, World War II, and the Cold War through massive public investments in higher education such as the Morrill Acts of 1862 and 1890, the GI Resettlement Bill, and the National Defense Education Act. This history of public higher education demonstrates that educational disinvestment, deregulation, and degradation are not the only responses to crises. Rather, higher education history reveals a previous conviction that the public must invest in education for the good of society. Continuing their summary of higher education history, Fabricant and Brier trace the history of campus resistance movements' fight for educational access and equity. Fabricant and Brier share the mixed successes of campus protests from the 1960s and 1970s as a tradition of campus resistance that current higher education activists can return to for strategies and inspiration. The higher education history of public

investment and campus activism presented in Part One of *Austerity Blues* counter the maxim "There is no alternative" by showcasing historical alternatives to economic and social crises. Furthermore, the educational history demonstrates that resistance in higher education institutions is possible and can be successful in thwarting hegemonic structures.

Informed by this higher education history, Part Two of *Austerity Blues* shifts its attention to the present state of higher education and the impact of neoliberal "reforms" on higher education's mission and structure. The conditions of higher education in times of austerity indicate changing public values regarding education. In contrast to earlier convictions that the public should invest in education as a public good for the betterment of society, neoliberal society represents education as a private good for which individuals must bear financial responsibility. The neoliberal restructuring of education as a private good then allows for austerity measures to be enacted during times of economic crises like the 2008 recession, as illustrated by Fabricant and Brier's description of the neoliberal-austerity process from Part One. Fabricant and Brier identify soaring student debt, the standardized testing regime, and diminished teacher agency as some of the most damaging effects of austerity policies in education. Although each of these concerns is critical and requires greater examination, Part Two focuses on the authors' two major concerns with education under austerity: the corporatization of the university through educational technologies and the reproduction of social inequality through educational practices.

The chapter on public higher education's complicity in reproducing social inequality is the most challenging to educators who may think of ourselves as victims of austerity without necessarily considering how the current educational system perpetuates social inequity. Fabricant and Brief summarize the impact of austerity on educational inequity, "The conjunction of fiscal austerity, imposition of a neoliberal business model, and consequent institutional restructuring has resulted in public higher education becoming an active agent in the growth rather than the reduction of social

inequality," which they identify as austerity's most harmful effect (118). Social inequity in education results from several linked factors including inequitable resource allocation policies, insufficient resources to prepare students for higher education or support them through higher education, and the individual burden of educational costs. Educational institutions must compete for limited resources due to state disinvestment from public education; however, the resource allocation process reveals systemic inequity throughout K-16. Fabricant and Brier examine K-12 public education as an already segmented educational system divided by race and class. As state support for education declines, communities and individuals are increasingly responsible for supporting education through local taxes, fundraising efforts, or personal contributions. Due to a lack of resources, poor students and students of color are more likely than their richer, whiter peers to receive a substandard K-12 education that will eventually underprepare them for higher education and future employment, thereby continuing the cycle of inequity. This same inequity continues in higher education as institutions that serve more diverse student populations often receive less funding than more selective institutions that often enroll fewer low-income students and students of color. Institutions that serve underrepresented populations require more resources to support their students' success, yet they are less likely to receive those resources. For both K-12 and higher education institutions, the lack of resources means that schools must make due with less. Educators must teach more courses with larger class sizes and less time to engage with students and offer a rigorous educational experience through innovative curriculum and effective pedagogical interventions. Students experience less individualized attention and an education that costs more but may produce fewer critical skills and eventual economic benefits. Finally, the cost of education disproportionately burdens the students with the fewest resources. Even with full federal and state aid, the remaining educational costs are a greater percentage of a low-income student's limited resources than for a student with a higher socioeconomic status. Low-income students must then pay for college by accepting loans

(contributing to skyrocketing student debt) or working more, which can negatively impact their academic success and completion. Throughout the chapter on educational inequality, Fabricant and Brier remind educators that we are complicit in a system that creates the inequality in society that we often rebel against, and as such, it is partly our responsibility to resist austerity as a social justice action.

Part Three of *Austerity Blues* addresses the future of higher education under austerity conditions. Fabricant and Brier return to the struggles that currently define higher education such as the high cost of a college education, the resultant student loan debt crisis, the reliance on contingent instructors working without labor protections, and the disparity in educational access and quality across race and class divisions. The authors offer multiple solutions to alleviate the pressure of austerity by investing public resources in K-16 education, improving labor conditions for educators, and using technology to improve (not replace) teaching and learning. However, implementing these solutions on a case-by-case basis will not fundamentally change the neoliberal system and its reproduction of social inequity. Therefore, Fabricant and Brier suggest that there needs to be a "political movement to emphasize within popular discourse and policy" that can confront "the growing racial and class divides in access to quality public higher education" (207). Fabricant and Brier identify potential resistance in contemporary grassroots campus protests, but it is uncertain how individual campus protests will transform and expand into a larger movement in the future. Although they suggest that large-scale coordination through a social movement is needed, the authors do not offer insight into how to form this massive social revolution. They do recognize this limitation, and in their conclusion, Fabricant and Brier present a series of questions about the characteristics and methods of the anticipated anti-austerity social movement, notably asking, "How do we establish a coherent language and politics that penetrate beyond the surface of individual, destabilizing events to their unjust collective essence?" (247). Although Fabricant and Brier

pose the unresolved question to the reader, writing studies scholarship on austerity activism may provide an answer.

How is austerity impacting composition scholarship and practice?

Austerity Blues illustrates the widespread impact of austerity policies on higher education, but to understand the impact on writing education more specifically I turn to *Composition in the Age of Austerity*. While the strength of *Austerity Blues* lies in its macro-level survey of austerity's origins in neoliberalism and large-scale effects of austerity policies in higher education, the strength of *Composition in the Age of Austerity* results from its specificity and rootedness in the work of writing education. Edited by Nancy Welch and Tony Scott, *Composition in the Age of Austerity* features essays from compositionists who occupy positions as administrators, tenure track professors, part-time instructors, and non-profit employees at a range of institutions and organizations. Based on their differing professional and personal locations, the contributors present diverse perspectives on austerity's challenges to writing education in a neoliberal society.

Composition in the Age of Austerity is organized around three major goals: To document and contextualize the effects of austerity policies on the work and mission of composition, to critically examine the field's ability to respond to austerity rhetorics, and to explore rhetorics and strategies of collective resistance. The first section of the collection, "Neoliberal De-Forms," addresses the intrusion of neoliberalism into composition, illustrating the subtle ways that composition has contributed to neoliberal values and austerity policies by participating in reforms such as assessment, course redesigns, and standardized writing curriculum. The next section, "Composition in an Austere World," examines austerity as a threat to writing initiatives like the National Writing Project, basic writing, prison writing programs, community writing programs, and first-year writing. Finally, "Composition at the Crossroads" encourages compositionists to reflect on composition's complicity

in austerity and to develop new theories, coalitions, and actions that can resist neoliberalism and austerity policies.

The first section, "Neoliberal De-Forms," features essays that interrogate the ideologies and assumptions inherent in austerity educational reforms such as course redesigns and standardized curriculum. These initiatives ostensibly reform education by establishing consistent educational standards across contexts and holding institutions accountable to maintaining and exceeding these standards through assessment. However, the essays in "Neoliberal De-Forms" question these reforms by demonstrating how such neoliberal interventions degrade educational quality and contribute to educational inequity. The first two chapters, "Our Trojan Horse: Outcomes Assessment and the Resurrection of Competency-Based Education" by Chris W. Gallagher and "Confessions of an Assessment Fellow" by Deborah Mutnick, recount the authors' experiences participating in institutional outcomes assessment. Both authors become disillusioned with outcomes assessment as it divorces assessment from the purpose of improving teaching and learning and instead reinforces narrow understandings of educational quality and standards. Gallagher argues that outcomes assessment has led the way for alternative educational methods like Competency-Based Education, which dilutes the educational experience for students. Mutnick finds that assessment has shifted from valuing inputs, or the resources and infrastructure that create the best conditions for education, to instead emphasizing outputs, or the "proof" of excellence often measured by standardized tests and curriculum. Continuing the critique of austerity-based standards of excellence, Emily J. Isaac's contribution, "First-Year Composition Course Redesigns: Pedagogical Innovation or Solution to the 'Cost Disease'?," illustrates one way that higher education institutions attempt to achieve excellence through course reform. Isaac examines the course redesign movement, which promises to reduce educational costs and improve educational quality by redesigning courses, often by using technology to reduce labor costs and replace or supplement instruction. Isaac argues that the most effective writing course redesigns simply implement best

practices in disciplinary knowledge such as reducing course size, scaffolding curriculum, and teaching writing as a process with multiple drafts. In contrast, most course redesigns feature "a reinvigorated focus on grammar and other lower-order concerns, and procedural, lowest common denominator interpretation of writing as a process," a narrow focus that does not align with disciplinary expectations for writing standards or excellence (52). Marcelle M. Haddix and Brandi Williams's chapter "Who's Coming to the Composition Classroom? K-12 Writing in and outside the Context of Common Core State Standards" also addresses educational reforms intended to achieve excellence. Haddix and Williams argue that the Common Core State Standards limit students to specific forms of writing, privileging argumentative, informative, and research-based genres, modes, and purposes while erasing other forms of literacy and writing rooted in creative expression that may appeal to young writers. Haddix and Williams share their experience working with a community writing project that helps working class students and students of color see how writing can connect to their lives and their communities. The essays contained in "Neoliberal De-Forms" reveal the intrusion of neoliberal values and practices into the work of composition from assessing the efficacy of writing education to presenting a limited understanding of writing purposes and contexts as part of standardized education.

The chapters in the second section, "Composition in an Austere World," document austerity's detrimental impacts on institutional and community literacy and writing initiatives. Both community and higher education writing programs are vulnerable to austerity policies because they are costly initiatives that resist commodification and corporatization in a neoliberal social-economic system that values privatization and profiteering. Each chapter examines a community or institutional initiative that confronted neoliberal logics of accountability, efficiency, productivity, and competition. One such initiative is the National Writing Project, a national non-profit organization that connects K-12 and higher education writing instructors in a variety of programs including community

writing workshops and teacher professional development. Tom Fox and Elyse Eidman-Aadahl's "The National Writing Project in the Age of Austerity" traces the NWP's post-2008 financial challenges that have fundamentally changed the organization's ability to offer community writing education. Similarly, Tobi Jacobi examines the declining number of prison college programs in "Austerity Behind Bars: The 'Cost' of Prison College Programs." Despite evidence that prison education programs provide numerous benefits including decreased recidivism, the number of programs nationwide has decreased due to budget cuts and increased prison security regulations, preventing inmates from accessing educational opportunities. Although Fox, Eidman-Aadahl, and Jacobi focus on the loss of fiscal resources needed to support community writing initiatives and community writers, Mary-Ann Cain's "Buskerfest: The Struggle for Space in Public Rhetorical Education" examines the loss of space as a public resource. Weaving together the histories of two community art collectives, Cain identifies public spaces as one of austerity's casualties as more public, third-spaces are turned into locations for private businesses and residences. Cain argues for the rhetorical and activist importance of public spaces as places to form coalitions and organize resistance to hegemonic forces, and she calls for communities to preserve public spaces from dominant economic interests. Basic writing and writing programs are also threatened by austerity. In "Occupy Basic Writing: Pedagogy in the Wake of Austerity," Susan Naomi Bernstein asks readers to imagine a pedagogy that bears witness to human suffering in times of austerity, especially in basic writing courses that educate traditionally underserved students and yet are often the first programs cut during budget crises. Bernstein's contribution takes the costs of austerity from the national and program level to the individual human element, showing how instructors and students suffer under neoliberalism and austerity conditions. Finally, Nancy Welch considers the redistribution of labor in first-year writing programs in her essay "First-Year Writing and the Angels of Austerity: A Re-Domesticated Drama." Welch points to the

institutional desire for the effects of a writing program without the costs of a writing program, which results in the labor of writing program management shifting from recognized labor to private service.

Despite the many challenges faced by each of the writing initiatives featured in this section, the work continues for now. Fox and Eidman-Aadahl point out that the National Writing Project continues to support a national network of writing instructors across grade levels and institutional types, although much of the financial and structural support has shifted to the network itself and site locations. Prison college writing initiatives continue with support from individual instructors and their institutions as well as some progressive state governments. Cain's students create activist, rhetorical moments within the public third-spaces that remain. Basic writing courses and writing programs continue to function and adapt to austere conditions, although Bernstein and Welch question for how much longer. The essays that are part of "Composition in an Austere World" stand as a testament to the human and disciplinary costs of austerity policies. They document not only the losses of funding and employment but also the intangible losses such as the further damage to vulnerable populations like incarcerated and basic writers and the loss of public resources like community outreach initiatives and spaces. The contributions in this section articulate the losses from neoliberal cost-cutting measures in the hopes of encouraging resistance.

The chapters in the final section, "Composition in the Crossroads," encourage readers to move from documenting losses to resisting neoliberalism and austerity. Jeanne Gunner calls for new methods of critique in her contribution, "What Happens When Ideological Narratives Lose Their Force?" Gunner argues that current critical theories have not provided the anticipated resistance to hegemonic narratives, and instead the theories and practices of critical theories have been coopted to serve austerity values. Gunner argues that a post-hegemony framework is needed to envision alternatives to hegemonic power structures and austerity. As Gunner calls for radical changes to composition theories, Ann Larson argues for

radical changes to composition's labor practices. In "Composition's Dead," Ann Larson focuses on the adjunctification of higher education and composition's dependence on contingent labor. Larson identifies labor issues as the starting point to transform current neoliberal conditions by engaging in labor resistance strategies such as strikes and coalitions with low-wage workers across industries. Eileen E. Schell also attends to higher education's problematic labor conditions in "Austerity, Contingency, and Administrative Bloat: Writing Programs and Universities in an Age of Feast and Famine." Schell examines the issue of administrative bloat, or the growing number of institutional administrative positions to manage the work of higher education while instructional resources and support are cut. Schell finds that writing program administrators (WPA) have benefited from administrative growth and argues that WPAs must develop a critical rhetoric that can respond to and resist the neoliberal university's desire for greater productivity, efficiency, and accountability at the cost of its students and instructors. Attending to instructors' positionality in neoliberal and austere education settings, Shari J. Stenberg's "Beyond Marketability: Locating Teacher Agency in the Neoliberal University" considers the potential for teacher agency. Stenberg shares new composition instructors' experiences of using their often-marginalized positions as disabled, queer, or non-native English speakers to locate new possibilities for what Stenberg calls "located agency" in the classroom. Located agency values the specific positionality of an instructor and recognizes the positionality of students to create a relational model of education, a concept I return to more in the review of *Feminist Repurposing*. Finally, Tony Scott examines how composition studies has been coopted by neoliberalism in "Animated by the Entrepreneurial Spirit: Austerity, Dispossession, and Composition's Last Living Act." Scott compares composition to a newly created zombie; composition is now part of the neoliberalism problem (as evidenced by the presence of values like innovation and entrepreneurialism in scholarship and pedagogy) but is currently experiencing a moment of self-awareness that can provide a

turning point. Rather than give into neoliberal, destructive urges for innovation and risk-taking, Scott argues that composition can chart a new path that would "renew its commitment to teaching and scholarship for the benefits of writing education in a just society, and devote itself to radical, creative possibilities at its material sites of production" (216).

Throughout *Composition in the Age of Austerity*, the contributors draw attention to the complicity of composition in the current social, economic, and political moment. From one perspective, Chris Gallagher reflects on how compositionists' desire to improve teaching and learning was unwittingly used to further austerity reforms. He writes, "We might have thought we were being good citizens. We might have thought outcomes were just a neutral tool. We might have thought we could have it all. If so, we were wrong" (24). In contrast to Gallagher's regretful perspective, Ann Larson criticizes composition for adhering to "failed politics of respectability" in which composition willingly aligned with neoliberal values to attain greater disciplinary status in the university at the expense of vulnerable laborers. She puts it bluntly, "Composition does not defy our rotten economic system; it exemplifies it" (164). Larson argues that as composition has established itself as a recognized research discipline in higher education it has done so by creating a segmented labor force divided between those who teach composition with poor labor conditions and those who manage or research composition with labor protections.

Although composition bears some responsibility for austerity's effects on education, the chapters in *Composition in the Age of Austerity* position composition's complicity as a starting point to resist neoliberalism and austerity in classroom, institutional, and public settings. Gallagher and Scott suggest that compositionists capitalize on the unique skills and experiences that they can offer. Gallagher articulates writing instructors' unique skill sets, specifically that writing instructors know "how to build environments and experiences that promote students' learning of it. And we know our students—not as bundles of competencies, but as human beings in the midst of rich social and contextual learning experiences" (31). Scott echoes

Gallagher's attention to the social experience of learning, "Compositionists can appeal to values that are shared among faculty, students, and parents, who, by and large, value personal relationships and face-to-face interactions between students and faculty, and curriculums that are open-ended and responsive enough to provide opportunity for unanticipated discovery and creative innovations" (216). However, Gallagher and Scott's arguments can be coopted to support the same neoliberal and austerity values of competition, productivity, and innovation that they critique and seek to replace. Gallagher writes, "We are not just another set of content providers; we are expert shapers of educative experiences for individuals and groups. We offer a kind and quality of experience—in courses and curricula, and in and through writing—that cannot be replicated or by-passed by vendors" (31). According to Gallagher, composition offers valuable products (courses, curricula) that other competitors in the market cannot, and therefore composition is valuable to higher education. Other contributors identify ways that composition can use its position within the neoliberal university to resist neoliberal values and austerity policies. Schell and Larson call for activist compositionists to develop a critical rhetoric for WPAs and create labor coalitions outside academia. Lil Brannon resists austerity and the commodification of labor by reclaiming bodies, locations, belonging, and collectivity. In the "Afterword" to the collection, Brannon writes, "Reclaiming our embodied locations, orienting ourselves differently in relation to neoliberal austerity measures and building coalitions with others in our communities can give us new ways of working" (225). Confronting austerity and neoliberalism is not easy as neoliberal values may inadvertently coopt resistance. Perhaps, as Brannon suggests, the most promising resistance methods lie in reclaiming what is discarded by neoliberalism to create new alternatives to neoliberalism and austerity.

How can educators, especially writing scholars and practitioners, confront austerity policies?

The chapters in Welch and Scott's collection illustrate how austerity is changing writing education to serve neoliberal values of productivity, efficiency, and accountability. Much like Fabricant and Brief in *Austerity Blues*, the authors in *Composition in the Age of Austerity* point out that austerity policies in education are an effect of neoliberalism's larger restructuring of the public and private spheres. It is easy to feel rather helpless and hopeless after reading the texts, overwhelmed by the belief that austerity and neoliberalism values have taken such a hold that they are impossible to confront let alone change. Each of these texts ends with a section that poses the question, what can be done about austerity? Fabricant and Brier suggest that a mass social movement is needed, although they leave it up to the reader to form such a large-scale social revolution. The last section in Welch and Scott's collection focuses on ways writing practitioners may resist austerity policies. Yet some solutions reify neoliberalism, suggesting that compositionists work within austerity conditions and leverage neoliberal values to advocate for writing and education. The solutions exemplify composition's commitment to confronting austerity; however, it is unclear if the purpose is to dismantle neoliberalism and austerity or to improve composition's position within neoliberal austerity conditions.

Stenberg's *Repurposing Composition: Feminist Intervention for a Neoliberal Age* offers a concrete method individuals can employ to counteract the harmful effects of neoliberal ideology without participating in the problematic system. Stenberg offers feminist repurposing as a set of tactics to recast neoliberal values as feminist practices to subvert the current social-economic system. Feminist repurposing tactics include illuminating and critiquing existing conditions, locating possibilities to work in and against current systems, reclaiming the excess and reusing it for new purposes, and finally enacting new pedagogical, relational, and cultural possibilities (10-11). Illuminating reveals the underlying

neoliberal logics that appear natural, universal, or inevitable and opens these logics up to critique and alternatives. The next two tactics reframe neoliberal logics and values through feminist frameworks and practices. The tactic of locating possibilities asks individuals to adopt a new perspective on the social context. Stenberg suggests that a shift in perspective can offer new ways of being, acting, and relating. The other tactic, reclaiming and reusing the excess, rescues the values and practices that are devalued in neoliberalism and uses the "waste" to challenge normative conceptions. The final tactic, enacting new pedagogical, relational, and cultural possibilities, creates new logics, values, and practices to disrupt and replace the "entrenched mode of neoliberalism" (11).

Employing the four tactics of feminist repurposing is not necessarily a linear process. Instead, as a testament to her feminist framework, Stenberg pays close attention to location, positionality, embodiment, and social context while encouraging her readers to do the same. Depending on the social context or an individual's positionality, a tactic may not be appropriate or effective at resisting neoliberal structures. Feminist repurposing is therefore also a rhetorical repurposing, using feminist values and practices to identify the most appropriate tactic for a rhetor's contextual position. The focus on positionality stands in contrast to neoliberalism, which erases difference by claiming equality for all while simultaneously operating under a social-economic logic that disproportionately harms poor communities, communities of color, and other marginal communities. Stenberg reclaims positionality and argues for compositionists to practice "located agency" that "includes examining, valuing, and taking responsibility for our locations and that opens possibilities for marginalized locations to serve as resources for teaching, learning, and knowing" (100). Located agency uses the contextual possibilities and constraints of bodies and the relations to other bodies to imagine and enact alternative modes of belonging and acting. Stenberg's feminist repurposing framework offers alternative modes of belonging, acting, and agency that can disrupt neoliberal structures across various locations including the writing classroom.

Throughout *Repurposing Composition*, Stenberg practices feminist repurposing to reclaim composition from neoliberalism. As the contributors to *Composition in the Age of Austerity* illustrate, the composition classroom often serves neoliberal interests as the work of writing education has been coopted and aligned with market values. Compositionists experience a double-bind constituted by the need to prepare students to write in a neoliberal economic-social system while also desiring to disrupt and transform the system. Stenberg offers feminist repurposing as one way out of the double-bind. She argues, "Feminist repurposing allows us to consider how we can take seriously our students' material needs for job readiness as well as to highlight and enact the feminist ideas that may otherwise be obscured in the neoliberal university" (40). Throughout *Repurposing Composition*, Stenberg identifies key terms that she argues can be repurposed to disrupt neoliberalism and its intrusion into writing education. The terms include *emotion*, *listening*, *agency*, and *responsibility*. In each chapter, Stenberg illuminates the normative understanding of these terms and how these understandings reinforce harmful neoliberal logics. Then, Stenberg examines feminist theory and rhetoric and composition scholarship to illustrate how scholars have repurposed these terms through the tactics of identifying new possibilities, reclaiming the excess, and enacting alternatives. Finally, Stenberg demonstrates how the key term can be repurposed in typical disciplinary work such as teaching academic writing, training graduate student instructors, and assessing writing programs.

Writing instructors can employ the feminist repurposing framework to identify the overlaps between writing education and neoliberal interests and then reclaim the work of composition and resist neoliberalism and austerity by enacting alternatives. Chapter Three, "Repurposing Listening—From Agonistic to Rhetorical," reveals how current approaches to teaching academic writing can problematically reinforce neoliberal values. In this chapter, Stenberg analyzes listening in industry and the composition classroom. Listening, as she notes, is a valuable market skill because people like to feel listened to, which then impacts market

services such as customer service experience and work place dynamics. Although feminist theories value listening to relate to others, in industry listening is a desired skill because it creates more economic value. The industry purpose of listening is "fine-tuning an existing structure, not revising its logics or values" (76). Similarly, academic writing enacts a superficial form of listening in which alternative positions are identified primarily to support one's own position. Students are taught to identify and "listen" to various perspectives as they write, but the purpose of listening is to "pave the road for one's own contributions, not to engage in genuine dialogue with other scholars" (79). For both industry and academia, the appearance of listening to others matters, not the transformation of one's position that can occur when listening creates dialogue. Using the illuminating tactic, Stenberg shows how listening in industry and academia reinforces neoliberal values of individualism, competition, and profiteering. Stenberg moves from illuminating to reframing and reclaiming by presenting scholarship on feminist rhetorical listening and silence as alternatives to neoliberal listening. In contrast to neoliberal listening, feminist rhetorical listening is "an active, generative practice that allows us to hear beyond our entrenched positions and assumptions" (76). Unlike neoliberal listening, feminist rhetorical listening engages multiple perspectives in dialogue to foster understanding and change. The last section of the chapter describes how Stenberg enacts repurposed listening as she teaches academic writing. Stenberg's classroom practice follows the feminist repurposing method as she works with students to illuminate the assumed values in academic writing, consider alternatives, and then enact alternatives in their writing. Students analyze cultural norms surrounding listening including methods of teaching listening, characteristics of effective listening, and intercultural listening differences. Stenberg also introduces alternative theories of argument that engage multiple perspectives to understand rather than popular forms of argument that debate across binary positions to persuade. Stenberg shares a dialogic argument assignment that asks students to practice feminist rhetorical listening as they write about a social issue.

Students "listen" to multiple perspectives by coming to a rich understanding of the position and then representing these perspectives without critique. In the second part of the assignment, students contribute their perspectives to the ongoing conversation. Students represent all perspectives with respect and engage ethically across the positions as they search for the connections, differences, and insights that become apparent when engaging with various perspectives from a desire to understand rather than to win an argument. Stenberg's attention to rhetorical listening is particularly relevant given the current state of public discourse characterized by arguments rather than dialogue, divisions rather than coalitions, persuading rather than understanding. Instead, Stenberg's dialogic argument assignment prepares students for different ways to engage with diverse perspectives and enact change based on these engagements.

Like *Austerity Blues* and *Composition in the Age of Austerity*, *Feminist Repurposing* reveals the presence of neoliberal ideologies in writing education and scholarship, but unlike the first two texts, *Feminist Repurposing* offers a method to confront neoliberalism and austerity. The book is not a resistance manual that presents clear instructions to confront austerity challenges such as program cuts, budget shortfalls, or the standardized testing regime. Stenberg's classroom practices cannot be adopted wholesale by a reader; the writing instruction, professional development, and assessment examples illustrate Stenberg's feminist repurposing in her institutional context. Nor should Stenberg's specific interventions be adopted and applied in any context. Instead, feminist repurposing is a method that compositionists can apply in their own contexts to identify the neoliberal values and practices present and to then reframe, reclaim, and enact new possibilities. Stenberg reminds readers that "important moments of resistance often occur at the microlevel" (11), which offers a more manageable starting point for writing instructors to resist neoliberalism and austerity than Fabricant and Brier's call for a mass social movement. Instructors can engage in feminist repurposing to disrupt neoliberal structures in small ways by reframing and reclaiming writing education from

the ways it has become aligned with neoliberal values. Stenberg's feminist repurposing offers a new way of thinking and acting outside of neoliberal structures and subsequently results in the social movement that Fabricant and Brier and other scholars argue is the only way out of austerity.

Conclusion: What Happens Next

It is difficult to write a satisfying conclusion for these texts about education in times of austerity as each day brings another report of a new educational crisis due to austerity measures. Most recently and significantly, the Trump administration announced its 2018 education budget, which cut more than $10 billion from federal education programs. The budget would reduce or eliminate funding for programs including those focused on college access and success for disadvantaged students (TRIO), college affordability (federal aid and grants, subsidized student loans, public-service loan forgiveness) and federal research (the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Institutes of Health). For K-12 education, the proposed budget directs funds towards school-choice initiatives such as charter schools and voucher programs. Although early discussion from politicians suggests that the proposed budget is unlikely to pass in its current form, the budget does signal that the Trump administration intends to continue, and in fact, accelerate neoliberal ideologies and austerity policies in education.

Reviewing these three texts illuminates the neoliberal ideologies that structure education today. Illuminating reveals that the austerity policies in local contexts are not isolated misfortunes but instead they are the intended outcome of a neoliberal economic-social system that values individualism, competition, and profits over communalism, collaboration, and equitable distribution of resources. For example, when the current executive administration proposes to reduce funding for college access programs like TRIO that serve predominantly poor students and students of color, it becomes apparent that the decision is about more than reducing government expenditures. Instead, the illumination process reveals

fundamental beliefs about who should be able to access higher education. In a neoliberal economic-social system, decisions about resource allocation will rarely be based in social justice or equity, and vulnerable populations will continue to suffer under austerity. And yet, the authors of these three texts remind the reader that austerity is not natural or inevitable. The age of austerity is the result of intentional decisions about resource allocation that reflect neoliberal ideologies, and therefore it is possible to make economic and social decisions that reflect a commitment to social justice and equity.

Austerity Blues, *Composition in the Age of Austerity*, and *Repurposing Composition* contextualize the rise of austerity measures and the impact on writing education. But the three texts also challenge compositionists to do something about it. None of the texts offers easy solutions because no easy solution exists. Neoliberal ideologies enacted through austerity policies permeate all aspects of society. The stakes are high for composition, for students, and for local, national, and global communities. *Austerity Blues* calls for a massive social movement to resist neoliberalism and create new social-economic structures. *Composition in the Age of Austerity* and *Repurposing Composition* present disciplinary-specific ways that writing instructors can confront austerity by changing theoretical, labor, program administration, and classroom practices. However, compositionists must quickly articulate the goal of confronting austerity: Do we want to confront austerity to elevate our own position in an unjust social-economic system to reap the systems' benefits? Or do we want to dismantle neoliberal structures and create more equitable social-economic systems?

Across the three texts, the authors seem to lean towards the second option, yet even the resistance strategies they offer can be twisted to serve neoliberal interests and maintain its harmful structures. As Audre Lorde reminds us, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house. They may allow us temporarily to beat him at his own game, but they will never enable us to bring about genuine change" (112). Educators must be constantly self-reflexive and self-critical lest we inadvertently find our well-

intentioned labor repurposed to reify neoliberalism. Additionally, we need to develop alternative theories and practices that can offer new forms of belonging, agency, and resistance outside of normative neoliberal modes. As educators and compositionists move forward in the age of austerity, we must remember that we are not necessarily the victims of austerity as in many cases we are complicit, and as such it is our responsibility and opportunity to initiate genuine change.

Works Cited

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REVIEW ESSAY

BREAKING BOUNDARIES: REVITALIZING CREATIVE WRITING STUDIES IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Kathleen McCoy

Dean Clark, Michael, Trent Hergenrader, and Joseph Rein. ***Creative Writing Innovations: Breaking Boundaries in the Classroom*****. Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. 256 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1474297172.**

Koehler, Adam. ***Composition, Creative Writing Studies, and the Digital Humanities*****. Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. 168 pages. ISBN-13: 978-1472591944.**

What could college and graduate students, creative writing instructors, and institutions learn if the creative writing classroom were no longer dominated by an overemphasis on preparing students for publication? Can the collegiate or graduate workshop (or "unworkshop") be driven instead by innovatively designed learning experiences? Can creative students transcend boundaries of classroom walls, genre-related expectations, identity, and emerging technologies at the same time that they ground themselves in literary conventions, interpretation, and theory? Given current conditions such as the long surge in popularity of creative writing programs, the saturation of the literary publishing market, and the undeniable influence of technology, these questions have been

driving innovation in creative writing pedagogy since the dawn of the twenty-first century. Two recent books from Bloomsbury Academic respond jointly that we must innovate by developing transformative educational experiences, both to better align teaching with the times and to help students discover new possibilities for the literary arts. These titles stand as essential reading for undergraduate and graduate-level creative writers who teach, particularly those who question the traditional workshop emphasis on publication and who are open to fecund combinations of rule-breaking, literary conventions, and new media. The essay anthology *Creative Writing Innovations: Breaking Boundaries in the Classroom*, edited by Michael Dean Clark, Trent Hergenrader, and Joseph Rein, takes us to the proverbial Burkean parlor to discuss creative writing classroom workshop (r)evolution via a rich array of sixteen essays, while Adam Koehler's monograph *Composition, Creative Writing Studies, and the Digital Humanities* unpacks more than three decades of scholarship to establish another nascent field, digital creative writing studies. Each volume interrogates the current situation of multiple pedagogical approaches to writing in this crossroads between disciplines. Whether read individually or as a pair, these are books whose time has come. They compellingly advance the rigor of creative writing as an academic discipline with deep ties to the sister world of composition and rhetoric while nudging teacher-writers toward innovative, process-oriented pedagogies and heuristics.

Both books herald the complementarity of composition studies and creative writing studies. To that end, *Creative Writing Innovations* contributes to the development of what Graeme Harper calls the "unworkshop," while decrying rigid demarcations of disciplinarity and genre identification in academe. Ultimately, this book furthers Wendy Bishop and Hans Ostrom's workshop-questioning accomplishment in their landmark 1994 volume, *Colors of a Different Horse: Rethinking Creative Writing Theory and Pedagogy*. Similarly, Koehler finds richness in Bishop-and-Ostrom-inspired crossover scholarship even as he predicts that current delineations between writing and technology will pass away in the next two to three decades. While the edited essay collection takes a heuristic

and thematic approach to pedagogical innovation, Koehler's book takes a purely scholarly and scaffolded approach. That said, readers will note similarities and differences among the theoretical underpinnings of each tome: *Innovations* is grounded in composition theory, literary theory, and creative writing studies, while Koehler's book is grounded in composition theory, modern philosophy, and neurolinguistic theory of creativity as well as thorough understanding of digital platforms and possibilities through which he offers broad, instantly recognizable implications for the collegiate creative writing classroom.

The college, university, or graduate school teacher of creative writing will particularly appreciate the up-to-date and detailed depictions of out-of-the-box objectives, assignments, methods, and their results in *Creative Writing Innovations*. It is a tribute to the theoretical groundedness and accessible writing in this book that even those chapters a reader might be tempted to skip or gloss over because they do not concern her primary genre do offer concepts and approaches that apply more broadly to most creative writing teachers. The essayists join the swelling chorus of those who question the continuing relevance of the old-style creative writing workshop, now over eighty years old in America, pointing out that it has been limited by rigid academic expectations of genre as well as the relatively narrow range of knowledge that student writers generally bring to the act of writing. Now the field of creative writing in the academy has triggered multiple frustrations including students' plot-driven fiction, students' inexperience with rhythm and language, academe's suspicion of the validity and rigor of creative writing studies, academics' hesitation to embrace new media, and teachers' longing to transgress traditional literary conventions as well as cultural boundaries of gender and equity. These difficulties—compounded by the long sociopolitical (r)evolution that seeks to reform or even upend many of the hierarchical and patriarchal structures on which the academy is based—have led to the shared sense among writer-teachers that the workshop must be reimagined. Hegel would be pleased: teacher-writers' dissatisfaction with the workshop has spawned

workshop innovation, and that innovation is finally coming into its own. The essays in *Innovations* demonstrate that these dialogical and dialectical innovations are being tested throughout a range of creative writing classes so that the emerging field can be taken seriously. In the context of the enervation of old systems in collegiate writing, the humanities need innovative curriculum that is tested in the classroom and driven by understanding of theoretical models from the comp-rhet crowd. Such curriculum development is poised to contribute meaningfully to a stubborn culture that grows best when its own power structures are challenged from within.

The hands-on tack of *Innovations* makes it particularly appealing for the creative writing instructor who is thirsty for new approaches to course design and individual assignments. Even grand advice such as Michael Dean Clark's call for "an active course construction that lays out the rules of creative expression in a given environment even as it deconstructs those same ideas" is theoretically grounded and illustrated with detailed course and assignment descriptions (109).

Part One addresses "Rethinking the Workshop," with chapters by Tim Mayers, Graeme Harper, and Derrick Harriell. In Chapter One Mayers lays the groundwork for the essays that follow by describing his multi-genre introductory creative writing course that is built on an "inventive, process-oriented pedagogy" (7). He provides a cogent synopsis of the history of creative writing studies and situates a few landmark texts by Bishop and Ostrom, Joseph Moxley, and others. His emphases set the tone for the book, privileging process over product in sequential assignments that offer common restrictions (a story assignment in which each student must have the same three characters, for instance) and foster an attitude of openness and reflection. Mayers makes the case for consciously designing assignments and rhetorical situations to evoke student resistance in educational experiences that become transformative. Next, Graeme Harper wields classic concepts about the individuality of the writer (which contrast with the position of later essays) in a plea for the "unworkshop" that may or may not

happen in an academic institution, concepts that seem instead to rely upon the synergy of engaged minds to foster artistic growth: the teacher's, the student's, and the collective "mind" created by students in dialogue with each other and with the world. Harper advocates for a model that eschews rigid workshop-circle rules and harkens back to the ancient mentor-student model, with a twist: the unworkshop is so flexible and enmeshed in the principle of individualized curriculum that it is "far more attuned to the networked synaptic post-digital world of the twenty-first century than the workshop can ever be" (30). In this way Harper seems to reimagine Plato for the digital age. Herein we see deep correspondences between *Innovations* and Koehler's book: a privileging of process and discovery as a bedrock pedagogical principle and an emphasis on multiple nodes or synapses of literary creation and production.

In the final essay of Part One of *Creative Writing Innovations*, poet Derrick Harriell presents his poetry collection-preparation workshop for M.F.A. students as a vital gap-filler. By dovetailing his classroom narrative with his personal story of the acceptance and requisite radical revision of his first poetry manuscript (which had "two or three" book possibilities within it), Harriell demonstrates the relevance of revising the portfolio course into sequential assignments that involve hands-on mentoring and collaboration as students craft a debut poetry collection. In this "macro workshop" students benefit from multiple perspectives on what has otherwise been a largely mysterious area of creative production in which it was assumed that students could assemble and curate their own debuts without the fertile space of collaboration that the best creative writing classrooms offer (40). Harriell is less interested, however, in challenging the academy's interest in preparing students for publication than he is in meeting the needs of his students, a segment of the creative writing student population that intends to make a career of publication. Harriell's focus acknowledges and innovates within the confines of M.F.A. programs in creative writing.

Innovations proceed apace in Part Two on genre. Rachel Haley Himmelheber picks up what, for me, is one of the most essential validations of the need for creative writing programs: in writing creatively and thinking critically about their writing, students can increase their own empathy, a crucial skill and "developmental process" for artists and citizens in an antagonistic world (45). Himmelheber presents heuristic details of a research project that involves collaboration, critical thinking, behavioral psychology, and ethics to lead students to write fiction with rich characterizations rather than plot-driven narratives. In a world of disconnection and virtual relationships, of warmongering and exclusion, Himmelheber's students learn that observation of real people and thinking critically about why they act and speak as they do can deepen originality in fictional narratives. Looking for a moment beyond craft, Himmelheber invokes the potential of creative writing to confront and begin the process of healing interpersonal and sociopolitical rifts. Hence creative writing meets the real world, and in the encounter, awakens it. Himmelheber concludes that such experience, while far from simple, is truly transformative and therefore worth the labor of curricular redesign and retesting.

In Part Two on "Expanding Genre," Michael Dean Clark's essay "Sequential Experiences: Course Design as Resistance in Creative Nonfiction" applies Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi's foundational work in creativity theory. Csikszentmihalyi's contention that divergent thinking is essential to innovation leads Clark and others in this collection to propose scaffolded assignments and writing prompts. These assignments require association and fluidity (such as collage) as well as restrictions/obstructions that require sequencing, experimentation, or genre-bending/blurring. Clark demonstrates the interfaces among Csikszentmihalyi's *domain* (knowledge, values, tools), *field* (community, practice, gatekeepers), and *person* (individual artist). He explains that innovators tend to break the rules of the field in order to access the domain, and that such a perspective "demands a sequence of writing situations balancing rule following and breaking in the same spaces" (108). Clark suggests that while resistance spurs creativity, adherence to domain and field to the

extent that the writer is afforded audience and publication or performance opportunities is equally important (108-09). In accordance with Hegelian dialectics, the very messiness of this creative process leads to an "expanded definition of the self" (112).

While incorporating diverse pedagogical approaches, editors Clark, Hergenrader, and Rein build their argument effectively from unit to unit, and Part Three on "Creative Collaborations" is no exception. Beyond facilitating redefinitions of the self, other essays in this collection argue that the experience of creative writing, when liberated from current conceptual and institutional strictures, can serve a dynamic function in the larger culture: one that challenges the status quo politically, institutionally, aesthetically, or in terms of genre and other traditional literary expectations. One way innovative teaching of creative writing challenges the status quo is by demonstrating the relevance of creative collaboration as a chief methodology. Several essays in *Innovations* point out the significance of this idea because it undermines, Foucault-style, the romantic notion that a tragic artist-hero is the reliable, in-control author of a clearly identifiable text, an idea that has been in decline for decades.

But this is not your father's sense of collaboration in the workshop. In order to create this type of innovative course, the innovative professor is immediately pitted against institutional hierarchies and processes that are not designed for out-of-the-classroom teaching. Displacing the creative writing classroom literally (location-based writing) or figuratively (in non-neutral ideological spaces that question extant power structures and literary concepts) also privileges rhetorical situation (place, time, sociopolitical, or institutional situation) over authorial identity (individual artist-as-god). This is one way to use collaboration: not as a means to the kinds of stale critique that the old-model workshop often elicited, but rather as a means of co-creating elements of a creative composition: creative possibilities, multiple points of view, or some other manifestation of meaning, such as metanarrative, character-mediated language, or language-mediated voice.

This co-creation in turn requires a renegotiation of language as medium. As Mary Ann Cain states in her essay "Collaborative Story Writing and the Question of Influence": "I want students to encounter language as if something real is at stake" by immersion in the unfamiliar (121) (one thinks, for instance, of the efficacy of immersion language programs that prepare students for extended stays in foreign nations). Writing in a park or other outdoor setting as a group leads students not only to confront the ethnocentrism often endemic to local histories, but also to experience language itself as mine, yours, or Other's. Cain reminds us that this Bakhtinian perspective on language proves more effective when experienced than when taught by lecture: the practice of literally dislocating the classroom into nature or a city environment requires students to process these new territories as borders to be crossed, and in the process students discover that creative work begins "at the crash sites" where their expectations and assumptions collide with the understanding, ideas, and perspectives of others (122). In the course in which collaboration is both prime directive and *modus operandi*, students learn that collaboration in textual creation can take many forms: language itself is a collaborator; other texts are collaborators (intertextual assignments); students are collaborators. As a consequence of extensive collaboration in the creative space, roles mutate, further disrupting the power differential first modeled by mutations in creative language acquisition. Students are forced out of using their defaults, such as omniscient narrative point of view, and into an experience of multiple subjectivities, and in the process the role of the teacher/coach shifts from judge to "cocomposer" (125).

Two other essays in this collection pursue the place-based idea: "Place-Based Pedagogy and Creative Writing as a Fieldwork Course" by Janelle Adsit and "Our Town: Teaching Creative Writing Students to Love Research and Collaboration" by Cathy Day. Adsit points out that most contemporary fiction lacks a sense of nature, an observation that syncs with the technologically-driven lifestyles students lead. Place-based instruction, Adsit contends, facilitates description and becomes valuable in its inherent challenge to the

bromide that the creative writer should simply "write what you know." She acknowledges persistent obstacles: accessibility is an issue; the structure of such courses counters institutional norms; Native Americans and others may resist the language of the "environmentalist" simply because the concept has always been integral to their way of life. Nevertheless, place-based writing leads to better retention and hands-on learning by opening a space for the interrogation of underlying assumptions about subject, object, cultural and institutional context, and individual identity. Cathy Day then presents her capstone humanities course that is not limited to creative writing, further setting out a list of compelling fiction texts to make the case that research and collaboration foster learning via de-familiarization. Thus are academic stakeholders assured of the rigor of the field of creative writing: as Day recommends, "Perhaps the trick is … to show those who are nervous or skeptical about creative writing that it requires critical thinking, and to show those who are nervous or skeptical about critical writing that it requires a good deal of creative thinking" (176). This drive to apologetics in the field leads naturally to Katherine Haake's personal and professional homage to the legendary poet-rhetorician Wendy Bishop, whose career helped establish the importance, in both the composition classroom and the creative writing workshop, of a "dialogic of inclusion" (181).

Part Four of *Creative Writing Innovations* concludes the book with riveting foci on the challenges of addressing identity in the creative writing classroom. Tonya C. Hegamin writes about embracing "Radical Imperfectionism" as a pedagogical frame and attitude in the multicultural basic writing class populated by first- and second-generation Caribbean and West African students who are in their late twenties and work full-time, about seventy percent of whom are women with children. Hegamin uses flash fiction, intention-setting, and Afrocentric science fiction and leverages taboo-writing as means to engage her students. Her approach is "an indirect hybrid" of "the bridge approach" that Teresa M. Redd and Karen Schuster Webb have called CAT (culturally appropriate teaching); she draws on African-American

students' culture and relies upon Paulo Freire's concepts of cultural literacy to motivate her basic writing students to write Standard Written English (198). Hegamin shares other heuristics such as "The Eavesdropper," an exercise that requires students to use African-American English in the service of character depiction while employing "code-switching," that is, selection of details of dialect to use or to reword so as to craft the language in character-revealing ways. This strategy teaches students at basic literacy levels some higher-level lessons about the intersection of language and identity. While the detailed peer review rubric she includes appears rather conventional, Hegamin has found it useful in teaching elements of creative writing and responsible peer reviewing to basic writers.

Strategic character-building innovations lead into issues of gender identity, which have never been more at the fore in the classroom than they are today. Ching-In Chen shares her experience of coming out as genderqueer while *en medias res* a Ph.D. program to illustrate the importance of supporting gender nonconformists in the classroom. Chen acknowledges the tricky territory of such negotiation in the college classroom, where it is not generally as easy or natural to address as in a community-based setting. Nevertheless, she calls for creative writing teachers to form the *avant garde* that leads the rest of the academy to practices of greater inclusivity. Chen expands students' understanding of identity and gender as a relevant nexus between the writer and the world. Finally, Prageeta Sharma addresses use of *The Waste Land* to illustrate "What We Do With Authorial Voices and the Postcolonial Body in the Writing Workshop" (223). Sharma cites Leslie Fiedler's campaign to "advocate for alternative discourses in reading" and Brooker and Bentley's premise that *TWL* focuses self-consciously on its own text as an act of reading (226-27). She teaches the poem as a way to illustrate the inherent relevance of literary theory to the act of creative writing. This final section of *Creative Writing Innovations* clearly shows a variety of influences by cultural notions of identity on the creative writing classroom and explores how the classroom can shape writers'

understanding of identity, texts, theory, and creative writing as a social act.

It takes courage to devote such intensive and ongoing energy to outlying pedagogical approaches in the face of ingrained institutional and psychological resistance to methodologies that challenge the structure of traditional creative writing classes in nearly every way. And the correspondences with composition theory are evident: writer-scholars are investing years in creating and refining atypical course assignments and syllabi that are designed to force the budding of young writers, many of whom are first-generation, women, LGBTQI, immigrants, refugees, or people of color whose sense of "Other"-ness is acknowledged and supported in innovative classrooms that actively engage students in critical and creative thinking.

Adam Koehler's *Composition, Creative Writing Studies, and the Digital Humanities* considers creative writing innovation in terms of the "electromagnetic imaginary" (96) in an intricate theoretical text that explores the tension between technological culture and the conditions needed to produce art. Like *Creative Writing Innovations*, this volume critiques and updates the creative writing workshop; however, Koehler considers creative writing studies an established field and therefore seeks to establish the place of creative writing in the emerging field of the digital humanities. To this end Koehler reviews "Digital Pasts" in Chapter One, defines digital creative writing studies in Chapter Two, explores "Ideology, Subjectivity, and the Creative Writer in the Digital Age" in Chapter Three, and considers broader implications for institutional practices in Chapter Four. However, Koehler limits his craft considerations to the realm of fiction with which he is most familiar, with the exception of general mentions of the role of digital poetics in creating new spaces for literary production and experience.

Koehler sees digital writing as a way toward the linguistic and form-al innovations that creative writing teachers hope to see in student writing. After all, Koehler argues, digital writing is a valid way to avoid what Ken Macrorie called "Engfish," or academically distorted language. In the context of new media, we see a

pedagogical path forward into an innovative, productive, symbiotic, and multimodal approach to creative writing. Such emerging artistic forms as Netprov ("the 'live' improvisation of storytelling across social media") (11), Twitter lit., interactive/hypertext fiction, video games, and digital poetry are prime examples.

As Tim Mayer notes in the foreword to Koehler's text, the traditional workshop's tendency to focus on the surface of a piece can "bog down" the classroom and "blind us to the breathtaking and dynamic scope of all that writing is and can be" (xi). Indeed, throughout this well-informed monograph, Koehler aims to elucidate how the digital humanities can refine the relationship between composition studies and creative writing studies. Three of the scholars Koehler cites as experts in the crossover between composition-rhetoric and creative writing studies contributed chapters to *Creative Writing Innovations* as well: Tim Mayers, Katherine Haake, and Graeme Harper. Other critics and fiction writers he invokes include Wendy Bishop, Paul Kameen, Patrick Bizzaro, Paul Dawson, Kelly Ritter, Stephanie Vanderslice, Dianne Donnelly, and Douglas Hesse. Koehler identifies several landmark essay collections as paving the groundwork for crossover scholarship, including *Creative Writing Pedagogies for the Twenty-First Century* (dedicated to Wendy Bishop), edited by Alexandria Peary and Tom C. Hunley in 2015, which was modeled after *A Guide to Composition Pedagogies* edited by Gary Tate, Amy Rupiper, and Kurt Schick in 2001.

Writing has always been mediated by technology, Koehler emphasizes. Furthermore, creative writing studies is following the narrative arc drawn by composition studies. Citing D.G. Myers' *The Elephants Teach: Creative Writing Since 1880*, Koehler points out that composition and creative writing in higher education actually "share a long and complex history" that dates back to the nineteenth century; for instance, Harvard's "Advanced Composition" classes of the early nineteenth century were actually courses in creative writing (7). Koehler argues that creative writing studies shares common roots with composition studies in the expressivism of writer-teachers like Donald Murray and Ken Macrorie, who

argued for cross-disciplinarity and envisioned the capacity for creative and expressive assignments to cross university power dynamics. Expressivists, in their valuing of truth and the individual, invited students and teachers alike to examine voice, form, and meaning while arguing for a stronger place for creative assignments in the composition classroom. Crossovers grew in the twenty-first century, emphasizing community, collaboration, visual rhetoric, multimodal composition, and multiliteracy; here Koehler cites Gregory Ulmer, Collin Brooke, Byron Hawk, Alexander Reid, and Jeff Rice, theorists who yoke digital means of composition with sociopolitical discourse. Other key predecessors Koehler invokes frequently are Wendy Bishop and Hans Ostrom, David Starkey, and Joseph Moxley, the writer-editors of foundational texts in crossover scholarship. Koehler argues for a single discipline of "writing studies" (2) that he depicts as a "double helix," with the two fields intertwined, reflexive, constantly turning in opposition to conventions (8).

Koehler, like the editors of *Creative Writing Innovations*, clearly sees implications for "Genre, process, and the production of knowledge" (112). Citing Kenneth Goldsmith's Uncreative Writing Class at the University of Pennsylvania, which seems similar to Graeme Harper's "unworkshop," Koehler demonstrates that a creative writing course need "not [be] defined by the genres it aims to reproduce, but rather the 'strategies' it aims to employ" (112). Goldsmith's course opens up possibilities for creative writing studies to understand "what it means to produce imaginative texts in digital environments" (113). A few of the many concrete examples of these digital possibilities that Koehler invokes are Michael Joyce's classic hypertext short story "Afternoon, A Story" and Shelly Jackson's cyberfeminist "Patchwork Girl," published electronically on StorySpace in 1996. An apocalyptic and radical reworking of the tale of Frankenstein's bride, this hypertext story shows the protagonist patching herself together after being molested, ripped apart, and reassembled time and again. This act of frustrated reconstruction of the female body, a tale written in digital environs, can be seen to represent Everywoman with her

complex history: multiple oppressions, assaults, voices, identities. The reimaginings, reconstitutions of self, writing, and Other in "Patchwork Girl" are made possible in part by the shared needle and thread of the cyber world.

To his credit, Koehler underscores the importance of critical thinking about media, audience, and reader awareness in digital environments. Koehler argues that concepts of creative production should supersede hermeneutics of literary interpretation (135), resulting in production of knowledge, creative innovation, and new ways of writing, reading, and publishing that far transcend the idea of textual consumption. Koehler shows how postmodern fascinations with participatory consciousness of readers, the displacement of authorial authority, and both aesthetic and sociopolitical transgression of conventions are leading the humanities into the paradigm shift of creative composition across media. Insightfully, Koehler expertly brings us back around, time and again, to the vitality of ethics and theory in multiple media. For instance, in making his case for teaching creative writing in the digital context, he returns to Heidegger's negation of distinctions between artistry and talent. Themes such as the ethos of humility required in downplaying authorial control, the ethos of innovation in service of discovery, and the ethos of empathy, all of which are highlighted in *Innovations*, find full measure in Koehler's book.

Creative Writing Innovations and *Composition, Creative Writing Studies, and the Digital Humanities* expand on the work of the Association of Writers and Writing Programs (AWP) and the new Creative Writing Studies Organization (CWSO), both of which are helping refine creative writing studies and expand conceptions about and teaching of creative writing. Both of these books view the complementary fields of composition studies and creative writing studies as working from personal reinvention (expressivism) toward societal reinvention (identity studies, new media, and the digital humanities). Both are grounded in writing, literary, and pedagogical theories as well as contemporary creative texts that challenge students' (and the academy's) concepts of process, publication, genre, identity, and creative writing in general.

Yet, the concepts of readership and the value and social meaning of publication differ in these two books. While most of the essays in *Creative Writing Innovations* seek to subvert the primacy of publication readiness in the creative writing classroom, particularly those centered around the undergraduate classroom, Koehler is more interested in expanding our concept of publication and creative writing production to embrace digital creation, production, and reading, with digital reading viewed as an element of co-creation. Both volumes, however, value experimentation, fluidity, inclusivity, genre-blurring, and teacher flexibility as they reimagine the discipline of creative writing, situating the field in the trifecta of composition studies, the humanities, and digital studies. Most heartening to the creative writing instructor is the commitment of these writers to transformative education that balances innovative approaches to teaching literary elements with boundary-breaking creative processes and media.

Guglielmo, Letizia, and Lynée Lewis Gaillet, eds. *Contingent Contingent Faculty Publishing in Community: Case Studies for Successful Collaborations*. Palgrave, 2015. 138 pp. Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-137-49161-9.

Reviewed by Kristeen Cherney

Working in academia is undoubtedly a challenge in terms of balancing teaching, scholarship, and service. Contingent faculty—adjunct instructors, non-tenure track (NTT) lecturers, and graduate students—are arguably at an even greater disadvantage in terms of time, compensation, and resources. With increasing teaching loads taken on in an effort to make a living wage, the thought of doing research, scholarship, and academic publishing can be quite daunting.

Yet the situation might not be so dire, as argued throughout the edited collection *Contingent Faculty Publishing in Community: Case Studies for Successful Collaborations* by Letizia Guglielmo and Lynée Lewis Gaillet. This collection consists of eight full essays and four vignettes from professors, adjunct faculty, graduate students, and scholars from around the country. Offering creative yet practical methods for getting published as a contingent faculty member, the editors also respond to a call by the Boyer Commission to create scholarship relevant both inside and outside the classroom. All of the essay contributions, as the editors note, discuss "ways in which faculty members can work together and in the process redefine faculty work and better serve their students and local communities" (ix). This collection is specifically written for contingent faculty.

The concept of community is key here to understanding the collection. Yet the authors of the essays do not pretend that the publishing environment is easy. In the first essay, "The New Faculty Majority: Changing Conditions and a Changing Scholarly Publication Environment," Eileen E. Schell at first relays a seemingly bleak, yet realistic insight into current trends in higher education: the growth of contingent faculty and administrators. She explains that "as higher education expanded its reach and opened its doors to many students

in late 1960s and 1970s, many institutions experienced precipitous growth and hired contingent faculty as a stop-gap measure to cover the demand for teachers of lower-division courses" (7). This in turn laid the groundwork for a surge in contingent faculty whose primary purpose—from an institutional viewpoint—was to teach, and not to engage in scholarly research. Schell notes:

> As the layers of administration have increased, the layers of faculty with stable working conditions and decent pay have decreased, and we have seen over the years raising tuition and fee rates for students as state legislatures continue to shift responsibility for higher education from the taxpayers and the state to individual students and their families. (8)

For readers, this first chapter could either discourage or reaffirm their feelings about contingency in higher education. However, Schell goes on to say that "just as we need to shore up and rebuild our nation's crumbling infrastructure—bridges, railways, and roads—we need to shore up our crumbling faculty infrastructure to maintain and advance our system of higher education" (9). This would, of course, involve opportunities for all faculty to engage in scholarship. She asks whether "publication be pursued for intrinsic motivations and the knowledge creation that might gain no immediate tangible professional reward" (11), noting that "academic publication is material, intellectual, and emotional labor" (12). Indeed, the perspective of many overworked faculty might be one of complacence about academic publication.

Moving beyond the state of academic publication and contingency, the following chapters discuss ways instructors can get published without sacrificing time devoted to teaching. Kimberly Harrison and Ben Lauren's "Casting NTT Faculty as Practitioner-Researchers: Using Research Opportunities to Enhance Teaching, Service, and Administrative Assignments" describes just this scenario. Here Harrison and Lauren discuss the intrinsic ties with scholarly research and teaching. They write that the key differences between practitioners and scholars/researchers are that the former apply

knowledge, while the latter create it (22). Without the creation of new knowledge in the classroom, our composition pedagogy could certainly fall flat. This explains the crucial ties between scholarship and teaching: While scholarship influences teaching, teaching can create new scholarship.

Though scholarly research and publication is needed for continuing pedagogical innovations, Harrison and Lauren offer some cautionary points. First, they claim that "the danger of developing your scholarly ethos is that you might get more work than you can responsibly handle" (30). While gaining multiple scholarly opportunities is exciting both personally and professionally, the time commitment involved can derail the whole process. This is especially a concern for contingent faculty who might work longer hours.

Specifically, Lauren identifies what he calls a "planning fallacy," which means "that many academics plan (and want) to do more than can be realistically accomplished" (32). For instructors, this can perhaps raise further questions of how faculty can realistically plan scholarship opportunities—are these really planned after all, or do they come up spontaneously in the classroom? Depending on the project at hand, IRB could pose additional challenges.

The next three essays discuss other ways that current work obligations can also be utilized as opportunities for scholarship. In "Knotworking with the National Writing Project: A Method for Professionalizing Contingent Faculty," Stephanie West-Puckett, Kerri Bright Flinchbaugh, and Matthew S. Herrmann discuss the ways in which the National Writing Project brought about opportunities for collaboration and a way of untying the "knot" in which contingent faculty members often feel they are trapped. The authors share reflections about their collaborative efforts and how they feel writing should be an opportunity to work together.

In their essay "Legal Tender or Counterfeit Currency: Organizing a Conference off the Tenure Track," Gwendolynne Reid, Bridget R. Kozlow, Susan Miller-Cochran, and Chris Tomelli offer a behind-the-scenes analysis of a recently organized conference led by NTT faculty. They also explore the question of whether such

efforts are worthwhile in the increasingly competitive academic marketplace. While the authors do not advocate for conference organization and chairing with no end goals in sight, they do highlight some of the benefits. Among these include, "interaction with writing scholars from around the country, intense reading on a particular topic, and collaboration with colleagues in one's home department and with academic publishers" (67).

Next, Chris Blankenship's essay "Opportunities in Assessment: Making Your Service Your Scholarship" suggests how instructors can make service, teaching, and research go hand-in-hand. As Blankenship points out, "assessment has come to signify an onerous process that often seems disconnected from our daily work with students" (79). While assessment is often an arduous process, Blankenship argues that it can potentially lead to research opportunities, which can then in turn question our traditional assessment tools and make room for improvements.

Of course, time is of the essence for tenured or tenure-track faculty in terms of finding research and publication opportunities within teaching, but Blankenship points out how this can be even more challenging for non-tenure track teachers. The classes taught by NTT instructors "are often lower-level, general education offerings that represent some of the most heavily-scrutinized and assessed courses, yet they simultaneously comprise the courses and faculty receiving the least institutional support" (79). Like other authors in this collection, Blankenship encourages a focus on research opportunities that already exist in the classroom, a key takeaway for instructors at all levels of their careers.

Overall, a large argument made by the collection is that getting published does not have to become an undertaking of one's own. Essays such as Julia A. Watson and Leslie Worrell Christianson's "Born-Digital Work: Opportunities for Collaboration and Career Growth" and Melissa Keith, Jennifer Black, Stephanie Cox, and Jill Marie Heney's "Into Active Voice: Seeking Agency through Collaborative Scholarship" argue that collaboration can bring about realistic publication opportunities while also building a sense of community among contingent faculty. As a bonus, these two essays

were written collaboratively, thus serving as potential models for others who wish to embark on a collaborative project.

Digital and multimodal work is indeed part of the future of writing studies. According to Watson and Christianson, "contingent faculty may risk missing an opportunity to move their careers and scholarship forward if they do not participate in born-digital work" (103). While acknowledging that not all instructors may consider themselves "techy," Watson and Christianson also note the great deal of research and scholarship opportunities within digital spaces. Indeed, Watson and Christianson acknowledge the trendiness of digital education, writing how "enrollment in online programs has grown at a greater rate than in education overall" (95). Rather than being intimidated by the idea of born-digital work, they call for us to embrace these opportunities for teaching *and* publication opportunities.

Of course, online teaching brings with it challenges, especially for contingent faculty. It is important to determine whether the teaching materials are copyrighted in an online course (especially if an instructor's contract is work-for-hire). As the authors note: "Unfortunately, the teacher exception does not hold water when it comes to content created in the context of online teaching" (97). This can create difficulties—if the institution owns an instructor's assignments created for an online course, copyright issues may result. As Watson and Christianson note: "The control and ownership issues surrounding online learning signify a potential barrier to innovation" (99). Indeed, if an instructor is not able to do anything with their work outside of an online classroom space, then they are unlikely to put as much effort into creating new assignments designated for the particular course—why would they, if the assignments could become copyright of the institution?

Finally, the authors discuss the future role of the peer review process when it comes to digital scholarship. They write:

> Contingent faculty should be aware that born-digital publication may sometimes be deemed nonscholarly (at best) or unscholarly (at worst). Critics balk at the absence of peer

> review, but some scholars argue that the open review model provides ample review from the community of practice. (101)

The perception of digital publishing is indeed changing. *Kairos* and *Digital Rhetoric Collaborative* are just two examples of digital scholarly journals that are as valuable as their traditional (print) counterparts. This raises the question of other digital opportunities, such as online popular sources, and whether they can garner some merit for instructors looking to get published.

Keith, Black, Cox, and Heney suggest that collaboration ought to be is a mainstream means to publish in academia. Regarding their own experiences, the authors write: "Essentially, we stopped waiting for people within the power structure to help us and claimed the right to help ourselves" (109). Instead of waiting for tenure and the subsequent opportunities for scholarship, they found their own opportunities by working together. Collaboration, the authors argue, is perhaps even more of an opportunity for contingent faculty, who write "[b]ecause we are free from tenure-bound expectations of publishing, we are free to ignore hierarchy and outside expectations" (115). Through a discussion of their own collaborative efforts, the authors also discuss how they "were willing to take those risks precisely because of our contingent status" (112). Aside from a lower perceived risk with collaboration, the authors also point out how the process can foreground scholarly partnerships. They state that "the marginal status of contingent faculty does not have to be a source of dissatisfaction and disengagement: if we come together with like-minded colleagues, it can instead be a source of opportunity" (107).

Despite their innovation and strong arguments via collaboration, one might question whether this is a sound plan if a contingent faculty member ever wants to transition into a tenure-track position. In addition to collaborative work, many institutions encourage individual publications, especially if an instructor wants to be hired on as a tenure-track faculty member. However, the authors seem to dismiss this point, writing:

> Although contingent faculty do not have the opportunity to work toward tenure, we can work toward a scholarly reputation, and, like our tenure-track (TT) colleagues, can use research and publication as a means of confirming our scholarly identity, which can lead to greater satisfaction with our work. (108)

Indeed, this could be a great solution for contingent faculty who do not plan on moving into tenured positions.

The last essay in the collection offers contingent faculty strategies to stay focused on writing so they can make their way to publication. In "Applications: A Practical Guide for Employing Habits of Mind to Foster Effective Writing Activities," Nicholas Behm and Duane Roen offer some tips to help scholars get into the writing mindset. They argue that "this process of writing to inquire invokes the rhetorical canon of invention in that it inherently encourages writers to seek diligently for ways in which they can contribute to the scholarly conversation on a topic" (120) and that "effective and productive writers cultivate and exercise persistence when writing about difficult, research-intensive academic topics" (124). In a nutshell, Behm and Roen argue here that one must push through and make some sacrifices to get published—circling us back to the first essay by Schell.

One of the questions raised by the Watson and Christianson piece is answered here in terms of writing outside of traditional academic publications. Behm and Roen call on faculty to "write for the general public. If every faculty member wrote even occasionally for the general public, citizens and policy makers would possess a better understanding of what academics do and why that work benefits the community" (129). This is certainly kairotic as program budgets are potentially at greater risk when the public lacks an understanding about what academics really *do* and *why* they are valuable outside of the academy.

Contingent Faculty Publishing in Community also includes four vignettes published throughout the book. Among these include Victoria Armour-Hileman's "Gender, Contingency, and the

Productivity Puzzle," Meghan Griffin's "Symbiotic Collaboration and a $0.00 Budget," Tiffany Bourelle's "Working Smarter: Mentoring and Scholarly Teaching," and Marcia Bost's "Discourse Groups and Scholarly Voice." Collectively, these shorter pieces offer personal insights and advice on overcoming the many challenges contingent faculty face when trying to get their research published.

Overall, *Contingent Faculty Publishing in Community* offers practical tips for writing teachers who want to get published—from graduate students to adjunct faculty working at various institutions and non-tenure track instructors with large classes and workloads. It can at first be discouraging to read the current state of contingency, yet the majority of the essays offer faculty the methods to break through the system without letting their own scholarly voices get lost in the shuffle. In a nutshell, the whole idea here is to "work smarter, not harder."

Emerson, Lisa. *The Forgotten Tribe: Scientists as Writers*. University Press of Colorado, 2017. 240 pp. ISBN-13: 978-1607326434

Reviewed by Christina Montgomery

In "The Good Writer: Virtue Ethics and the Teaching of Writing," John Duffy writes, "to write is to make choices, and to teach writing is to teach rationales for making such choices" (229). Duffy explores those choices and how they inform virtue ethics. He argues that writing teachers are already teaching virtue but need to understand this aspect of their teaching in a more meaningful way. By doing so, Duffy suggests not only will teachers better understand themselves and their practices, but they will also help students become more powerful writers. Michael Carter also argues in "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines" that by having a deeper understanding of practice, teachers can help students get a better sense of the connection between knowledge creation and writing. He suggests a "division between writing in the disciplines and writing outside the disciplines" and argues that this division prevents us from recognizing more effective writing practices within specific disciplines (385). Carter posits that this division is related to how faculty learn to write in their own disciplines and that "they are unable to see that writing itself is specific to the discipline" (385). Duffy and Carter are both trying to get at the importance of *how* teachers of writing in various fields come to their attitudes about knowledge and learning and believe this directly influences their own writing and teaching practices. This conversation about knowledge, writing, and teaching is an important one in academia and directly affects not only writing in the disciplines but also writing outside academia. Lisa Emerson's book, *The Forgotten Tribe: Scientists as Writers*, builds on Duffy and Carter's ideas and the larger conversation about writer identity by examining a collection of literacy narratives and uncovering the way scientists see themselves as writers and professionals.

In her book, Emerson aims to both dispel the widely-held notion that scientists are not writers and to better comprehend how scientists' views of their writing histories and experiences shape both their future success as writers and how those histories better inform how to teach and engage future scientists through writing. Over a period of six years, Emerson collected 106 interviews of scientists from three groups: senior scientists, emerging scientists, and doctoral students. Emerson acknowledges that this book is not "a typical scholarly book" but a collection of stories from the scientists' points of view. This genre, she believes, is important in arriving at a new way of identifying scientists' relationships with writing. In the book, she provides extended, transcribed, and edited narratives of nineteen of the interviewed scientists. Emerson organizes the interviews into five groups, which are set up as chapters: "Public-focused writing, the reluctant writer, the writing community, the development of the scientific writer, and creative writing" (23). Each chapter is a collection of three to five narratives that are representative of that theme. Emerson arranges the text in this way to "invite the reader into the scientists' experience of writing and learning to write within a disciplinary context" (23).

In the final chapter, Emerson analyzes the literacy stories of the scientists to identify patterns and trends and to understand the effect of scientists' views of themselves as writers. First, she categorizes the scientists' writing experiences into four quadrants based on themes she observes in the narratives: "Quadrant 1: Early Influences" addresses childhood and undergraduate experiences with writing, "Quadrant 2: Learning to Write Science" concerns writing in graduate school, "Quadrant 3: Attitudes" focuses on the emotional effect of writing, and "Quadrant 4: Beliefs" relates to identity and how the scientists see their roles. Within the quadrants, Emerson then correlates responses based on the scientists' assigned group (senior scientists, emerging scientists, or doctoral students). In addition, she looks at writing support by gender.

Emerson's study has four significant implications: (1) learning to write in the sciences begins in K-12 and influences scientists' attitudes about writing; (2) despite WAC/WID curriculums, and

the research which supports writing in the disciplines, the scientists felt that they did not learn the ways of writing as undergraduates; (3) mentorship in doctoral programs is not giving graduate students the necessary writing support; and (4) scientists stay narrowly focused on academic writing instead of venturing into other disciplines or into the public sphere (202-07). Based on these findings, Emerson details several potential implications for writing instruction, but perhaps most important is re-seeing writing in the sciences not as an outside disciplinary practice but as a complementary one. Doing this, Emerson suggests, has "exciting possibilities for collaboration and pedagogy" (208). She also proposes implications for student writers in the sciences, including the importance of their voices in the discipline and reconsidering their own attitudes and beliefs about writing.

This book is a valuable resource for writing program administrators; faculty who teach writing in any discipline; K-12 educators, particularly those in English and science; and students who have an interest in science. Emerson's findings suggest that having positive experiences with writing in childhood and in the pre-doctorate phase will result in scientists having better attitudes about writing and being more productive as writers in their careers (185). This finding alone is enough to make this book a must-read for educators and students. Teachers, in turn, will better understand how they can work with writing in the sciences throughout a student's educational career. Students will better comprehend writing as a disciplinary necessity and see the value of advocating for writing support.

Overall, Emerson's text uncovers new ways of seeing and understanding the scientist as a writer. She dispels the stereotype of the scientist as someone who can't write by portraying the scientist as an individual who has experiences, beliefs, and attitudes about writing that are not dissimilar from those of writers in any other field. Emerson's presentation of "the researcher as storyteller" works effectively to show readers the mindset of these scientists as writers, and many readers will see their own struggles with writing mirrored in these narratives (19). Emerson's text is an

important contribution to the conversation about how identity as a writer and one's history and experiences with writing directly influence writing success in one's professional life, whether that be in the public sphere or as an educator.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

JTW's New Guest-Edited Section on K-12 Classroom Practices: Teacher to Teacher

In the spring 2018 issue of *JTW* we will launch a new section entitled Teacher to Teacher, devoted to K-12 reflections written by and for K-12 teachers. This new section will be guest edited by Brandie Bohney, a former Carmel High School teacher (Carmel, IN) who is now completing her Ph.D. at Bowling Green State University. The theme for the spring 2018 issue is failure in the writing classroom. As writing instructors, we struggle semester after semester to help students understand that first drafts are never final drafts, that it's okay to take risks in their writing, that expression of meaning is their primary goal, and that expression usually takes several tries. Yet in a time where student success is measured in terms of testing proficiency rather than academic growth, there seems to be little room to allow students to fail or to make them feel safe in doing so.

Guest Editor Brandie Bohney invites K-12 teachers to reflect on their own classroom activities, policies, or practices that create space for failure in their writing classrooms.

- How do you allow students to fail?
- How do you encourage them to do so?
- How do you work failure into curricula often centered entirely on success?
- How do you share your own failures with your students?
- How do you make failure safe in your classroom and in their writing?
- How do you encourage students who feel they are failures because of past experiences?
- How do you balance students' concerns about failure with the necessity of failure?

Brief submissions (roughly 750-1,200 words) that reflect on this theme should be sent as a Word document to jtw@iupui.edu with the subject heading "K-12 Reflection." The deadline for submissions for our spring 2018 issue is January 15, 2018. All submissions will be reviewed by the Guest Editor in consultation with the *JTW* Editor. Contributors will be notified of the Editors' decisions by the end of February 2018.

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