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CALL FOR ARTICLES

We welcome manuscripts of 20-30 pages, double spaced, on topics related to basic and ESL writing, broadly interpreted. Submissions should follow current MLA guidelines. Manuscripts are refereed anonymously. To assure impartial review, include name(s), affiliation(s), mailing and e-mail addresses, and a short biographical note for publication on the cover page only. The second page should include the title but no author identification, an abstract of about 150 words, and a list of four to five key words. Endnotes should be kept to a minimum. It is the author's responsibility to obtain written permission for including excerpts from student writing, especially as it entails IRB review (which should be noted in an endnote).

Contributions should be submitted as Word document attachments via e-mail to: Hope.Parisi@kbcc.cuny.edu, and Cheryl.Smith@baruch.cuny.edu. You will receive a confirmation of receipt; a report on the status of your submission will follow in eight to ten weeks.

All manuscripts must focus clearly on basic writing and must add substantively to the existing literature. We seek manuscripts that are original, stimulating, well-grounded in theory, and clearly related to practice. Work that reiterates what is known or work previously published will not be considered.

We invite authors to write about such matters as classroom practices in relation to basic writing or second-language theory; cognitive and rhetorical theories and their relation to basic writing; social, psychological, and cultural implications of literacy; discourse theory; grammar, spelling, and error analysis; linguistics; computers and new technologies in basic writing; assessment and evaluation; writing center practices; teaching logs and the development of new methodologies; and cross-disciplinary studies combining basic writing with such fields as psychology, anthropology, journalism, and art. The journal is in active dialogue with the scholarship of new literacies, translingualism, multimodality, digital rhetorics and online and social-media impacts as per intersectional writing identity formations.

The term “basic writer” is used with wide diversity today, and critiques the institutions and contexts that place students in basic writing and standardize academic language, as much as it may illumine the subtexts of individuals’ writing practices. To help readers, therefore, authors should describe clearly the student population and settings which they are discussing.

We particularly encourage a variety of manuscripts: speculative discussions which venture fresh interpretations; essays which draw heavily on student writing as supportive evidence for new observations; research written in non-technical language; and collaborative writings which provocatively debate more than one side of a central controversy. A familiarity with the journal is the best way to determine whether JBW is your next venue for scholarship.

EDITORS' COLUMN

I am coming to think of Basic Writing as like a voice in oscillation, a swash line indicating the past of ecologies interacting, a marker both reflective of influences—narratives and counternarratives—and perhaps something in itself. Yet that something, if waveforms or swash lines are any indication, cannot be known except for the interactions (not long staying present) within their frame. How to define that frame?

As *JBW* readers will verify, a good many Editors' Columns of recent years have spun around the theme of definition and transitions in Basic Writing. A set of courses in a department's line-up of courses; a pile of referrals to the writing center for help with students' language use; advisement focused on remedial placement—all redundant signs and practices attesting to some version of Basic Writing in the room. As departments shift support for basic writers toward accelerated writing, mainstreaming, and other means, the "where" and "how" of Basic Writing grow less defined. Rightly, calls for equity and social justice in writing programs have dimmed the narrative of equal opportunity as founding principle for skills acquisition, no neutral project, under open admissions. We are sounding new waves of realization and change to amplify access and justice. *Where we are now* among the markers of BW history may be notes to study and collect only as we go. We might see Basic Writing history, in other words, as still being written.

The articles of this issue approach the task of defining Basic Writing by spotlighting acts of investment that, in the *doing* of Basic Writing, create experiences and interactions for exemplifying Basic Writing still on the move. New pedagogies; affective and antiracist priorities; the circularity of student narratives; and creative convergences among a unique set of BW stakeholders in a large urban university: this issue's topics reflect the work of instructors filling Basic Writing spaces to reflect what *more* they want Basic Writing to bring or to be. In our first article, "Dada and Surrealism in the Composition Classroom: A Transgenre Approach to Basic Writing Pedagogy," Kristin LaFollette lays down an immensely rich, theorized arts pedagogy in her Basic Writing classroom. This pedagogy is all about possibility and transformation: Taking the Dada artists and the Surrealists as the base for students opening themselves broadly to writing, LaFollette links theories and methodologies of multimodalism, interdisciplinarity, and Sirc-ian "box logic" to reinvest the Basic Writing courses she teaches with value for transfer and personal renewal. Conceiving writing as so embracive helps LaFollette to engender a "transgenre" writing theory, after transgenre artist and scholar Ames

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Hawkins, whose work LaFollette puts into conversation with the Dadaists—now for a new era. The result is a several-semester self-study of LaFollette's teaching toward a transgenre writing-arts practice across three Basic Writing classes, shared here along with stunning samples of students' artwork. (For full color renderings, please view the article online.)

Our second article, "Affect, Fear, and Openness in an Antiracist Writing Classroom," by Amy D. Williams, Sarah Kate Johnson, Anika Shumway, and Dennis L. Eggett, widens the arena of Basic Writing research by focusing on a high school seniors' Language Arts classroom where, pivotally, writing identities and dispositions are still forming. Following Kevin Roozen's own expansive approach into Basic Writing research in crediting students' diverse and generative literate histories—this, as a key to understanding so-called basic writers—Williams and coauthors identify fear and affect as subtexts of writing instruction at a time when many instructors have felt compelled to revise their curriculums for antiracism. While the coauthors anticipated at the start of their project that the effects of fear and affect would reveal themselves as endemic to this—as to many other—high school Language Arts classroom(s), they did not expect they would be studying an antiracist curriculum and pedagogy taking shape in the moment. Noting a "high school writing curriculum and pedagogy designed to help students recognize, resist, and oppose racist structures and practices," the coauthors scrutinize key elements of an antiracist writing classroom in motion. This endeavor is one of starts and stops, marking the power of openness to decrease students' fear about writing as well as the risk of a White habitus arising to "blind[ ] [teachers] to the full affective ecology of their classrooms." In all these senses, readers discern an affective, antiracist pedagogy for Basic Writing as a critical investment in teaching.

At the same time instructors can be found to invest Basic Writing spaces with pedagogies that foster openness and possibility, we must guard against a certain *over*investing of these spaces, as what can likely emerge may be less revelatory of our students and more reflective of our own presumptions as well as those of our policies and institutions. Our third article, "When Bootstraps Break: Re-examining Assumptions about the Symbolic Capital of Immigrant Students' Persistence Narratives," by Emily K. Suh, Barrie E. McGee, and Sam Owens, speaks caution to this point of how academic authority can sometimes overtake students' narratives, derailing the flexibility students need to shape and reshape these narratives toward goals students define for themselves. The article charts the progress of two students of immigrant backgrounds whose narratives of persistence, even trauma, acquire

a certain academic—or, after Pierre Bourdieu, *symbolic*—capital, presumptively fitted to instructors' and tutors' independent sense of these students. These attachments are found to impress student identities, and, following Helen Oughton's investment theory, "'impose [certain] cultural arbitraries in deciding what 'counts' as funds of knowledge" (Oughton), or, as Suh et al. add, "how to value students' experiences." Ultimately, one student of the study, Labiba, becomes discouraged about her prospects for college success, wanting to drop out; she feels her narrative now dissociated from earlier affirmations of enduring hardships as a refugee. Another student, Olan, attributes his competence in English to innate talent and diligence, having "studied British language in school. . . I read and work and just practice." Apparently, for a Yazidi who served as a US Army interpreter in Iraq, a narrative of natural language talent is too facile. His instructors and tutors are disposed to prompt the telling and retelling of his *persistence* through war and relocation instead. In both cases, theories of investment around student language competence help to highlight not only the experiences students bring to their learning, but also how those experiences *qua* narrative can be used up, skewed, or ignored.

Finally, our fourth article, "Encouraging Student Voices: Toward a Voice-Based and Antiracist Culture from the MA Program to Basic Writing," by Elizabeth Baez and Rosanne Carlo, takes voice as both metaphor and statement for wide-ranging change within a large urban English department, at College of Staten Island CUNY, that includes Basic Writing. Baez and Carlo set out the problem of voice in writing programs for undergraduates, where students may receive limited latitude for expression through code-switching, and in graduate programs as potential sites for redrawing the lines of professional culture and community. They link shortfalls of justice in writing programs to an inability and unwillingness to embrace the range of students' voices, an experience that Baez recounts first-hand as a former undergraduate and graduate student. Baez's thesis project for her MA in English at CSI, guided by Carlo as program director, forms the base of the article and highlights Baez and Carlo's many collaborations. Their renewed vision for their department encompasses a great deal: social justice-oriented professional development led or supported by MA students for all faculty; MA students mentored in composition who serve as instructors of basic writers; and reading and working groups now hosted on a regular basis. Change, says Baez and Carlo, is happening: "Readers might wish for some sort of proclamation, or wide-sweeping evidence, that the CSI Writing Program has changed, that we now have persuaded faculty to value students' voices, their rights to

their own language, and to work against deficit stances in their thinking." But, they urge, "that's not the case." Rather the change they see "is in the conversations we have with faculty," broadened to include code-meshing and many equity issues. In all, Baez and Carlo point to the creative, impactful potential of investments laid down in BW space.

In this time of change for Basic Writing, we may find ourselves searching to identify what of Basic Writing are the keynotes for holding on to long-term—to help define Basic Writing and mark it as a thing in itself, a supportive presence in the room. As the articles of this issue suggest, going forward we may not so much be occupied by an entity as much as by a *doing*, a critical reinvestment of our teaching and professional spaces.

--**Hope Parisi** and **Cheryl C. Smith**

Dada and Surrealism in the Composition Classroom: A Transgenre Approach to Basic Writing Pedagogy

Kristin LaFollette

ABSTRACT: The Dada and Surrealist movements are known for producing work that challenges reader-viewers' perceptions of reality. These movements also prompted creators to experiment with unexpected mediums and materials, and this can be seen through the intersection of visual art and writing. This essay emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to the teaching of Basic Writing and proposes an approach that uses the tenets of Dada and Surrealism as starting points for enacting an arts-based, transgenre pedagogy. Focusing on three Basic Writing courses as case studies, the essay explores the benefits of this arts-based pedagogical approach and assignments that require students to engage in art-making and writing simultaneously.

KEYWORDS: arts-based; art-making; Basic Writing; composition; Dada; interdisciplinary pedagogy; Surrealism; transgenre; writing

With the recent passing of the one-year anniversary of COVID-19 shutting down in-person operations on university campuses, I've been reflecting deeply on what it means to be an instructor, composer, and researcher of writing and the humanities. The pandemic has changed how we think about teaching and learning. It has helped us understand our own strengths, weaknesses, and ability to adapt under pressure. And, for me, the COVID-19 pandemic has accentuated the importance of a flexible pedagogy that recognizes the uniqueness of each individual student, which I see as especially pertinent for instructors of Basic Writing. Basic writers often have numerous barriers to overcome as they navigate a developmental college course and frequently grapple with feelings of inadequacy and fear connected to past experiences with writing. These barriers were only made more difficult with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic; in the Basic Writing course I was

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teaching during the Spring 2020 semester, most of the students who were struggling ended up failing the course after the transition to virtual learning. With the concerns of the pandemic weighing heavily on me—safety, illness, shifts in work and family responsibilities—I can only imagine how they've affected students who are attempting to balance learning, work, and anxieties related to an uncertain future.

I take inspiration from Dada and Surrealism which, like teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, illustrate just how much humanity needs and relies on creativity during difficult moments. Like the Dada and Surrealist movements that developed out of a need for escape from the chaos of war, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with necessary moments of creative expression. More than one hundred years after the end of World War I and the development of Dada and Surrealism, the COVID-19 pandemic has reemphasized that research on visual art and writing isn't just about *teaching students to write*. Rather, intersecting visual art and writing provides opportunities for students to, like Dada and Surrealist artists, help reader-viewers experience and perceive their subjects through a creative-critical lens. Reflecting on the past year in this way has helped me see the ways an arts-based approach to writing is beneficial even beyond the pedagogical benefits; being creative can provide a reprieve, a much-needed distraction, and a way for us to envision our lives and the world differently.

The pandemic presented a new moment for us to revisit and reevaluate the relationship between visual art and writing to recognize and appreciate the ways that both art and writing interact, intersect, and communicate. Similarly, the Dada and Surrealist movements challenged traditional notions in the art world surrounding *who* could be an artist and *what* could be art. By using various materials to create art and exploring dream-like subjects in their work, Dada and Surrealist artists expanded the field of possibilities while simultaneously removing the "highbrow" label. A similar development can be seen in Writing Studies over time; while writing was once considered to be "words on a page," the advancement of technology has changed the way we think about writing in contemporary classrooms. Jody Shipka's *Toward a Composition Made Whole* advocates for students choosing the composing form that best aligns with their goals and target audience. Further, Shipka encourages creativity in this process of choosing; students are invited to "experiment with alternative, hybrid, or diverse forms of discourse" (1). While the term "multimodal" is often considered to be synonymous with "digital," a multimodal composition is just as the term suggests: something created digitally or nondigitally using multiple modes, and regardless of the

form or modality, choice is critical to gaining rhetorical awareness. In "The Artistry of Composition," Vittoria Rubino writes that this analysis of "why or how the medium they chose is better than other modes they could have chosen" is a "critical skill for any designer" (129). From these two perspectives—multimodal composing and art and design—we can see the importance of giving students a broad choice of modalities to work with so they can clearly see and understand their rhetorical strategizing.

Composition has always been multimodal, and multimodal composing creates space for all ways of knowing, being, and communicating. In recent years, scholars including Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes, Jason Palmeri, Cynthia Selfe, Anne Frances Wysocki, and Geoffrey Sirc have highlighted the numerous possibilities of multimodal composing. These possibilities range from digital tools—like audio and video—to physical projects—like the student project Shipka discusses in *Toward a Composition Made Whole* where an essay was written on a pair of ballet shoes. Multimodality has been and continues to be a crucial and pertinent pedagogical tool in composition classrooms and, in the current moment, students need creative outlets and forms of self-expression even more. In addition, these creative outlets and forms of self-expression can help important compositional skills stick beyond the writing classroom as students connect rhetorical strategizing with their interests, identities, and various situations within and beyond the academy. In this way, composers are enacting what Dada and Surrealist artists were working toward with their own work: using creativity as an outlet for escape and developing new and unique ways to communicate and connect with their reader-viewers. Just as Dada and Surrealism broaden understandings of what art is and who can be an artist, multimodality reminds us of the possibilities in writing and for writers.

Building from the Dada and Surrealist movements and with a focus on Basic Writing, this essay highlights three important skills encouraged through an arts-based pedagogical approach: creative-critical thinking, an understanding of transfer, and freedom of expression. To bolster these discussions, I provide an overview of three case studies: Basic Writing courses taught during the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters where this arts-based approach was enacted. While this approach is valuable for writing students at every level, I argue that it can be especially beneficial for basic writers. For all the reasons that deficit views of writing, and sometimes insufficiently resourced instruction, follow basic writers, the Basic Writing classroom may feel disembodied and disengaged. The arts-based approach I advocate for, however, encourages ownership and buy-in by recognizing that "writers are

not separate from the writing they produce" and that "the act of writing is less about using a particular skill set than about developing a sense of who we are" (Komlos 68). Not least, an arts-based approach shows students that identities and experiences that have previously been discounted in academic spaces are important and necessary. This allows for more openness and engagement and, as students develop as writers, they can navigate varying contexts, adapting their approach based on the unique purpose and audience of the situation. They are at once practicing creative-critical thinking and freedom of expression while seeing the ways these skills transfer to other contexts.

In addition to building from Dada and Surrealism, I frequently rely on the work of Ames Hawkins in conceptualizing this arts-based approach. An artist, writer, and scholar, Hawkins' work exemplifies the freedom and flexibility that can come from intersecting image and text. One example of Hawkins' arts-based, genre-bending work includes "Courting the Peculiar," a project that will be referenced throughout this essay. "Courting the Peculiar" is a collaborative project where Hawkins and others argue for creative nonfiction as a "queered" genre that resists binary thinking. Like Dada and Surrealist work, "Courting the Peculiar" challenges norms through a unique format and delivery; the project began as a conference presentation where each panelist performed responses to a series of questions and then developed into a multimodal piece published in the journal *Slag Glass City*. Like Dada and Surrealist work that challenged dominant norms in the art world, "Courting the Peculiar" opens up the possibilities for writing by breaking down preexisting expectations and creating space for alternative forms that celebrate identity.

Dada and Surrealism: Approaching Transgenre

The Art Movements. The intersecting of visual art and writing gained momentum during the Dada and Surrealist movements; these movements encouraged a reimagining of what art could be and who could create art during a time when people needed a creative outlet and escape from reality (much like our current moment). Dada and Surrealism developed in Europe during World War I as a result of the apprehension and anxiety associated with war and new technological and industrial progress. Early pioneers of Dada and Surrealism began creating work—art, writing, and work that combined art and writing, like collages—that was revolutionary in getting people to think in new, creative ways. As David Hopkins writes, "The [Dada

and Surrealist] artist's task was to move beyond aesthetic pleasure and to affect people's lives; to make them see and experience things differently. The Surrealist goal, for instance, was nothing less than the French poet Arthur Rimbaud's call to 'change life'" (3). An enactment of this task to make viewers "see and experience things differently" is present in one of artist René Magritte's most well-known paintings, *The Treachery of Images*. The painting depicts an image of a pipe with a caption that states "Ceci n'est pas une pipe," or "This is not a pipe." Most would look at the image and say that it *is* a pipe, but after thinking about it more thoroughly as the artist intended, it's clear that it isn't really a pipe, but an image of a pipe. Curator and author Fiona Bradley describes this tension in the following way:

> A brief moment of disorientation ensues until the contradiction is resolved—it is not a pipe, but rather a painting of a pipe. Neither the image nor the caption is lying to the viewer. The painting does, however, act out the warning implied by its title: the image is so illusionistic that it is treacherous, making us 'see' something (a real pipe) that is not really there. (41)

This tension and shifting of perception points to Dada and Surrealist genius in that the object moves from being an object to an image in a striking way, exemplifying how work that combines both image and text encourages reader-viewers to interact with and think critically about the art to establish new meaning.

Because of their focus on "free thinking" and creating unique experiences for reader-viewers, the movements avoided true definitions or labels. Hopkins writes, "Like certain other 20th-century art movements such as Futurism, which reflected the speeded-up, multi-sensory world in which people in the first decade of the 20th century were living, Dada and Surrealism were committed to probing experience itself" (3-4). He continues by stating,

> This commitment to lived experience meant that Dada and Surrealism were ambivalent about the idea of art as something sanctified or set apart from life. This is a fundamental point, and it is why it is inappropriate to treat Dada and Surrealism as identifiable stylistic 'isms' in art history. In actual fact there was comparatively little stylistic homogeneity among the artists involved, and literature was as important to them as visual art. It would be more accurate to describe these movements as ideas-driven, constituting attitudes to

> life, rather than schools of painting or sculpture. Any form, from a text to a 'ready-made' object to a photograph might be used to give Dada or Surrealist ideas embodiment. (Hopkins 4)

Dada and Surrealist artists were working to break down barriers in the art world which gave certain people access and privileged particular styles and forms. They saw art as something that was inseparable from everyday life and, as a result, were open to using anything to create art. This can be seen with "ready-mades," objects not normally considered art (one example is artist Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, a porcelain urinal presented as a sculpture). In addition, as Hopkins points out, Dada and Surrealist artists were invested in writing, as well, and often integrated it into their art.

Collages were the epitome of Dada and Surrealist art in that they could be created by anyone using any materials, like paper scraps, tickets, or newspapers that could be layered or glued together. Artist and writer Max Ernst was a pioneer in the creation of surrealist collages, and several books resulted from his substantial collage work, including *La Femme 100 Têtes* or *The Hundred Headless Woman*. His collages create tensions between image and text, convey dream-like scenes, and challenge reader-viewers' perceptions of what they see and know. In *The Hundred Headless Woman*, each collage contains a caption that propels the narrative forward, but the captions don't always seem to "fit" with the images; instead, as the words interact with the visual art, reader-viewers are challenged to reimagine what they are seeing and experiencing. The visual art doesn't stand on its own, just as the words aren't disconnected from the imagery; the two elements create a curated experience for the reader-viewer and break down preconceptions about visual art and writing. A collage of a man observing a girl sitting in a machine is accompanied by a caption that reads, "Where you can see a charming little insect with metallic hair" (Ernst 47). Since the image and text seem to be at odds, audiences must shift their perspective and reimagine new meaning.

Toward Transgenre. Because multimodality is often conflated with only the digital, I adopt the term "transgenre" from Ames Hawkins to describe the work and pedagogical approach I advocate for throughout this essay. In the beginning phases of working on my arts-based dissertation as a doctoral student, Hawkins introduced me to the term "transgenre." While I originally used the term "hybrid-genre" to refer to work that incorporates multiple genres and/or modalities, Hawkins suggested I use the term "transgenre" instead. They noted that "transgenre" better reflects the "messiness" of

composing and works against binary thinking about a composition being *this or that*. With this understanding of "transgenre" as being open to numerous possibilities, I theorized an arts-based pedagogical approach in my dissertation project for intermediate writers. In my current position as the developmental writing specialist at my university, I wanted to adapt that approach to examine how transgenre composing can work against limiting binaries, traditions, and expectations and teach important rhetorical skills in Basic Writing classrooms.

In an email conversation with Hawkins early in my dissertation process, they wrote, "I really resist the term hybrid [as it] anticipates and nearly desires a particular outcome. . . I don't know that any one form is better than another, but I guess I am partial to ecological diversity and believe that the more forms we have, the better." In subsequent conversations and the interview Hawkins contributed to my arts-based dissertation, they shared that, through encountering autoethnography and literary nonfiction, they discovered there were other authors who were experimenting with form and style in the same way they were. They are rarely interested in only composing a piece of research or putting together a scholarly essay, but instead consider how various genres can contribute to a particular project. Hawkins sees transgenre work as a collaboration of genres, moving between and among forms and transforming those forms into new, alternative forms. Additionally, they consider transgenre work to be personal and note that, through the personal, scholarship can appeal to broader audiences because of the visceral and relatable nature of personal narrative.

Frequently moving between and among forms, Hawkins' work is representative of the possibilities available through transgenre composing. Their project, "Exhuming Transgenre Ties," featured in a special issue of *Enculturation* on cultural rhetorics, is not only a manifestation of what transgenre work can look and sound like, but it also conveys how creating transgenre work is deeply creative and embodied. The almost 18-minute video project begins with an image of a bookshelf on the beach; like Dada and Surrealist work, the project pairs unlikely objects to encourage creative-critical thinking. As the video goes on, Hawkins is shown walking near and on the beach while narrating and discussing their "comfort with [their] masculinity" and "permission to embrace [their] love of ties." Pushing against traditional expectations of academic research (i.e., impersonal, text-based, publishable in a print journal), the project weaves storytelling and personal narrative with conversations on embodiment and identity.

As "Exhuming Transgenre Ties" highlights, our embodied subjectivities and identities are a necessary component of transgenre composing because, as Hawkins notes, quoting scholar Daisy Levy, "bodies are always in relation to the world around them, to other bodies, and that, truly, there is no good or bad body." Later in "Exhuming Transgenre Ties," Hawkins writes that wearing a tie "on their transgender/genderqueer body" is not just text or performance, but rather marks Hawkins "with and in relationship to male dress" to help control the story their body communicates to the world. "Courting the Peculiar" similarly makes connections between composing, embodiment, and identity. Hawkins writes that they identify with Kazim Ali's statement that "'genre, like gender, is not so much passé as it is *boring*.'" As Hawkins points to, traditional ways of categorizing people and writing don't allow for true creative-critical thinking and freedom of expression. Transgenre compositions like "Courting the Peculiar" and "Exhuming Transgenre Ties" create space for identity, the self, and the body, at once challenging norms about genre and academic expectations and giving writers agency over their work (see figure 1).

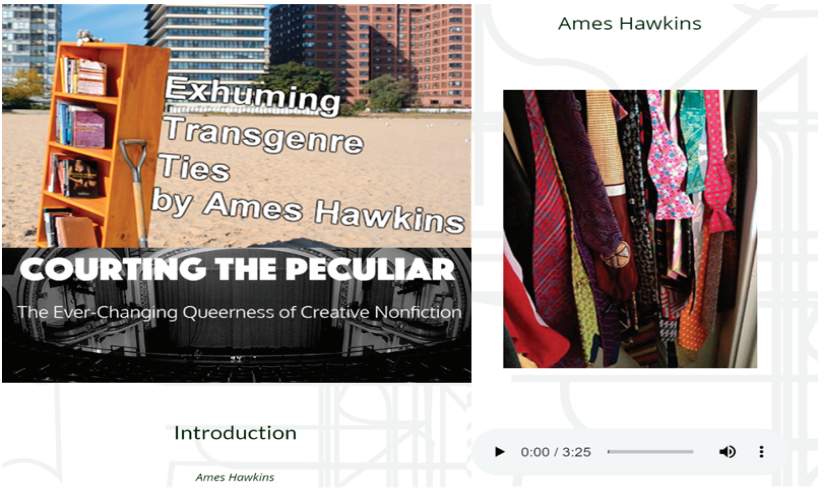

Figure 1. Snapshots of Hawkins' "Exhuming Transgenre Ties" and collaborative project "Courting the Peculiar."

This resistance to binary thinking and space for identity and agency is likewise possible in Basic Writing classrooms through transgenre composing. As Rubino notes in referring to the work of scholar Diana George, "The pull between words and images is productive, and if we can only trust and empower students to follow their own line of enquiry and uncover multimodal means of communication, we may be surprised by the work they produce in our classes" (127). Trusting and empowering students to "follow their own line of enquiry" allows them to integrate their own embodied subjectivities, identities, and experiences into their work. As Hawkins points out in "Courting the Peculiar," transgenre composing creates opportunities and challenges the concept that writing is rote or follows a particular prescription. At the start of a project, transgenre composers don't need to know "where it is [they're] going, sure of [their] argument, confident of [their] approach" (Hawkins et al.). Transgenre composing is a process that creates space for messiness and making and unmaking. There is no "right" way to be a transgenre composer; rather, in the process of exploring form, students can discover what works for them, their project, their audience, and their way of knowing and being.

An Arts-Based, Transgenre Pedagogy for Writing Studies and Basic Writing

Writing Studies is still gaining momentum when it comes to discussions of art's role in scholarship and pedagogy and, while multimodality valorizes the visual, not many scholars have examined multimodality through an arts-based lens. Our field has been focused on multimodality through a digital lens for quite some time, and while I encourage digital composing in almost all my courses, it's exciting that work from scholars like Kate Hanzalik, Nathalie Virgintino, Joddy Murray, Rubino, Hawkins, and others continues to shift how we think about multimodal composing as linked to art. In rethinking multimodality through an arts-based lens, instructors can foster a reimagining of the role visual art can play in writing classrooms. As Joddy Murray writes, "To value interdisciplinarity is to value the work of other disciplines, and this includes art. The claim that only art deals directly with the visual is as obviously short-sighted as to claim that only the empiricism of the scientific method is epistemic, or that only the social sciences can effectively research cultures and societies" (326). Rubino echoes Murray by outlining the benefits of embracing an arts-based pedagogical approach: "Many themes already overlap in art and composition theory

and pedagogy, including a privileging of process, freedom of expression, discussion and collaboration, and compositional flexibility" (125).

Meanwhile, Geoffrey Sirc's "Box-Logic" expands the possibilities of multimodality and transgenre work in composition classrooms by using Duchamp's *Green Box* as a springboard. Like Hawkins, whose work consistently challenges binary thinking, Duchamp's *Green Box* pushes the boundaries of genre as it is an assemblage of notes, diagrams, and images. Sirc builds upon this idea of an assemblage by stating that it's a form "[he feels his] students. . . could work well within" (112). Much like Duchamp's *Green Box*, Sirc's "box" concept is a collection or archive. He writes, "In terms of transcending essayist prose. . . [the box] allows both textual pleasure, as students archive their personal collections of text and imagery, and formal practice in learning the compositional skills that seem increasingly important in contemporary culture" (Sirc 114). Like collages, box assignments allow students to intentionally bring materials together—"associational juxtapositions of word, image, and sound" (124)—and arrange them appropriately through practicing the "key compositional arts of selection, arrangement, and expression" (125). Box assignments are simply structured to allow for creative-critical thinking and freedom of expression, and Sirc notes several assignment possibilities, like having students compose photo essays, build a catalogue of materials related to a specific date in history, or document class sessions using a medium of their choosing, including photography or audio recording (129). He writes that experimenting with multiple modalities and forms helps students learn to compose in ways that emphasize individual identity and expression and that embracing the personal works to break down the binaries of "academic" vs. "creative," and "scholar" vs. "creative writer," much like Dada and Surrealist artists were challenging traditional norms in the art world.

Just as Writing Studies has underscored the benefits of embracing multimodality in the classroom, Basic Writing scholarship points to the importance of giving students opportunities to choose their composing form. In their essay "Remembering Basic Composition," Thomas Henry, Joshua Hilst, and Regina Clemens highlight the importance of a Basic Writing pedagogy that allows for freedom of choice. They note that, since we all communicate using various modes, including "reading and writing print-based text, text-messaging, social networking, and using Internet, video, audio, radio, television, visual images, and cinema," we should move beyond only teaching students as if they communicate using print-based text (Henry et al. 4). In addition, Basic Writing scholars outline the impor-

tance of arts-based projects and their impact on basic writers' development of key compositional skills. In "Storyboarding for Invention," Jon Balzotti advocates for intersecting image and text through storyboards and notes that "better transfer is possible when we employ a broader notion of what gets transferred or exchanged" (65). Barbara Z. Komlos' "'That's Me on a Horse of Many Colors': Native American College Students' Self-Portraits as Academic Writers" explores connections between identity and composition through art-making. In her study, Native students were asked to draw self-portraits of themselves as writers to unveil their "understandings of and dispositions toward academic writing" (Komlos 71). By asking students to create visual art (self-portraits) through the low-stakes process of considering and reflecting on their writing practices, Komlos was able to learn that, while there are similarities among all basic writers despite cultural background, it's important to recognize the unique experiences and perspectives of Native students in college writing classrooms (93). In "iBooks Portfolios," Thomas Peele and Melissa Antinori similarly emphasize the importance of an embodied pedagogy in Basic Writing classrooms. They write that, while some students might feel marginalized because of their placement into Basic Writing, non-traditional projects (like transgenre compositions) can allow them to draw on their identities, experiences, and knowledge of audience in powerful ways (Peele and Antinori 29).

As Writing Studies and Basic Writing scholars have pointed out, allowing students to choose their composing form "meets them where they are." It privileges their already-existing abilities, identities, and experiences, which is especially important for basic writers who feel sidelined in traditional classroom spaces. While multimodal composing provides opportunities for students to build upon their identities and think critically about their goals and their audience, a transgenre approach further emphasizes working beyond traditional genres. The possibilities are limitless, and for basic writers who may lack confidence in their skills, transgenre composing (like Dada and Surrealist art) conveys that anyone can be a writer and writing can be anything. Similar to the process of assembling a box as outlined in Sirc's "Box-Logic," transgenre composers select and arrange materials that work together to create meaning and communicate beyond what is possible when adhering to expectations of genre. Transgenre composing encourages deep creative-critical thinking, teaches important rhetorical skills, and allows students to experiment and create in new ways while considering their own interests and identities as starting points.

The Study

I used an arts-based, transgenre pedagogical approach in my Basic Writing classes during the Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters at the University of Southern Indiana (USI). Two sections of the course were taught in the fall while one was taught in the spring; they were full-semester, 16-week courses focused on preparing students for success in our two-course first-year writing sequence. USI is a mid-sized institution with over 10,000 students and 150 student organizations. The university serves many students in the local and surrounding communities and the state of Indiana as a whole with about 80% of students as in-state residents. The majority of the students in these classes were White, women, and attending college right after high school. My purpose in implementing this approach was to observe how intersecting visual art and writing impacted basic writing students' compositional skills and learning experiences. Moreover, in giving students space to be creative-critical thinkers and creators, I wanted to see students bring their own identities and interests into their compositions and investigate the unique ways they worked beyond the confines of academic writing. While the English department at USI offers multiple emphases for majors (creative writing, literature, professional writing and rhetoric, and teaching), and a broad range of classes for non-majors, the majority of the faculty specialize in literature. Currently, only four faculty members specialize in Writing Studies, so the development of new courses and the integration of new approaches into existing Writing Studies courses has been a slow process. In bringing this arts-based approach into my Basic Writing classes, I hoped to initiate more conversations about embracing alternative approaches to writing to my department. In addition, I hoped students would feel a deep connection to and investment in their work and see themselves as composers in multiple, varying contexts.

While teaching the three courses, I kept a research journal where I recorded my observations of class discussions and interactions, student projects, and student reflections on the process of transgenre composing. After the Spring 2020 semester ended, I began sorting and organizing these notes by highlighting and color-coding similarities and differences among the classes and student projects. This required paying close attention to student attitudes toward transgenre composing, responses to in-class activities where students analyzed and discussed images and transgenre compositions, and reflections on the rhetorical strategizing involved with transgenre composing. I also had the difficult task of selecting only a few

student projects and reflections to focus on in this essay. After reviewing my notes on the many memorable student projects, I chose a few samples that represented the broad range of compositional skills that can be gained through a transgenre approach. I outline these observations here to display how assignments that incorporate both visual art and writing can help basic writing students develop creative-critical thinking and an understanding of transfer through freedom of expression and greater buy-in.

Case Study Profiles. Moving forward, I will refer to the case study courses as Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3. To provide background and context for each class, I've included brief profiles below:

- Class 1 (20 students) was taught during the Fall 2019 semester. The class ran three days a week and met at 9:00 a.m. Overall, the students participated well in class discussions and easily collaborated with each other. Several students claimed they were in the class by default because they hadn't taken the placement exam.
- Class 2 (17 students) was taught during the Fall 2019 semester. Like Class 1, this class ran three days a week, but met at 10:00 a.m. The students were often quiet and weren't always eager to collaborate. Several students consistently stated they hadn't done well in past writing classes and noted they were afraid of failing and having to retake the course. This concern was present from the beginning of the class and appeared to be unrelated to the course content and/or arts-based assignments.
- Class 3 (22 students) was during the Spring 2020 semester and was mostly made up of students who didn't pass Basic Writing during the fall semester. There were only a few students who consistently participated in class discussions and asked questions, and while we started the semester face-to-face (meeting three days a week at 1:00 p.m.), we ended up moving online after spring break due to COVID-19. The class began with 22 students and unfortunately ended with 15, and less than half of those remaining students passed.

Results: Students' Compositions

Fall 2019 was my first semester as an Assistant Professor; fresh out of a doctoral program where I had just completed a dissertation on transgenre composing for intermediate writers, I was ready to expand that research and

explore how arts-based assignments impact basic writers. On top of this, my desire to pursue this research was guided by the fact that there aren't many conversations taking place on multimodality in Basic Writing (Henry et al. 2), and discussions on arts-based or transgenre approaches are even less prominent. To facilitate transgenre composing in the Basic Writing courses, I developed two arts-based assignments. The first—a profile essay—required students to interview a professor at the university in their major on teaching, research, and writing practices and construct a profile of that professor. In addition, students were also asked to create a visual representation of the profile (using photography, a collage or drawing, etc.). To provide a justification of the visual and the rhetorical thinking that went into it, students were required to write an additional paragraph explaining the visual. Questions they could respond to in the justification included the following: *How is your visual a representation of your profile? Why did you choose that form? Why did you choose those materials, images, colors, words, etc.? Why did you arrange your visual that way?* While the visual needed to represent their essay in some way, students were encouraged to move beyond just illustrating the writing. Instead, I reminded the students to be as creative as possible and to, as Rubino notes, "create pressure between words and images" to "see the way items work, or do not work, together or independently" (129). Like Dada and Surrealist artists, I wanted students to practice creative-critical thinking and freedom of expression to challenge the reader-viewer to think about the profile differently.

When I first introduced this project and the necessary visual art component, many students were apprehensive. While I explained that the visual art was a way for them to practice creative-critical, rhetorical thinking and that they could use any medium they wanted, the students repeatedly asked what the visual *should* be and they wanted to see specific examples. One student in Class 1 mentioned that she felt uneasy about the assignment and wondered if I would grade her visual art harshly because it wouldn't be "good" or what I "asked for." I assured students that I was not approaching the assignment in this way and reminded them that they wouldn't be graded on their artistic ability, but rather on their ability to exercise creative-critical thinking and articulate the rhetorical choices that went into creating the visual art. Because of the concern surrounding the assignment, I created a sample visual—a collage made with paper, acrylic paint, photography, and some found images—and shared it with Classes 1 and 2 to provide an example of the form the visual could take. The collage fit the assignment they were working on—a profile—and was an artistic representation of poet Sylvia

Plath. When I presented the artwork to the class, I encouraged students to ask me any questions they wanted. The students in Class 1 were mostly quiet, but a few asked what the artwork meant to me while one student offered his own perspective on the piece. I ended the class session by explaining how each element of the collage represented Plath in some way, articulating my rhetorical decision-making process along the way and modeling what I was asking students to do in the assignment. In Class 2, the students asked many insightful questions. One student asked why I included a particular image and why it was in the center of the page, and another asked why I chose the colors I did (see figure 2).

For Class 3, I shared a different collage that was created digitally, but was another representation of Plath. The image contained several multi-colored typewriters on a stairway with words I pulled from Plath's *Letters Home: Correspondence 1950-1963*. Like Class 2, Class 3 asked many insightful questions about the piece and articulated that they were able to better grasp what they were being asked to do in their own visual art (see figure 3).

Figure 2. The collage I shared with Classes 1 and 2.

In all three classes, there were students who ended up creating digital collages using images of the professor found online and other images that represented concepts, hobbies, or interests the professor mentioned in the interview, but there were several students who took more creative approaches. In Class 1, one student represented her interviewee/profile using

a handmade book with images from famous works of literature on the front and back covers and with popular literary excerpts and quotes on the inside pages. In creating this collaged book, the student took seriously the concept that *anything* can be art (see figure 4). In her required visual justification paragraph, she wrote,

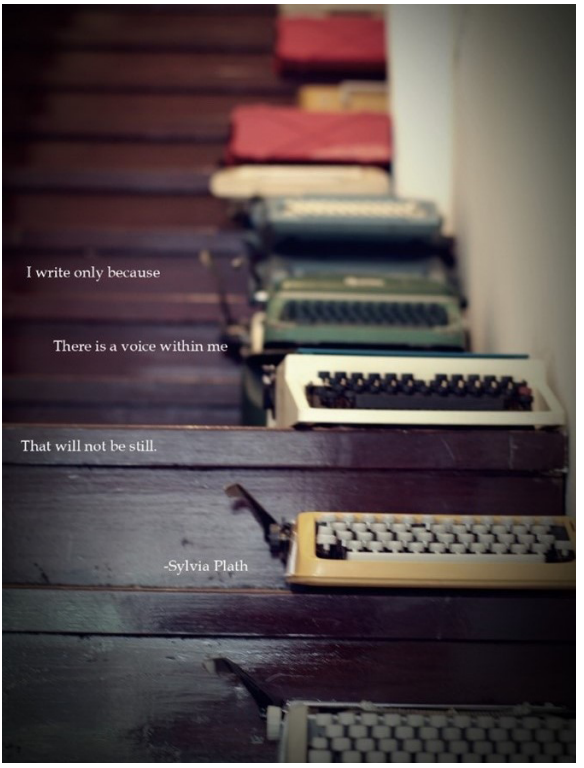

Figure 3. The digital collage I shared with Class 3.

> The cover is a collage of different literary characters made up of fantastic explorers, dark figures, and whimsical characters. They are happy, sad, afraid, determined, wicked, great, and terrible all at the same time. I chose them because I believe that these characters represent what it is like to be human. . . There is an ocean of depth in each of us and, through books, we can understand our past and our future.

Using these characters as a springboard, the student went on to say that her visual art expressed the humanity she felt and experienced during the

interview. Rather than a direct illustration of the profile, the collaged covers and inner pages of the book used literary references to portray what the interviewee shared about her journey. This was not only a great representation of Dada and Surrealist work but was also a well-written justification of the choices that went into creating the artwork. There were several other fantastic student projects, including one from Class 3 where the student created

Figure 4. A student created a handmade book as the visual component for the profile project.

a handmade trebuchet to represent his interest in history, and used balls of aluminum foil to show the class that it was a working model (see figure 5).

I was able to see students' increased understanding of how visuals convey meaning and how art can work with and enhance writing through the profile project. In Class 3, one student, an art major, interviewed the

chair of the art and design department. For her visual, she put together a collage of some of the professor's artwork, writing that the interview helped her realize that it is possible to make a living as an artist and that she should continue pursuing her passion for art-making. She went on to say that the oil paintings she compiled for her visual were meant to represent her inter-

Figure 5. A student crafted a handmade trebuchet as the visual component for the profile project.

viewee, a professor and artist "who is caring and nurturing. Someone who is bright and colorful. Someone who went against the grain and went for her happiness." The student drew attention to the colors in her visual and connected them to her interviewee, noting that the pinks and oranges in the paintings represented her bright personality. This communicates clear creative-critical, rhetorical thinking; the student created a visual with her interviewee in mind, wanting to represent her as a person. This shows an understanding that visuals hold and communicate meaning, and, for this student, creating the collage and articulating its connection to the interview were very specific choices that helped reader-viewers experience her project in a different way.

Another representation of clear creative-critical thinking and freedom of expression can be seen in a project from a student in Class 2. Her visual—a digital collage that resembled a roadmap and outlined her interviewee's journey to becoming a professor—was accompanied by a page-long articulation

of her rhetorical choices where she went into depth about every aspect of the visual (the colors, the use and meaning of specific images and/or materials, etc.). One of the elements of her articulation that I found most interesting was her description of *why* she arranged the materials in the way she did. The student wrote that she "put everything in a random position because that is the beauty about life, you never know where you are going to end up in life. You might end up on a roller coaster but in the end, you wish it hadn't gone any other way." This description doesn't just discuss the various elements within her visual, but specifically makes note of why she put them in a seemingly random arrangement. The arrangement is connected to the interview and adds to the telling of the interviewee's story; he explored many career paths prior to becoming a professor, and this student wanted to further convey that to her audience through the disparate arrangement of materials in her visual.

While the first assignment gave students the option to choose their artistic form, the second assignment—an analytical essay—asked students to create art in a very specific way: through photography. Below is a brief overview of the assignment:

> This assignment requires you to take a photograph (on your phone, tablet, or using a camera from the library) and compose a 3-page analysis of the photograph. After taking a photograph, you should analyze the image by responding to the following: *What does the image mean? What story is it attempting to tell? What aspects of the photograph communicate that message (color, subject, object, texture, angle, perspective, etc.)? What larger ideas does the image promote?*

Many students expressed that they hadn't previously thought of photography as an art form, especially since people can take photographs at any time using electronic devices like smartphones; however, my hope was that this would make photography a more approachable art form illustrating that anyone can be an artist, since so many already have experience with taking photographs (on a camera, phone, or other device). We talked about considering color, subject, object, texture, angle, and perspective and using those elements to tell a story through image. As a photographer myself, I shared many original photographs with each class, and we worked through the questions that were posed in the assignment prompt.

One image we used as a sample was a photo I had taken of a broken, overgrown fence with a hole in it and several garbage cans behind it. In each

class, I asked the students to talk about what they noticed in the photograph, and several noted the contrast between the plants and the fence, the position of the garbage cans, and the dilapidated nature of the fence. Based on those observations, Class 2 determined the photograph was representing nature's resiliency as it appeared the plants were "taking back" what was theirs (see figure 6). For the project, students took photographs on campus, at their homes, of their friends and family, and in posed shots they set up themselves. One student in Class 1 got up early one morning and took a photo of her neighborhood in the fog (see figure 7) while a student in Class 2 spent an afternoon taking photos in a cemetery (see figure 8). A student in Class 3 asked her roommate to pose for a photo, capturing a complex image that showcases the intersections of identity, the body, gender, education, and career aspirations (see figure 9). During a period of unrest due to the pandemic, racial injustices, and political turmoil, images like this one proliferated to encourage viewers to question perceptions of race, gender, and class; as Dada and Surrealist work also made clear, art can be a powerful tool for social activism and advocacy.

While some students provided a straightforward explanation of their photograph, describing for example how the various elements of the image came together to create meaning, others approached the essay in a more creative way. The student who took the photograph in figure 7 from Class 1 wrote her essay as a narrative from the perspective of the person who can be seen off in the distance. Looking at the photograph, one can see the figure of a person barely visible through fog; while the image itself is interesting, viewing it alongside the narrative creates tensions and provides new meaning. Like Dada and Surrealist work, the elements are not separate, but work together to tell a story that wouldn't be possible with only one of the components. The student wrote the following as the introductory paragraph of her analysis:

> I exist in this valley of heartache, isolated and alone. This world is cold, unfeeling, and colorless. I have been walking without rest for many years, yet I know that I cannot stop moving forward. There is an unseen voice pushing me to continue for one more day, telling me that the fog may clear and the colors could return. Trudging, I hunch my shoulders to try and keep warm but the dampness seeps in. I call out, aching to hear another human's voice, but the only response is the slow sound of my footsteps on this dirty, broken road.

Later, after the narrative, the student provided a bit of context for her approach:

> The photo is grey and colorless, which means that the man cannot see any happiness or beauty around him. He has become lost in his own misery. . . This unnamed man is searching for another person to bring him comfort but no one ever responds to his cries. The cars represent the help that is offered but he is too overwhelmed to see or accept. He sees no way out, and no effort is worth making anymore. In our society, everyone is wrapped up in their own problems that they sometimes fail to notice the person beside them who is also struggling.

Not only did the student analyze her photograph, but she also provided background information on her approach. The transgenre nature of the assignment allowed the student to approach it creatively and critically; she was able to tell a story while also articulating her rhetorical choices. To her, the image represented a lack of human connection in society, and she broke down each element of the photograph to show how it conveyed that meaning. This meaning she pulled from the image is not inherently communicated through the photograph; rather, she established this meaning through in-depth analysis and creative-critical thinking.

Other students reflected on the assignment differently, noting how taking the photograph and analyzing it allowed them to gain fresh perspective and think about images in a more critical way. In her conclusion, a student from Class 1 wrote that analyzing the photograph helped her to consider and think critically about things she wouldn't normally notice. She wrote, "We are taking the little details and things from life for granted without questioning, because we have turned into machines that only know how to do what is asked of us, but we don't have the capacity of getting out of our minds and put our obstacle aside and acknowledge the beauty of the world we live in." In the process of analyzing and writing about her image—a sunset through a car window—this student was able to think about a seemingly simple landscape in a new way. While we are bombarded by images every day, students (and especially basic writers) don't always understand that visuals have the ability to communicate and convey arguments. The assignment helped this student to understand the meaning created by art and gave her an opportunity to create meaning in her own way through intersecting visual art and writing. This awareness can be applied to various

Figure 6. One photograph used in class to practice analyzing a visual.

Figure 7. A student photograph of a figure in the fog.

Figure 8. A student photograph of a local cemetery.

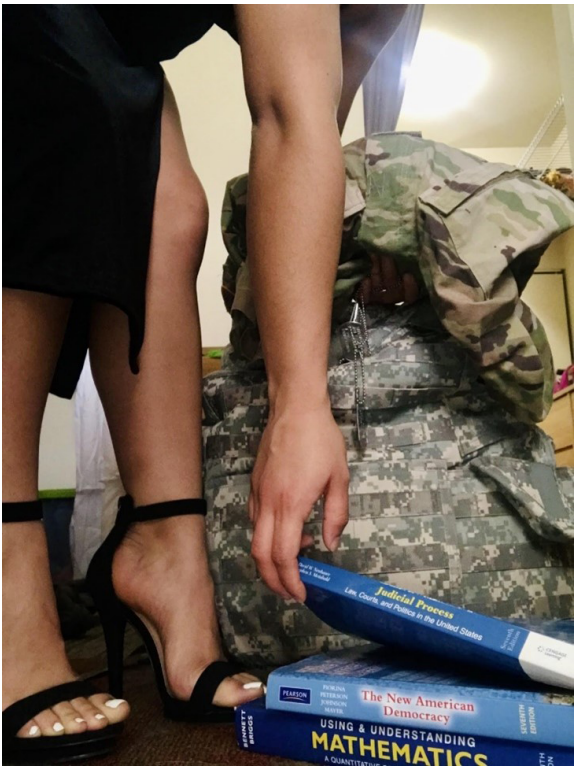

Figure 9. A student photograph of her roommate's intersecting identities.

rhetorical situations as transfer as the student noted in her reflection; she doesn't want to just accept what she sees at face value, but rather wants to consider the messages that are being conveyed through media.

Another student from Class 1 wrote that the assignment helped her think about art, interpretation, and individual perspective in new ways, noting that "every person will have a different way of how they interpret the same picture, but that is the beauty of art. There is no wrong or right answer when it comes to analyzing a work of art. For me, [this photograph, an image of a pink, orange, purple, and blue sky] was about taking the time to learn how to see the good in all of my struggles and not be blinded by problems I face in my life." Here, the student articulates how art helps us to approach problems creatively and critically and that everyone has unique identities and experiences that will impact how they create and interpret, emphasizing that everyone can be an artist (or writer) and create art. Through shooting and analyzing her photograph, this student was able to see the power of art and how creative-critical thinking can teach us to be open to what images are communicating.

Negotiations and Limitations

While a transgenre approach creates unique opportunities for basic writers, I am keenly aware of the challenges such an approach can present. In my experience, most students aren't enthusiastic about taking Basic Writing; as Peele and Antinori point out, many feel "academically marginalized" and have been told that they aren't "good writers" (29). Understandably, this has caused basic writing students to lack confidence in their abilities and, as a result, it can be difficult to bring a new approach into these classroom spaces. In implementing this transgenre approach, I desired to give students as much ownership over their work as possible, encouraging them to write about subjects they were interested in or that were tied to their identities and/or experiences. In doing so, I aimed to increase student investment and enthusiasm toward the work in the class. However, it's important to show patience and understanding when bringing a new approach into Basic Writing classrooms; instructors should acknowledge that many basic writers have had negative experiences in writing classes in the past and may require more guidance with non-traditional assignments.

I also want to emphasize that the study results are based on my observations. Students weren't directly interviewed, so the results highlighted are from my own research journal and are a combination of direct observations

and excerpts from student work. I approached the study in this way for a couple reasons: One, reflection was an element already built into the assignments and, two, I wanted to give students space to be flexible and take risks. I felt that students would be more willing to exercise creativity and flexibility without the "threat" of having to justify their assignment approach to me in a face-to-face interview after completing the project. Because creating and sharing art can be a vulnerable process, I wanted to honor students' openness and creativity. While these reasons informed my approach, I recognize the limitations of filtering student interactions and assignments through my own observational lens. In addition, the sample for this study includes three courses, all facilitated at USI, with approximately twenty students in each course. As mentioned, the students were predominantly white, women, and from the state of Indiana. These factors further limit the results as they don't illustrate a diverse range of perspectives.

Another important consideration is that Class 3 was interrupted and moved online mid-semester due to the COVID-19 pandemic and is not representative of a typical in-person, full-semester course. In addition to the quick shift to online learning and coping with a global pandemic, Class 3 faced other obstacles: Most of the students were in the class because they had failed Basic Writing the previous semester, and they were being asked to embrace a new, arts-based approach. Despite the many difficulties Class 3 endured, and although many students in the class failed because of these difficulties, I saw clear attempts to embrace creativity through their art-making and writing. I was most impressed by the photographs students took for the analytical essay as many of the images represented beauty and an escape: images of lakes and streams, of people playing music, of family taking walks and enjoying time outdoors, of pets and favorite pastimes. Even with the chaos of the pandemic, they were still able to capture and share the parts of their lives that provided safety and stability. Class 3 reminded me of the importance of an embodied, compassionate pedagogy that allows for students to ask questions, take risks, and be creative. In the best of times, transgenre composing can help basic writers find unique ways to bring their interests and identities into their work. It can encourage a deeper understanding of transfer and provide students with a creative outlet for self-expression. In times of crisis, as with the COVID-19 pandemic, art-making provides an outlet for escape, a way to imagine a reality different than our own.

Today's Context: Further Reflection on the Current Moment

Through transgenre composing, we see the lived experiences of others and what it can look like to live "queerly" (i.e., outside the confines of societal expectations within and beyond the academy). Furthering notions in "Courting the Peculiar" that position creative non-fiction as a genre transcending boundaries and binaries, Hawkins' recent transgenre book, *These are Love(d) Letters*, brings together elements of image and text. The book explores the concept of the love letter while specifically focusing on letters Hawkins' father wrote to their mother in the 1960s. Like much of Hawkins' other work, *These are Love(d) Letters* provides reader-viewers with moments to think critically about the possibilities of artistic expression and writing. Like Dada and Surrealist artists, Hawkins blends materials and genres, creating space for alternative ways of creating and imagining. In sharing stories of their own life and grappling with complex subjects like gender and identity, the work is vulnerable and approachable. And, as Dada and Surrealist artists and writers conveyed, the ability to find escape and express oneself through art is especially important during difficult times, and our current moment has only further illuminated this.

Even though Class 3 was not a "normal" Basic Writing course because of the COVID-19 pandemic, I still included it as a case study because I think it provides insight into the chaos experienced by Dada and Surrealist artists in the 1910s and 20s and what prompted them to create in the first place. The Spring 2020 semester brought the start of the COVID-19 pandemic alongside political and racial tensions in the United States. The pandemic and these tensions (combined with mandatory quarantine, the transition to virtual learning, and a loss of social and community connections) contributed to an overwhelming sense of isolation. However, people were still able to seek out moments of creativity to wrestle with the fear and uncertainty. Students in Class 3 kept moving forward with their assignments, engaging in art-making alongside writing. On social media, videos surfaced depicting immense creativity as people found new ways to make, connect, and regain a sense of stability. There were individuals who recreated famous works of art, made intricate and beautiful drawings on Etch A Sketches, experimented with bread-making, and created art with food, sticky notes, and many other materials (including toilet paper, a resource that was difficult to come by).

I think the Dada and Surrealist artists would be excited to see how a transgenre approach continues to help humans cope with and heal from the uncertainties of life. The creativity we pursued and experienced during

the COVID-19 pandemic was a necessary medicine; we turn to the arts and entertainment to distract from the world around us, to see alternative perspectives, and to experience life through a different lens. In the same way, creating is therapeutic; we become grounded, can connect with our subjects and with others more intimately, and can work through the complex feelings and emotions associated with day-to-day life, especially during a period of worldwide upheaval. In a time when the arts and humanities are consistently being devalued, it's important to remember how urgently we need art. I take this reminder with me as a new semester is just a few weeks away; we are still navigating continued concerns surrounding the pandemic, including the development of COVID-19 variants. With a true return to "normal" still in the distance, basic writers, and all students, need patience and compassion, reminders that their identities matter and that their instructors care, and time for creative exploration to distract from the stresses of day-to-day life and the current moment.

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Affect, Fear, and Openness in an Antiracist Writing Classroom

Amy D. Williams, Sarah Kate Johnson, Anika Shumway, Dennis L. Eggett

ABSTRACT: At a time when antiracist teaching is increasingly needed, this article reports on an IRB-approved, mixed-methods study of high school seniors' affective experiences in an antiracist English language arts classroom. We find that students in this study became less scared and more confident writers. They attributed these positive changes to antiracist teaching that was designed to help them develop openness and new perspectives about race, inequality, and social justice. We argue that as students experienced openness as an affective (rather than only cognitive) disposition, they became more comfortable with the fearful affect associated with writing. We suggest that an antiracist curriculum that intentionally attends to openness and affect can confer political, social, intellectual, and emotional benefits; it can also make students less afraid of writing.

KEYWORDS: affect; antiracism; antiracist teaching; anxiety; Basic Writing; college writing; ELA; English Language Arts; fear; high school; self-efficacy

In recent addresses to the CWPA and CCCC conferences, Asao B. Inoue condemned writing programs as sites of structural racism. Noting composition's longstanding fidelity to White language standards, Inoue blamed White language supremacy for violence against BIPOC populations, immigrants, Muslims, women, indigenous people, and LGBTQIA populations. White language supremacy, he argued, is the "handmaiden to White bias

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in the world, the kind that kills Black men on the streets by the hands of the police through profiling and good ol' fashion prejudice" (359). Violence in writing classrooms, Inoue asserts, is no less real: When writing teachers teach White standards using White frameworks, White students feel comfortable and affirmed, but students of color feel judged, excluded, or imprisoned. As a result, too many students, like Maya Angelou's caged bird, write "with a fearful trill" (355). A student's fearful trill threatens not only their writing enjoyment but also their writing confidence, self-efficacy, motivation, and academic achievement (Bruning and Kauffman; Horning; Pajares et al.). Fear may especially threaten the already tenuous self-efficacy of basic writers who have interpreted their course placement as a bleak assessment of their writing ability (Bandura).

We approach the problem of writing fear by examining the relationship between *antiracist* writing teaching and students' fear of writing. This article discusses a high school writing curriculum and pedagogy designed to help students recognize, resist, and oppose racist structures and practices. While these goals sometimes seemed more important than developing writing skill, students in our study became less scared writers over the course of this academic year. We use affect theory to explore the relationship between antiracist teaching and students' decreased writing fear. We suggest that as students become comfortable dwelling in the unsettling affects that openness to new ideas requires, they also become less sensitive to affects that could diminish their writing confidence.

Building on scholarship previously published in this journal, our research benefits Basic Writing teachers in at least two ways. First, our concern for affect provides a helpful counterpart to research that focuses primarily on basic writers' abilities. Like Emily Schnee and Jamil Shakoor, we expand the Basic Writing conversation by letting students describe and interpret their experiences in a writing classroom rather than only documenting the measurable skill-related outcomes of those experiences. Second, our research contributes a valuable perspective by studying high school student writers *before* their placement in any college writing course. Kevin Roozen persuasively established the need for understanding basic writers' literacy histories. As Roozen points out, a student's performance in Basic Writing coursework is part of a "continual, unceasing interaction of extracurricular and curricular literate activities that are so profoundly interconnected that it becomes difficult to see where one ends and others begin" (27). This article provides a view of the literate landscape some students inhabit before entering our classrooms.

In the fall of 2018, we began a yearlong mixed-methods study in a high school language arts class to understand how students' writing affect and self-efficacy changed over the course of their senior year. As we planned the research, we did not anticipate we would be studying an antiracist curriculum; nevertheless, our ethnographic methods proved productive in studying this element of the teaching. By the time we entered the classroom, racism, police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement had become prominent themes in U.S. national discourse. The class's White teacher, Ms. Grow (pseudonym), felt compelled to make her teaching explicitly antiracist through the literature she assigned, the assignments she required, and the pedagogical strategies she used, though she had never done so before and had no formal training in antiracist teaching. For the first time in her ten years of teaching, she required students to engage affect-laden texts about Black experiences through the affect-laden pedagogical strategies we discuss below. Like most White instructors doing antiracist work, Ms. Grow had both good intentions and White habitus, a term coined by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Carla Goar, and David G. Embrick that describes, among other behaviors, the tendency for White people to establish "how difference ought to be celebrated, defined, recognized, denied, or denigrated" (Burns et al. 260). Many positive things happened in Ms. Grow's classroom. And on occasion, her well-practiced habitus prevented her from recognizing how her students experienced her teaching and how her curriculum regulated their responses.

Our research used quantitative surveys to measure twenty positive and negative affects students might experience while writing. The results of those surveys showed that study participants became significantly less scared of writing over the course of the study, though the curriculum neither addressed writing fear nor provided much explicit writing instruction. Still, we theorize that the curriculum and decreased fear of writing are linked, that the antiracist curriculum itself changed writing affect. To support this claim, we use qualitative data we gathered both from students' interviews and our field notes of classroom observations. Students in our study attributed their increasing calm and confidence both to the antiracist curriculum and to the way Ms. Grow delivered that curriculum through her pedagogical performance. When Ms. Grow introduced difficult social and political issues and thus encouraged the distressing affects that occur when students open themselves to new ideas, opinions, and beliefs about race, social justice, and advocacy, she also addressed the fearful affect associated with writing.

We first provide a theoretical framework for affect, fear, and openness and show how our field's most prominent pedagogies have neglected affect.

We then describe the research site and explain our methodology as context for our findings and discussion. We describe what being scared of writing means for these students and how Ms. Grow's curriculum and pedagogy changed their affect toward writing. We explore elements of Ms. Grow's antiracist pedagogy that seemed to reduce students' fear and increase their writing confidence. Specifically, we focus on teaching activities and assignments that gave students in our study writing-related opportunities to enact openness as an affective practice, and we describe the limitations and complications of those activities. We end with suggestions for affective and antiracist teaching that can address racism and writing fear.

Theorizing Affect, Openness, and Fear

We use affect theory to analyze Ms. Grow's teaching and how her students perceived, responded to, evaluated, resonated with, and rejected the ideas, objects, and forces in her classroom. Other scholars have also used affect theory as a lens for evaluating antiracist teaching, often focusing on teachers' affective responses. Elizabeth Dutro, for example, argues that teachers often make immediate, racist judgments about students based on their affective responses to students' classroom behavior or performance. Dutro argues that delaying the "leap to certainty" (385) can open teachers to more equitable and just interpretations of what they see students doing and being. Esther O. Ohito similarly demonstrates how affect can negatively intervene in the space between a teacher's antiracist commitments and their teaching practices. Both authors call for more attention to embodied affect in antiracist teaching.

We argue that attuning to affect is especially vital in antiracist writing classrooms because writing is inherently affective. Affect emerges in dynamic relationships between bodies and other bodies, objects, ideas, energies, and forces. Writers are always unavoidably involved in such assemblages (Micciche). As things in the writing assemblage shift, move, and change, they spark affective responses in other things, unleashing additional shifts, moves, and changes (Seigworth and Gregg). Writers experience these affective shifts as ripples, swells, shocks, thoughts, beliefs, emotions, feelings, sensations, impulses, movements, dispositions, expectations, provocations—or, in Kathleen Stewart's succinct language, "something that feels like *something*" (2). These *somethings* can encourage or inhibit writing.

A writer's affective body is never static. Affect theory says that bodies are always alert to—and always moving toward or away from—objects and

intensities around them. This movement is neither entirely random nor idiosyncratic. Sara Ahmed notes that people share affective orientations—that is, they move toward and away from the same kinds of objects—because affects emerge within political, cultural, and social ecologies that establish which objects "should make us happy" ("Happy" 35). Often those happy, likeable objects are constructed through racialized and gendered frames (39).

Following Ahmed, we define fear as affects that people experience when they approach objects, people, things, ideas, or activities they believe may cause harm or injury. Fearful affects unsettle, shock, disquiet, or terrorize bodies. Many objects that writing bodies engage—technologies, texts, teachers, readers, other writers, grades, ideas, standards—induce fear because of their historical association with judgment and exclusion. For students of color, White language standards only intensify the violence of those judgments and exclusions (Inoue). Little wonder, then, that many students experience fear while writing. Fearful writing affect is both cognitive and physiological; students can be consumed by fearful, anxious thoughts and can experience visceral and somatic manifestations of those thoughts—"shudders that are felt on the skin," Ahmed calls them (*Cultural* 63). Together, these affects "shrink[ ] the [writer's] body" (70), constraining its movement, inhibiting its capacity, and undermining any sense of confidence and potential. This is true whether writing fear is generalized—extending over time and contexts—or attached to particular tasks or situations.

We define openness, a counterpart to fear, as the willingness to encounter, consider, acknowledge, and welcome unfamiliar objects and ideas. Despite its frequent association with cognition (e.g., an open mind), we argue that openness is at once rational *and* emotional, physiological, visceral. Openness is affective because it involves relationships between bodies/things/ideas that can become (both the relationships and the bodies) virtually anything. Openness can be enriching when it feels like hospitality, when it welcomes another into a relationship of "interdependence that strengthens all" (Jacobs 569). But openness can also be a "site of potential danger" (Ahmed, *Cultural* 67). Jim Corder warns that encounters with another can "send[ ] us lurching, stunned by [the other's] differentness" (19). The affect of openness, then, may resemble the affect of fear: an "impinging" or "thundering" that leaves us "flushed, feverish, quaky, shaky, angry, scared, hurt, shocked, disappointed, alarmed, outraged, even terrified" (19, 21). Especially in White-dominated spaces like writing classrooms, affects of fear and openness may overlap.

Additionally, Ahmed reminds us that the consequences of terrifying affects are not equally distributed. When White bodies experience openness as threatening, they respond by embracing structures that guarantee their own mobility and restrict the mobility of the bodies they fear. In encounters between White and Black bodies, Black bodies are doubly imperiled: they are more likely to be read as fearsome objects, and they are more likely to be "crushed by [the White body's] fear" (69). Jennifer Lin LeMesurier reveals the "absurdity" in the affect White bodies attach to Black bodies, using Childish Gambino's "This is America" music video as an example: "When [Gambino] dances, we [White bodies] are comfortable. The moment he takes hold of a gun, we cringe reflexively" (148). This kind of White openness is like the spring-loaded door of a cage trap—though it seems welcoming, it can shut unexpectedly and violently. White discomfort is its trigger. Thus, for bodies of color, openness does not guarantee happy outcomes.

Teaching Openness

An appreciation of openness as affect is missing in texts that guide the teaching of writing. For example, the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Education treats openness as a cognitive practice, or "habit of mind," that is essential to college writing success. Since its introduction in 2011, the Framework—written by college and high school faculty and endorsed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project—has become central to our field's beliefs about writing. While more recent position statements from our professional organizations explicitly address race (Baker-Bell et al.), the Framework takes a distinctly apolitical stance. According to Inoue, this seeming neutrality functions as a form of "White language supremacy" that reflects "White habits of judgment and then canonize[s] those White habits" (362). We read Inoue's critique to include the White habit of foregrounding cognition and deliberately downplaying affective and embodied epistemologies that are more common in non-White cultures. We use the Framework as an example of many writing pedagogy texts that encourage openness without addressing its affective precarity. The Framework's authors define openness this way:

> **Openness** – the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world. Openness is fostered when writers are encouraged to

- examine their own perspectives to find connections with the perspectives of others;
- practice different ways of gathering, investigating, developing, and presenting information; and
- listen to and reflect on the ideas and responses of others—both peers and instructors—to their writing. ("Framework for Success")

Even as the Framework mentions both "being and thinking," it promotes *thinking* when it encourages students to "examine their perspectives," "find connections with the perspectives of others," and "reflect on" ideas and responses they hear. Implying that openness is primarily intellectual work, the Framework does little to encourage openness as affect. There are no ideas for helping students notice and grapple with the emotions and sensations that accompany engaging other bodies, objects, or ideas. There is no suggestion that different ways of researching, writing, and presenting might include embodied practices (Arola and Wysocki). These omissions limit the Framework's power to promote new ways of "being." More importantly, the Framework's failure to acknowledge openness's affective work also elides the unequal risks White and Black students face when they adopt new and open stances. Antiracist pedagogy demands that the thinking, examining, connecting, and reflecting done in writing classrooms be race based, political, and activist, yet the Framework remains silent on these issues (Baker-Bell et al.).

The Framework's authors are not alone in slighting affect and ignoring racialized aspects of openness. Our field has long associated openness with intellectual activity (Peter Elbow's "believing" and "doubting"; Wayne Booth's "assent"). Popular first-year writing textbooks typically present openness as a rational practice. Connie Snyder Mick tells students to engage texts they disagree with in order to "locate gaps in current thinking or even change your mind on an issue" (109). The perennially popular book *They Say, I Say* advocates addressing counter arguments in order to "come across as a generous, broad-minded person" (Graff and Birkenstein 79). Andrea Lunsford et al.'s *Everyone's an Author* directs students to consider things "you know are absolutely wrong" (25) because these perspectives "will help you sharpen your own thinking, and your writing can only improve as a result" (437). Advice to pursue openness as a rational strategy is everywhere, even as emotion and affect are largely ignored.

To be clear, we don't reject cognition. Because openness is an affective phenomenon, it necessarily incorporates—includes and *embodies*—cogni-

tion. But if we narrow openness to something that happens only or even primarily in the mind, we neglect the affective dimensions of "being" open and the affective risks and rewards of openness. Without affect, openness pedagogies founder.

Although our textbooks have neglected the affects of openness, we see encouraging evidence that this is changing in our teaching. For example, Kendra N. Bryant points to the value of physical classrooms that allow "mind-body-soul connection[s]" between students and teachers (73). The "embodied learning" Bryant imagines relies on the proximity of actual bodies and their willingness to be vulnerable with each other. Barry M. Kroll advocates a similarly embodied approach to teaching openness by emphasizing its multiple dimensions: rational, kinesthetic, and contemplative. Using martial arts and meditation, Kroll provides his students opportunities for "embodied expression" as they "'feel' the movements" associated with openness (11). Bryant's and Kroll's pedagogies approach openness from extracognitive directions that "disconnect [students] from [their] drivetrain" (Berlant and Stewart 58). Students learn that affect and cognition are necessary complements in openness. The difference between traditional pedagogies and Bryant's and Kroll's is discrete versus diffuse attention. The cognitive approaches outlined above focus on rational strategies for reframing thinking. In embodied learning, students attend expansively to cognition *and* the feelings, sensations, and movements that openness inscribes on their bodies.

Aligning Bryant's and Kroll's pedagogical practices with Ahmed's theoretical perspective provides a useful schema for reimagining the Framework's explanation of openness. A revised definition would help teachers and students understand that as affects associated with openness ripple through and between bodies, they will sometimes resemble affects associated with fear. As Matthew Heard argues, asking students to practice openness to another's perspective is also asking for a painful "'shearing' of [their] most comfortable habits and feelings." If unaddressed, that affective conflation can undermine students' attempts to develop openness. In contrast, antiracist teaching that explicitly seeks to help students become comfortable with affects of openness may also help students become less sensitive to affects of fear—not just fear of new ideas, perspectives, bodies, and things, but fear of writing as well. Our research supports this claim.

Research Site: Classroom and Curriculum

We conducted this research in a public high school in a mid-size US city. The class was a regular, twelfth-grade Language Arts class not designated as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), College Prep, or Honors. Ms. Grow, a veteran teacher and former head of the school's Language Arts department, explained that the school offers AP and IB tracks for students who are "absolutely, without question" going to college and honors/college prep courses for kids who are likely going to college but don't want the pressure of AP/IB or are concentrating on advanced courses in other subjects. Regular classes, like the one in our study, are for the remaining students—some, but not all, college bound.

The school is in one of the city's affluent and predominately White neighborhoods. But the school's extended geographic boundaries and the district's open enrollment policy create a diverse student population: 40% of the school's students are people of color and 38% are economically disadvantaged. Three percent of the school's nearly 1,700 students are homeless ("Reports: Enrollment/Membership"). Of the approximately thirty students in Ms. Grow's class, thirteen voluntarily enrolled in our study. The participant group was slightly more diverse than the general school population: six self-identified as BIPOC students (46%), six self-identified as White (46%), and one student did not provide a racial identity. All thirteen were native English speakers even if other languages were spoken in their homes. Six had no immediate family members who had graduated from college, yet nine planned to matriculate. In other ways, the participants represented the diversity of a typical American high school. They were also straight, gay, bisexual, middle- and working-class, athletes, student body officers, thespians, dancers, extroverts, and self-proclaimed loners. In this article, we use pseudonyms for all study participants.

As White, middle-class researchers (one professor and two graduate students), we were in some ways outsiders in this classroom. For example, because Ms. Grow first introduced Amy as a professor from Brigham Young University, students later highlighted that professional role, sometimes referring to Amy as "the professor." Furthermore, none of the nine college-bound students planned to attend our university, a private religious institution in a nearby city. At other times, however, students seemed to want to identify with us. Several volunteered information about their religious commitments and practices, even though we never asked about religion. As in all ethnographic

research, we see evidence that our identities impacted the data we collected, and we acknowledge how this limits the generalizability of our findings.

Ms. Grow, a White woman, taught an antiracist curriculum that investigated inequitable structures and practices and required students to engage social issues outside the classroom. Confident and charismatic, Ms. Grow enacted both the good cop and the bad cop in the classroom. At times demanding and direct, her speech sprinkled with mild profanity, she issued brisk commands in the manner of a drill sergeant: "Everybody's eyes up here!" "If I see you touch that backpack, that phone will be mine. Forever!" "Sit your ass up!" Other times she was playful and relaxed, calling students "my ducklings" and saying, "If you have finished, then just chill. Just be."

Ms. Grow had been drawn to issues of social justice since her undergraduate days but, by her own account, had never yet prioritized it in her teaching. Still, she had become increasingly convinced that her job was to open students to new perspectives on social issues, specifically to understanding how people experience racism, prejudice, and discrimination. And she wanted her students of color to be able to communicate "what White privilege feels like to me." Centered on the topic of police brutality and themes of race and stereotypes, Ms. Grow's curriculum included two novels, *The Hate U Give* and *Dear Martin,* and the films *The Hate U Give* and the *New York Times* documentary "A Conversation with My Black Son"—all texts that address racial minorities' devastating experiences of police brutality. In the findings section below, we describe Ms. Grow's pedagogy, or how she enacted this curriculum.

Methods

Our research design combined qualitative methods common to Writing Studies (interviews, observations, and textual analysis) with quantitative methods borrowed from psychology. This mix of quantitative and qualitative data provides a nuanced understanding of students' experiences. The quantitative measurements allow us to speak precisely about affective changes; the ethnographic methods help us interpret the numbers. To obtain a holistic view of students' affect and experiences—and with IRB and school district approval—we observed the class one day a week throughout the school year and interviewed participants at the end of each academic quarter. The first semi-structured interview centered on our original research questions about affect and self-efficacy; we modified later protocols in response to participants' previous answers and our classroom observations. We also collected

assignment descriptions, rubrics, classroom handouts, all the participants' graded assignments, and freewrite journals from willing participants. We took pictures of PowerPoint slides and collaborative work that students produced in class. Interview transcripts, fieldnotes, students' texts, photographs, and curricular materials formed the data set for our qualitative analysis.

Two researchers coded each interview. To ensure coding integrity, each researcher coded a set of interviews with each of the other two researchers (e.g., Researcher A coded twenty-five interviews with Researcher B and twenty-five interviews with Researcher C). To ensure intercoder agreement, we met frequently to compare codes and to adjust our code categories, definitions, and criteria for inclusion or exclusion. In the first round of coding, we assigned category codes to interview sections related to our original research questions about self-efficacy and affect change. This round included coding for emotions, moods, sensations, objects (e.g., pens and pencils, computers and phones, bedrooms, and other workspaces), and bodies (e.g., friends, family members, coaches, bosses, and other teachers) that made up students' affective writing environments. Where possible, we assigned magnitude codes to students' descriptions of their affect (positive, negative, and neutral)—for example, when students described being excited about writing, dreading writing, or not caring about writing. Similarly, we assigned magnitude codes to their descriptions of changes in self-efficacy—decline, growth, and no change (Saldana). In later rounds of coding, we developed more nuanced codes around the experience of being scared or fearful of writing. During these rounds, we discovered a relationship between fearful affect and Ms. Grow's teaching. We then coded for curriculum and pedagogy, using descriptive codes to categorize pedagogical activities (e.g., group work, classroom writing assignments, and feedback) and curricular themes (e.g., writing instruction, reading instruction, and *perspective*[1]).

Following affect scholars in psychology, we used the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) to measure positive and negative dimensions of the affect students associated with writing. Widely accepted as a reliable and valid measurement of affect, the PANAS scale asks participants to rate twenty moods (ten positive and ten negative) using a scale that ranges from *very slightly or not at all* (1) to *extremely* (5). Positive feelings or moods include being interested, excited, and enthusiastic; negative moods include feeling hostile, guilty, and scared. High positive affect indicates a state of "high energy, full concentration, and pleasurable engagement"; low positive affect reflects "sadness or lethargy" (Watson et al. 1063). High negative affect scores indicate general distress, while low negative affect scores signify a

state of calm. The PANAS scale can measure short-term fluctuations in affect if participants rate their affect "right now," and it can measure the stability of specific affective traits when participants rate their affect "in general" or "on average." Because we were interested in students' average or general affective responses to a yearlong curriculum and pedagogy rather than in daily fluctuations of their affect, we administered the survey twice—once halfway through the academic year (early January) and once at the year's conclusion (late May). Both surveys asked participants to rate twenty mood states for the "extent you GENERALLY feel this way when writing—that is, how you feel ON AVERAGE when writing" (see Appendix A).

Findings

Most research participants became less scared and more confident as writers during the year of our study. To understand how a curriculum that emphasized teaching antiracism above teaching writing correlated with a change in students' scared affect, we used our observation fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and students' written reflections to see what students said about being scared of or while writing—even though they never used the word *scared* when talking about writing. Instead, they used synonyms or words that name affects associated with being scared such as *dread, nervous, anxious, worried, stressed,* and *antsy*. We coded these words and other negative affect descriptors and reviewed the interviews to determine the contexts in which negative affect occurred. We found that students associated generalized negative affect—frustration, dislike, boredom, apathy, disorientation, and confusion—with past and present writing. They used fearful vocabulary only in connection with future writing. Yesterday's writing was unpleasant, but tomorrow's writing is scary. This finding illustrates why fear is detrimental to writing self-efficacy and confidence, which both concern beliefs about what one can accomplish in the future.

Students used fear-based language—*nervous, worried, stress, dread*—to describe imminent and future writing assignments, tasks, or situations, such as the demands of an assigned paper (e.g., working with other people or doing research) or the possibility of an undesirable outcome (e.g., a poor grade). One student described a habitual pattern of "dreading the idea of the assignment until I just sit down and shut up and quit complaining."

For students in our study, the most significant source of anticipatory fear was the course's end-of-term project, called the Social Action Project (SAP), perhaps because Ms. Grow presented it as labor intensive, high stakes,

and public. It was a group project that required research and asked for activism in the community (see Appendix C). Ultimately, all the students confined their activism to the school, creating products that ranged from a video to show in social studies classes to posters about discrimination to hang in the hallways. The project also included an oral presentation explaining the project to the class. In its many facets, the SAP was the primary determiner of students' third quarter grade. When asked in an end-of-quarter interview to describe their initial reaction to the assignment, students responded:

- "Dread. Didn't want to do it. At all."
- "I was also really nervous because it was going to take a lot of work. . . If you're gonna present something, you have to understand it, um, and just, yeah. I was nervous 'cause it was going to be a lot of work involved."
- "I'd say nervous just 'cause of, so in, like, the majority of my group that I had never went to class, so it was just me and one other kid. . . just two people working on this whole thing."
- "It just sounded like a lot. . . [Ms. Grow] almost made it out to be, like, a big, like it was going to be this giant thing."
- "[I was] really stressed out. It was a big project."
- "There wasn't a big enough time frame for us to like—I felt the project was really quick so like tryna get it all done and, like, find people and get interviews. It's all crammed together."
- "[My feelings] went from nervousness to stress. . . I'm just like, ahh! So much to do, you know, just trying to rush things around."
- "My first thought, uh I was nervous because the first [thing Ms. Grow] said that this was gonna determine what our whole grade was for third term. Um, I definitely care about my grade."
- "It's kind of that thought of knowing that if you don't do this project then you won't pass. So that's something that, I guess, I get anxiety, I guess, is a good word, or something like that."

We found that students' fearful language—*dread, nervous, stressed, anxiety*—frequently collocated with language of size or consequentiality—"big," "giant," "so much to do," "whole thing," "whole grade," "a lot of work," "won't pass." The proximity of scared talk and consequential talk was a prominent pattern in interviews leading up to the SAP.

After students had successfully completed the SAP, in their fourth quarter interviews, we asked how confident they felt about their ability to

accomplish any high school writing task and how confident they felt about their preparation for college or employment. Eighty percent of the students expressed increased confidence in their ability to succeed in high school and college writing classrooms or in future jobs. In the same interview, students completed the second PANAS survey (described previously).

We analyzed changes in students' negative and positive affect by comparing the two PANAS surveys. We found a statistically significant decrease in the average across all negative affect terms as measured by a difference in means test (from 2.2769 to 1.7969; p=.02). Among these terms, the decrease in *scared* affect was both notable (0.8 points, from 2.3077 to 1.5593) and statistically significant (p=.04) (see fig. 1).

Combined, students' expressions of confidence and the statistical findings about fear corroborate the well-researched connection between self-efficacy, mastery experience, and affect (Bruning and Kauffman; Pajares et al.). That completing the high-stakes SAP contributed to measurable decreases in students' writing fear is perhaps an expected finding. Ms. Grow had billed the SAP as the year's most consequential assignment, and students described their relief at having it behind them. Additionally, as Christopher Minnix has suggested, students feel empowered when they participate in civic life through writing. Assignments like the SAP project that ask students to pursue activist goals by producing texts for public audiences can increase students' confidence as writers and as citizens. They learn that writing can give them influence in their communities.

However, students who felt less scared and more confident as writers also attributed their improvement to the affective and antiracist aspects of Ms. Grow's teaching. For example, Sophie, who identifies as half-black and describes herself as dyslexic and as having ADHD, explained in her final interview how her writing "fluency" had improved, along with her ability to "go deep" and "open up" in her writing. When asked what had caused the change, she answered, "I think it's Ms. Grow pretty much. 'Cause she shares lots of personal experiences, and I feel like she can be relatable in that way, and I feel like her example kind of made me more open." Sophie also credited Ms. Grow's openness with allowing her to "do better and just accept myself." Other students echoed Sophie's assessment of Ms. Grow's teaching and expressed appreciation for a curriculum that challenged them intellectually and affectively. Only Miguel, in an early interview, criticized Ms. Grow's openness, mentioning his discomfort with her intense emotion and strong language. Yet in his final interview, he walked back his criticism,

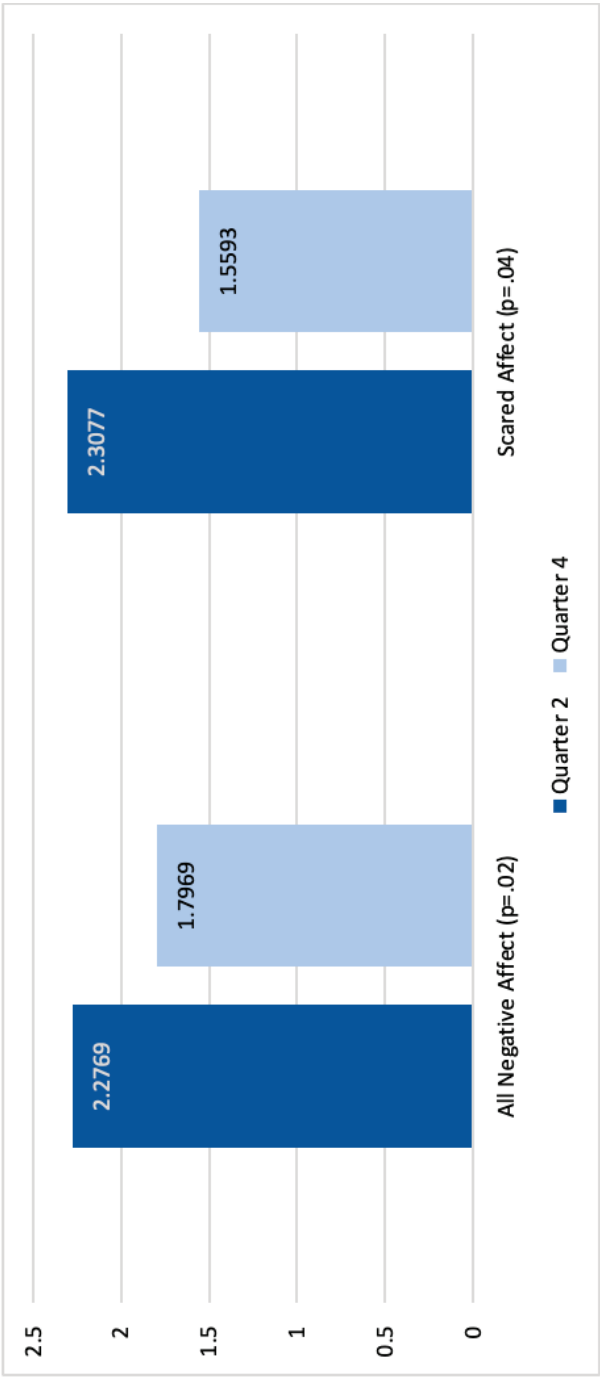

Figure 1. Negative affect changes in PANAS scale surveys

saying "it's gotten better" and that he now appreciated Ms. Grow's "a bit more sociable" classroom.

A correlation between affective antiracist teaching and writing confidence is not a new finding. Jody Polleck and Tashema Spence-Davis likewise credit their students' increased writing confidence to their antiracist curriculum that engaged students in uncomfortable conversations. While Polleck and Spence-Davis's curriculum included more explicit writing instruction and more focus on writing process than Ms. Grow's, some of their students linked increased writing confidence to the antiracist and activist elements of the curriculum rather than to the writing instruction. Even without such focused writing instruction, fear of writing decreased in Ms. Grow's students. They told us that they felt more confident as writers because they had learned to examine their biases and consider new perspectives.

Discussion

Openings for Antiracist Teaching. Our findings allow us to reiterate important features of students' writing fear in an affective framework. Again, their pattern of associating writing with future writing suggests that fear is primarily anticipatory. Located in a projected hurtful future, fear's affects nevertheless impinge on the present body (Ahmed, *Cultural*). Fear's temporal locus is yet to be, but its affective intensities are now. The students' consistent turn to materiality (time, size, magnitude) and the proximity of scared words and consequential words in their interviews confirm that affects are not just cognitive or emotional; they are also experienced in the body.

More importantly, our findings allow us to suggest *why* participants connected decreases in their writing fear to Ms. Grow's teaching. Here we contextualize our discussion by painting a picture of Ms. Grow's teaching using interviews, field notes, and course materials, and further, we explore pedagogical activities that illustrate the promises and limitations of antiracist teaching. We conclude by elaborating the SAP, a key assignment in Ms. Grow's antiracist curriculum and an object of many students' writing fear.

Curriculum and Cognitive Practice. During the first quarter interviews, when we asked students to explain what they were learning in Ms. Grow's class, they listed reading, analyzing, and annotating texts; relating texts to their own lives; appreciating "deeper" perspectives and different viewpoints; and changing their opinion on social issues. After the second quarter, students said they were learning to understand other people's experiences with racism and to summarize the things they read. In the third and fourth

quarters, students reported learning about racism and stereotypes and about how to be open to other people's opinions and viewpoints. Students liked the sustained practice in reading and interpreting texts and the course's focus on openness, but at least one student felt that "all the skills that we're using to write, we already know." While Ms. Grow provided some direct instruction about writing summaries and annotations, her students felt that the bulk of class time was devoted to reading, interpreting, and discussing texts.[2]

While we focus on the many admirable features of Ms. Grow's curriculum, we cannot ignore its relative "inattentiveness to *writing* instruction," as is sometimes the case with critical pedagogies (George 81). This is significant because when students said Ms. Grow's teaching made them less scared and more confident as writers, they were not talking about explicit writing instruction. During thirty-three hours of observation, we saw six occurrences of such instruction, four of which were lessons on annotation strategies, and one of which lasted only two minutes. In this regard, Ms. Grow's classroom resembles many high school classrooms (Applebee and Langer). Although Ms. Grow's students sporadically composed freewrite journals (discussed in the following subsection) as well as short in-class writing assignments, annotations, and formal assignments, the overall amount of required writing was low, and no assignment required multiple drafts or peer review—again in line with national trends (Scherff and Piazza).[3] Our purpose is not to criticize Ms. Grow's lack of attention to writing in her curriculum but instead to understand how such a curriculum helps students develop less fearful relationships to writing. We see compelling evidence that Ms. Grow's combination of affectively challenging content and affectively provocative teaching practices decreased students' writing fear and increased their writing confidence.

Still, we note that even while privileging affect, Ms. Grow sometimes positioned openness as a cognitive practice. She spent several weeks teaching students to "read with the grain"—a rational strategy of believing what the author says, gathering all the information and facts, and determining the main argument and subarguments. Reading with the grain, Ms. Grow taught, is "accepting that the author knows what she's talking about and just taking it in as interesting information." Ms. Grow led students through *New York Times* opinion pieces[4] claim by claim, evidence by evidence, in a rapid-fire question-answer session: "Where's the next claim?" "How the hell does [the author] know?" Students offered answers, which Ms. Grow either affirmed or corrected—"That's too vague"—followed by audible "Ahhs!" or groans from the students. Next, Ms. Grow taught students to "read against

the grain" by encouraging them to "determine relevance, question ideas and assumptions, and identify weaknesses in reasoning and evidence" (instruction she projected on a PowerPoint slide). She pointed out places where an author was inconsistent or revealed a bias: "He's pretty damn snarky about this. Holy cow!" Here, her instructional language grounded openness in cognition—the ability to identify, determine, believe, and question. Yet, Ms. Grow's exclamations also modeled an affective response to the readings and, in so doing, encouraged students to use similarly affective behavior, gestures, and expressions.

Antiracist Teaching and Affective Practices. Ms. Grow highlighted affect in three deliberate pedagogical practices: journal writing, discussions, and classroom activities. Students wrote in the journals, which Ms. Grow promised never to look at or read, about ten times during the year. Though Ms. Grow assigned journal writing sporadically, the journals communicated her concern for her students' affective lives. For example, on the day in April when Ms. Grow introduced "reading with the grain," she started class by asking students to write about "a time when you felt powerful and strong" and to describe the feeling of being powerful. Though the students' responses were diverse—weightlifting, playing roller derby, listening to music, ending a bad relationship, protesting a pipeline being built on Native American land—they all described an embodied activity that brought them into or out of relationships with other bodies and things. That is, their powerful experiences were all embodied and affect driven. Seemingly unconnected to the day's instruction about reading with the grain, this journal prompt nevertheless countered the lesson's cognitive focus. Ms. Grow ended class by sharing a personal story with the students, once again framing the day's cognitive content with activities highlighting affect to signal its merit.

In conjunction with course readings, Ms. Grow generated an affective environment by also encouraging difficult discussions about racism, a teaching practice that antiracist education scholars consider a "pedagogical imperative" (Love et al.). During these robust conversations, she encouraged students to share personal stories as she shared her own. She detailed her adolescent insecurities, her family's experiences with addiction, her unhappy first marriage and divorce, and the challenges of parenting adult children. Here, Ms. Grow excelled as a teacher—she was personable, honest, engaging, and funny. We watched students listen, laugh, absorb her narratives, sometimes challenge her ideas, and frequently respond with equal openness and vulnerability. One White female student described Ms. Grow's class as a place where "we can share struggles together. And I think that's something

really cool that I've never really seen a teacher do. . . . She always asks us to, like, talk about stuff we're really passionate about. Like, I have cried in this class from talking about something I'm extremely passionate about." Class discussions consumed a lot of instructional time, but students appeared especially involved in learning during these teaching segments.

Occasionally, discussions sprang from students' journal writing. For example, one Friday, Ms. Grow started class with a journal prompt: "What societal issue is most important to you?" After giving students time to write, Ms. Grow asked students to stand and share their experiences. This practice imparted a performative quality that focused attention on the speaker. Ginny, a White female, stood and talked passionately about transgender issues, becoming visibly upset as she spoke. Ms. Grow waited for a minute and then gently thanked her. Ginny sat, and Ms. Grow thanked her again. Though Ms. Grow was typically funny and even sarcastic, her warmth in this moment validated Ginny's vulnerability and again demonstrated Ms. Grow's own affective openness, her willingness to listen to and honor another's experience in a way that blurred the lines between bodies (Jacobs).

Finally, Ms. Grow used class activities to intentionally provoke affects that accompany and sometimes inhibit openness. For example, in November, while students were reading *The Hate U Give,* Ms. Grow had what she called a "silent debate." She gave students large sheets of paper with prompts about issues addressed in the book: color blindness, reverse discrimination, prejudice, racial profiling, implicit bias, and lethal force by the police. After writing an initial response to the prompt, students walked through the room silently and responded, in writing, to what they read of their peers' writing, now posted, without names, to the classroom's wall. These textual "conversations" allowed students to practice cognitive openness strategies—to agree with, believe, question, elaborate, or challenge what their peers said—all without verbal expression. By limiting interaction to semi-anonymous writing, Ms. Grow dampened some of the affective forces a typical classroom debate might spark. But this activity privileged other embodied affects, as students physically wrote on posters and moved through the space, encountering, avoiding, and waiting on other bodies. Because they weren't required or even allowed to talk, and because there was no assessment of their responses, the activity provided a forum for students to concentrate on their own affective reactions to others' ideas about racial inequality and the material experiences of Black and Brown bodies. Thus, the silent debate exposed both the affordances and the limits of rational, articulable dialogue as a vehicle for openness. It called students' attention to

the ways alphabetic texts provoke, press, and sometimes paralyze affective responses, even in the absence of speaking.

Together, the journals, class discussions, and class activities gave students opportunities to share their experiences and consider other people's experiences—those they read about and those they heard in class. These pedagogical activities may have correlated with writing confidence because they honored students' cultural knowledge, attitudes, and life experiences—the "incomes" they brought to the classroom (Minnix). The activities—especially the silent debate—may have also helped students become comfortable with affective dissonance. When Ms. Grow asked students to embrace, without trying to resolve, their affective responses, she was preparing them for the affective ambiguity writing provokes and demands (Dutro).

The Problem of White Habitus

Still, a few teaching moments felt affectively perilous. Michael Sterling Burns et al. remind us that White habitus can make it difficult for White teachers (and students) to recognize the inherent racism in behaviors they have mindlessly practiced and performed their entire lives. Teachers—even skilled and affect-conscious teachers like Ms. Grow—sometimes fail to fully consider how students of color may experience, perceive, interpret, or value teaching activities, especially affect-laden activities (260).

One cold January morning, Ms. Grow taught another explicitly affect-oriented lesson. She began by arguing that stereotypes and labels are an underlying cause of the social problems they were discussing. After dividing the class into small groups, she gave each group a poster paper on which they were to (1) define *stereotype*, (2) define *label*, (3) explain why we label people, and (4) write as many labels as they could. Only labels associated with sexual anatomy or acts were off limits, she told them. We watched two study participants complete this activity: Joseph, a Native American male, and Ben, a male student who did not provide a racial identity. Joseph and Ben worked with two girls who were not study participants. In our fieldnotes we captured word-by-word some of Ben and Joseph's dialogue. Because the girls were not enrolled in our research, we did not record their speech. What follows represents the group's interactions and direct conversation between Ben and Joseph.

> Ben defines stereotype as "a word or phrase directed towards a group of people," and Joseph agrees: "I like what Ben said."

One of the girls, acting as scribe, writes this on the poster. A brief discussion of the difference between stereotypes and labels follows.

> Joseph: "[Labels are] the idea that comes to mind when we think of someone."
>
> Ben: "How the behavior of someone is used to identify them."

The scribe writes *behavior used to identify a person*. Josh suggests the scribe add an *s* to *behavior* "because there are lots of behaviors." The scribe adds an *s*.

The group talks about why people use labels. Joseph says that labels are natural, people use them without thinking and without even noticing.

> Ben: "But sometimes people do it intentionally to hurt."
>
> Joseph: "It's not a natural instinct. I'm trying to think of a better way to put it." [Pauses.]
>
> Ben: "Habit."
>
> Joseph: "They're quicker, shorter, faster to think about."

The scribe writes: *The first reason we label people is because it is a habit we are used to. The second reason is because we are intentionally trying to hurt someone.*

The group starts listing labels: *beaner, fag, illegal, ratchet, ghetto, slut, pothead, player*. The scribe hesitates to write *fag*, and the group discusses whether it violates Ms. Grow's prohibition on sexual terms. They agree to include it.

> Ben: "I know there's another one, but I don't want to say it."

The scribe asks if he wants to write it instead.

Ben: "Not really."

Joseph: "The N-word?"

The scribe hesitates, and they discuss writing just *N-word.* They turn to Ms. Grow for direction. Ms. Grow encourages them to write the whole word, "to show its ugliness." On the poster, the scribe writes a rap-inflected version of the word.

When students had composed their lists, Ms. Grow asked them to silently walk around the room for fifteen minutes, asking themselves, "Who do I think of when I hear this term?" She instructed them to write groups of people (not individuals) next to the label. Here again, Ms. Grow isolated affective elements—movement, visual stimuli, silence—while highlighting affect's relational and cognitive dimensions ("Who do I think of?"). She smiled and nodded as she watched students move through the room. Her behavior suggested that she was, in Sarah Stanley's words, "tightly bound to [her] curricular map" of privileging affect and perhaps unaware of "the experiences of the people in the room" (21).

After surveying the posters, students composed an "exit ticket" describing their "thoughts and feelings" during the activity. Ms. Grow concluded the class with a brief discussion about the students' discomfort and uncertainty. Elle, a White student, said that her group had been "timid" to say labels aloud. Sophie, who identified as "half-White, half-Black," agreed that it was "uncomfortable saying things verbally." We, as researchers, wondered if the students' words fully captured their complex emotions and affective responses. Ms. Grow ended class by saying that on Facebook she had seen an attractive person referred to as a "snack." Students roared with laughter when she expressed exaggerated outrage at this "dehumanizing" term. But despite the levity, we wondered if the day's activity might have caused harm. Ms. Grow's attempt to end class on a light note suggested that she, too, felt uneasy about the lesson, something she confirmed in a later conversation with us.

Ms. Grow did not show us that day's exit tickets, but we later saw some evidence that the class discussion had too quickly dismissed the range of affect the activity provoked. For example, the formal writing assignment associated with this activity was a research paper on labels and stereotypes.

Of the nine study participants who submitted the assignment, five wrote in a detached, academic voice. But four students (two White, two students of color) included personal narratives of being stereotyped. One called it the "absolute shittiest feeling when people who have no knowledge of your being, decide to put you in one of their mental idea of groups and use some word or phrase to obviously let you know where y'all stand." During Ms. Grow's short debriefing after the labelling activity, no student had mentioned feeling degradation and humiliation during the activity. Though Ms. Grow admitted the offensiveness of labels generally, her critique failed to acknowledge the horrific differences between a label like "privileged" and labels like "fag" or the N-word. Furthermore, her decision to allow students to use racially offensive words exemplifies what Esther Ohito calls an "enactment of Whiteness"—the tendency for White teachers to address racism in ways that feel comfortable and convenient for *them* (21). We find much to admire in Ms. Grow's ability to combine "rational," intellectual strategies (define, list, categorize) with intensely affective experiences. But this teaching episode also reveals the way White habitus might blind teachers to potential hazards of affective antiracist teaching.

Antiracist Teaching and Writing Assignments: Choosing to Become Open

The journals, discussions, and class activities formed the nucleus of Ms. Grow's teaching, but the SAP project loomed over the entire year. Ms. Grow saw this assignment as the primary assessment of students' writing development and antiracist evolution. As such, she made it the entire basis of students' third quarter grades. Consequently, it also became the focus of students' fear, as discussed previously. As a nexus of antiracism and fear, the SAP deserves special attention. After they had completed the assignment, we asked students about their experiences with the SAP. Their answers reveal complex relationships between affect, openness, and decreased writing fear. We use Joseph's interviews as an example of the SAP's effect on writing fear and antiracist attitudes.

In early interviews and discussions, Joseph repeatedly articulated his belief that people succeed through effort, talent, hard work, and "mak[ing] correct decisions." His favorite past writing assignment, a junior year research paper on the American Dream, had convinced him that "it's a true thing that work, work, hard work does pay off." In his first quarter interview, Joseph evaluated Ms. Grow's curriculum through this meritocratic lens. She was

teaching about police brutality, Joseph said, in order to help students learn "how to not follow bad paths" and how to resist "if someone asks you to do something you don't want to do." Joseph seemed somewhat unconcerned about racial violence in policing, focusing instead on how Ms. Grow's curriculum resonated with his life goal to "be a good person." Using Ahmed's ideas about the relationship between fear and mobility (*Cultural* 68) to analyze these early interviews, we would say that Joseph viewed voluntary restrictions on mobility—avoiding "bad" paths and making "correct" choices—as necessary for upward mobility. If he seemed indifferent about police brutality, it was because he, as a student of color, believed bodies of color could avoid unwanted constraints on their mobility by being less restive, less bodies-to-be-feared.

Later, we saw Joseph struggle to reconcile his beliefs with the affects Ms. Grow's antiracist curriculum provoked in him. In his third quarter interview, Joseph was less sanguine about challenges Black people face, calling it "heart wrenching to know that just the smallest thing someone says to some individual or something like that can really affect their outcome of life." While doing research for the SAP, he discovered "facts" about police brutality that he called "pretty hard, and they're kind of hard to realize. . . . Some of them were very graphic." It was during this interview that the only *in vivo* use of the word *scared* occurred. Describing his group's SAP, Joseph said:

> [Police brutality's] a hard topic for people to talk about, but something that the police do it for a reason and, I mean, we don't want people to just be *scared* of police the whole time, I mean like all the time...but we wanted...people who come inside the school to know that, like, this is a topic, I mean, this is a, this is, um, I guess, a challenge that people of color do face every day. (emphasis added)

Here, Joseph displayed both his developing openness and the difficulty of adopting open stances. He first appeared to countenance "a reason" for police brutality. Yet in saying that people shouldn't fear police "the whole time," Joseph implied that there are times when people are rightfully scared of law enforcement. He ended by acknowledging that police brutality is a consistent "challenge" for people of color, but his verbal hesitations and "I guess" suggested that this was not an entirely easy stance for him to take.

Still, Joseph's openness is worth noting, given his prior attachment to you-get-what-you-deserve meritocracy. Jennifer Trainor calls these attachments "emotioned" because they are both personal and central to the

discourses, practices, emotional regulation, and affective experiences of schools. The persuasive force of emotioned beliefs is "elaborate[d] in school practices that are not about race per se," making the beliefs especially hard to challenge with antiracist pedagogies (80). Thus, it is remarkable that Joseph resisted his emotioned beliefs enough to advocate for the people of color who "do face [police brutality] every day."

Ms. Grow's affective teaching—teaching that Joseph called "heart wrenching"—seemed to help him develop openness. In his final interview, we asked Joseph to imagine a writing topic that would be "completely exciting and totally engaging." Maintaining his meritocratic beliefs, Joseph replied, "Something that I could relate to, something that has really stood out to me, like keeping morals or keeping the right ideas and thoughts in your head." But for the first time, he was equivocal about the limits of meritocracy and the realities of racism. He added, "I feel like I'm not facing a lot of things, but we actually are." Joseph's subtle change from *I* to *we* revealed a relational shift that allowed him to feel what other bodies of color experience. Rather than boldly espousing a gospel of meritocracy, Joseph now said that his goal as a writer was not getting someone to "agree or disagree" but helping other people "know" and "understand" what his writing is trying to say. He called Ms. Grow's class "very important" in changing his attitudes and helping him develop openness, which he described as his ability to "think of something completely different. . .all these possibilities and questions." Importantly, at the end of the year, Joseph said that it was this openness, the ability "to dig deep and really not just talk about just like plain old, plain old stuff," that made him a more confident writer.

We measured decreased fear in all students, and most students described increased writing confidence. But like Joseph, most students also exhibited some ambivalence regarding racism as it pertained to their own experiences. This is not surprising. Since openness is an affective disposition, it will always be in flux. Though we speak of developing openness, it is never stable enough to be accessed in every situation. Students, like all of us, will only ever be *becoming* open. An antiracist curriculum and affective pedagogy doesn't guarantee antiracist students, but it may help them more consistently and reflectively choose to become open. Even if students in our study experienced openness in nascent and uneven ways, we link Ms. Grow's students' increased confidence and decreased fear to her antiracist teaching and her emphasis on affect.

Conclusion

The students in our study became less scared and more confident as writers, and they attributed these positive changes to antiracist teaching designed to help them develop openness around issues of race, inequality, and social justice. Based on our quantitative and qualitative findings, we conclude that Ms. Grow's curriculum and pedagogy succeeded because they helped students become more comfortable with the affects of openness and the affects of fear. As a result, students felt more confident and prepared as writers. Our research suggests the promise and potential peril of affective antiracist teaching.

The promise: Teaching that foregrounds affect while also tackling difficult topics like antiracism encourages openness. Cognitive approaches to openness may be less effective because negative and positive affects that precede cognition are especially resistant to reason (Haidt). Students will experience those affects whether we address them or not. Unexplored, negative affects can work against openness, making students believe that because openness doesn't feel right, it is dangerous. Conversely, an antiracist curriculum that intentionally attends to affect can help students more mindfully evaluate their affective responses—including fearful affect associated with writing. Developing affective openness can confer political, social, intellectual, and emotional benefits; it can also make students less afraid of writing. In this regard, the outcome of Ms. Grow's class was noteworthy: a statistically significant and substantively meaningful decrease in students' writing fear measured by the PANAS scale. Helping students become more confident writers is an important outcome, and we are excited to think what might happen in a classroom that combines difficult topics and affect-oriented teaching strategies with focused writing instruction.

The peril: Despite its positive potential, affect can manifest in ways that discourage openness and damage writing confidence. Teachers who encourage affect cannot fully predict or control its effect on learning. Exploiting affective resources always introduces risk, and those risks are elevated when teachers arouse affect in connection with an antiracist curriculum. White educators, especially, should carefully consider how their habitus blinds them to the full affective ecology of their classrooms. Teachers should try to imagine how students might experience planned activities and assignments. We encourage teachers to invite students to participate in designing pedagogical activities, assignments, and learning objectives. And we ask teachers to talk frankly and reflectively with students about pedagogical missteps and

learning activities that go awry. Sarah Stanley has argued that collaboratively reflecting on positive affective moments can build a sense of community in antiracist classrooms. We add that collaboratively reflecting on negative moments can also build community and increase a sense of affective safety.

Ms. Grow's class offers a pedagogical pattern that composition teachers can thoughtfully adapt for their own classrooms. Because writing is inherently affective, everything we teach—all writing knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions—has cognitive and affective entailments. Thus, attending to affect is always part of a writing teacher's job. Furthermore, writing teachers can harness affect to pursue antiracist objectives, and this, too, our field increasingly agrees, is a fundamental part of writing instruction. Ms. Grow's teaching illustrates the challenges of affective, antiracist teaching. While writing this article, we shared two drafts with Ms. Grow as a form of member checking. In response, Ms. Grow affirmed her commitment to antiracist and affective teaching and described her continuing efforts to learn about antiracist pedagogy. She said she now better understands how her identity limits what she can assume about students' experiences in and outside her classroom.

Early in this article, we cited scholars who assert the importance of understanding basic writers' literacy experiences *before* they acquire a Basic Writing label. Our research convinces us that this approach must include understanding students' affective histories with writing and specifically how they have experienced fear and openness while writing. Antiracist teaching that pays attention to affect—past and present—has the potential to create more inclusive and equitable attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, and no less importantly, antiracist teaching that pays attention to affect may improve writing confidence. When composition teachers address urgent contemporary problems with both rational and overtly affective teaching, students grow as thinkers, writers, and people.

Notes

1. *Perspective* is an *in vivo* code.
2. Because Ms. Grow only had one set of books for all her classes to share, students read both novels during class time.
3. Of the five students who contributed their journals to our study, the most prolific writer filled just five 6 x 9-inch pages. Appendix B summarizes page lengths of Ms. Grow's graded assignments.

4. Opinion pieces dealt with a variety of subjects unrelated to the antiracist curriculum—for example, cell phone use and the virtues of boredom.

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Appendix A: PANAS Survey Instrument

This scale consists of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each word and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you GENERALLY feel this way when you are writing—that is, how you feel ON AVERAGE when you are writing.

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Interested					
Distressed					
Excited					
Upset					
Strong					
Guilty					
Scared					
Hostile					
Enthusiastic					
Proud					
Irritable					
Alert					
Ashamed					
Inspired					
Nervous					
Determined					
Attentive					
Jittery					
Active					
Afraid					

Appendix B: Major Graded Witing Assignments (with Page Lengths) in Ms. Grow's Language Arts Class

Assignment	**Average Length**	**Description**
Short answer responses	2 paragraphs	Response to Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"
Personal essay	1 paragraph	In-class essay responding to prompt, "What is your greatest regret?"
SAP research paper	1.25 double-spaced pages	Research-based paper responding to prompt, "What's in a label?"
SAP activist element	Various	Posters and video to educate student body about social justice issues
Reflection paper	1 page	Short answers to eight questions about students' experiences with the SAP
Reading responses (3)	1 page each	Summary and response to article of the week
Reading commentary	2.09 double-spaced pages	Analysis of and commentary on *The Hate U Give*

Appendix C: Research-Based Social Action Project (Abridged for Space)

UNIT'S ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What responsibilities do individuals have, whether teenagers or adults, of impacting society for the better within our individual communities?

ASSIGNMENT

Martin Luther King Jr. stated that "The time is always right to do what is right." If we do not do something to stand up and do what is right by those who suffer simply due to who they are as a person, we are inadvertently part of the problem. **The goal of this unit is to counteract a social injustice that is occurring. Your task is to 1) conduct research and 2) construct a social action project in order to create a positive impact on a community or an individual who is experiencing some form of injustice related to discrimination, racism, etc.**

GRADING

Your grade will be comprised of four different components, with each element weighted the same on the grade scale:

- The research (and artifacts of your research) of your theme/topic – 25%
- The group presentation of your theme/topic – 25%
- The direct action you take to make a difference to your community or to an individual (broken down into 3 levels) – 25%
- Your individual portfolio which contains your essay, research artifacts, and self-grade reflection – 25%

This research-based action project will determine the majority of your grade for third term. All four elements of the project must be completed in order to obtain a minimal passing grade for the project. Specific information will be given to you at a later time concerning the requirements of each element of the project and how they are broken down for an overall grade.

DIRECTIONS FOR SELF-REFLECTIVE ESSAY

1. What was the topic/theme for your group? Describe your social action project in detail—what did you and your group do?

2. Describe your group's process for this assignment, including the pre, during, and post steps that were taken to ensure success. How did you divide up the work? How was the execution of the project?

3. Tell me about one problem your group encountered while working on this project. Was it ever resolved? If so, how? If not, why?

4. How do you feel about your social action project? What parts of it do you particularly like? Why?

5. What would you change if you had a chance to do this over again?

6. What did you learn about yourself as you worked on this project?

7. Provide feedback on individuals within your group. For each person, respond briefly to the following:
   Did they contribute ideas?
   Were they civil and respectful to everyone involved?
   Did they fulfill their responsibilities to the group?

8. What grade would you give yourself, based upon your work ethic, performance, and reliability?

When Bootstraps Break: Re-examining Assumptions about the Symbolic Capital of Immigrant Students' Personal Persistence Narratives

Emily K. Suh, Barrie E. McGee, and Sam Owens

ABSTRACT: In the hopes of deepening Basic Writing instructors' critical awareness of their authority in assigning meaning to student experience, we present a case study of two adult-arrival immigrant students. We explore the ways that writing instructors and tutors encourage students' personal narratives of persistence—rather than actual persistence habits—and shape their academic and person identities, at times in ways beyond students' choosing. We call into question the relevance and utility of applying the popular theoretical framework of symbolic capital (Bourdieu) to Basic Writing and college literacy pedagogy. Instead, we call for Basic Writing instructors to respond to students' personal narratives as a form of participation within a specific academic discourse community. This work requires refocusing the learning environment as a community of practice to center student agency alongside educators' and students' participation goals, while providing students with an explicit introduction to participation expectations so that they can make informed decisions about how and when they choose to share personal stories.

KEYWORDS: agency; Generation 1 learners; immigrant college students; personal narrative; symbolic capital; cultural capital

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For her Integrated Reading and Writing class book report presentation, the student projected an image of the title page and the photograph of a family circa World War II. The student did not address the presentation guidelines of introducing and summarizing the book and instead discussed her own experiences as a young girl during the 1970s Afghanistan War: "It [the book] is exactly the same. . . even you lose your friend, your family, your everything. The pain was exactly the same." For 30 minutes, the student shared personal stories about fleeing from the Taliban, escaping from her deceased husband's controlling family, and being a refugee. During the question-and-answer period, no one asked about the book or her personal connections to the text. Instead, classmates praised her bravery and perseverance. (Observation Notes)

Following Anne Ruggles Gere, we define the personal narrative as "prose that gives significant attention to the writer's experiences and feelings" (204). The genre legitimizes developing writers' experiences and feelings and is most effective in college writing contexts when learners' disclosure of personal experiences aligns with course learning objectives to support students' progression toward academic or research writing (Bartholomae and Petrosky; Borshuk). Paul Eakin notes that personal narratives allow for identity expression, creating space for marginalized students to develop their sense of belonging and make meaning of their lived experiences. Furthermore, the trauma narrative, a subgenre of the personal narrative, is purported to offer multiple benefits for introducing academic writing (i.e., Borrowman; Brown; Dutro; MacCurdy). Trauma narratives feature an "infliction on the psyche" and demand a response from the reader (Spear 61), and teaching with narrative through a trauma-informed pedagogy can honor the experiences of survivors as they reclaim their voice to determine the meaning of their experience (Harrison et al.).

However, focusing on personal experiences, especially those involving immigrant students' experiences of trauma, can also shift attention away from academic skills development (Almon; Anderson et al.; Bajwa et al.; Carello and Butler; Suh, "Off"; Westfield). Although assignment prompts regarding personal narratives of overcoming can introduce students to the power of these narratives—particularly ones of perseverance—in Basic Writing and English Composition classrooms (Swartzlander et al.), Linda Harklau critiques adult ESL curricula that frequently draws upon personal experiences and survival tropes. Harklau argues in particular against what she describes as the overuse of personal persistence narratives focused on "coming to America," a prompt that assumes that learners of immigrant

backgrounds are newly arrived in the country through a journey that they are willing to share, while constrained to reduce this journey to assignment parameters. Further, scholars have not yet explored *how* educators may take up such writing as representative of students' ability to develop academically, or what kind of pedagogical training and skills may best advance writing toward such goals (Carello and Butler), leaving open questions around students' telling of such stories as part of academic development, including the empathy and advocacy for professional counseling and other supports that may be needed.

Overall students can face multiple challenges in developing their academic persona through the celebration of a "survivor" identity. In *Bootstraps from an American Academic of Color*, Victor Villanueva rejects the exhortation for students of immigrant backgrounds to "pull yourself up by your bootstraps," noting how this adage places full responsibility for success—or failure—on students while ignoring the role of faculty and staff in disseminating these stories beyond the page and into other (physical and metaphorical) spaces. Like Villanueva and others, we question the degree to which the valorization of grit can support learners of all language backgrounds in the English classroom. Educational scholars have offered related critiques (Mills; Morton and Paul; Nathan; Ris). In particular, literacy educator Alfred Tatum criticizes instructional overemphasis on soft knowledge as "a conceptually thin approach to overall socioemotional and cognitive development" (45). Instead, Tatum advocates for literacy instruction focused on the development of skills for academic literacy practices.

Trauma-informed pedagogy similarly calls for a recognition of learning as the primary goal of exploring trauma in educational spaces. Janice Carello and Lisa Butler describe trauma-informed practices as (1) understanding how violence, victimization, or other traumatic experiences have impacted the lives of those involved and (2) providing services and designing systems to meet the needs of trauma survivors. They note that "A central tenet of this view is that individual safety must be ensured through efforts to minimize the possibilities for inadvertent retraumatization, secondary traumatization, or wholly new traumatizations in the delivery of services" (156). The authors present examples of uninformed inclusion of trauma in college writing classes that they dub "risky" (159) and "potentially perilous pedagogies" (153). Further , scholarship on trauma-informed practices include cautions against non-clinical perspectives that associate painful personal sharing with growth or require the re-elaboration of students' trauma (Carello and Butler; Davidson; Downey). Outside of trauma-informed pedagogy, Melanie

Booth as well as Brandi Frisby and Robert Sidelinger, who study the impacts of student disclosure, have identified several potential negative consequences of sharing—or oversharing—in the classroom, highlighting similar risks.

This piece emerged from our work as director and instructors in an integrated reading and writing course discussing our concerns over students' overshar ing. We took on a two-year long course redesign to transition from stand-alone reading courses to corequisite, integrated reading and writing shortly after the first author became the director of our developmental literacy program. As we discussed the merits of various genres and assignment types in our lesson planning and the role of various literacy assignments in facilitating first-year student success, we reflected upon our observations of personal narratives in some cases taking on a life beyond the written genre to become talking points or presumed evidence of student persistence in campus conversations (Suh, "Off"). As developmental literacy practitioners, we noticed the challenges that arose from the interplay between students' personal narrative sharing and instructor/tutor responses when we assigned personal narrative writing. Our interest led us to re-examine the ways in which personal narratives can be taken up by college instructors and tutors, particularly when students come from diverse backgrounds.

In the present study, we explore the experiences of two Generation 1 learners, adult-arrival immigrant students, as they share their personal stories of trauma in the Basic Writing classroom, the writing center, and other study spaces. We seek to inform Basic Writing instructors on ways to support students' narrative sharing to both foster their academic development while offering empathy and advocating for professional counseling and support when necessary. Following the previously established nomenclature in the literature, we identify Generation 1 learners as "immigrants who (1) arrived in the U.S. at the age of 22 or older (Rumbaut) and are therefore ineligible for U.S. high school, (2) are adult learners (Knowles, *Modern Practice*) who first experience U.S. education in adult ESL (i.e., outside of U.S. K-12), and (3) transition to college with the plan to earn a degree" (Suh, "Counting Backwards" 3-4). While we acknowledge the dangers associated with labeling students and how such practices can reduce students' complex backgrounds (see Anderson; Orapeza et al.), we echo Suh's argument for increased collaboration between the fields of applied linguistics and Basic Writing in order to increase awareness of Generation 1 learners as individuals possessing unique life circumstances and experiences within the larger, more visible population of students who are learning English as an additional language. In particular, we hold with Suh that "Generation 1 learners are adult learners

who are influenced by their multiple social roles (Knowles, *Modern Practice*) and educational experiences outside of the U.S. K-12 system" ("Counting Backwards" 3-4). These multiple roles include that of family caregiver, employee, and community elder, among others that are not commonly held by Generation 1.5 students or other traditionally aged learners (Suh, "Counting Backwards"). Suh further notes how "Scholars' failure to establish a unified term for adult immigrant students is indicative of the students' marginalization within fields of educational scholarship and learning institutions" ("Counting Backwards" 1) and calls for scholarly recognition of this group of students in order to emphasize their uniqueness and strengths as adult-arrival immigrants who are learning English as an additional language.

Rather than examining the construction of the narratives themselves or the ways in which narratives are taught in Basic Writing (Borrowman; Dutro; MacCurdy; Spear), our present examination focuses on the sharing and circularity of the narratives told by two such Generation 1 learners within Basic Writing contexts around their college community. Our exploration was also influenced by our reflections on the first author's role as both a researcher and writing instructor/tutor at the focal students' college during a previous (2017) study of Generation 1 learners transitioning into community college (Suh, "Off"). The second and third author share this reciprocal relationship of their scholarship and instruction as they, like the first author during the data collection, seek to improve their teaching through relevant and personal research. In our conversations about the ways in which the learners' narratives were taken up by institutional actors and how they came to possess varying levels of symbolic capital within the college, we were guided by the following questions:

- What personal narratives do Generation 1 learners share in their first term in college?
- And, how and by whom are Generation 1 learners' personal narratives received by others in the college?

We begin by summarizing the current literature on students who have recently immigrated and then highlight the shortcomings of over-applying theories of symbolic capital (Bourdieu; Oughton) for guiding Basic Writing instructors and tutors who label learners' personal experiences as valuable, or what scholars term *symbolic power* (Bourdieu). In particular, we examine Bonny Norton's theory of investment, which is highly influential in the fields of Second Language Acquisition and Teaching English to Speakers of Other

Languages. Investment theory emphasizes learners' choices towards identity formations within new or targeted community membership; however, our exploration uncovers the powerful influence of *other* community members in accepting or rejecting learners' identity enactment. From this examination, we conclude that Basic Writing instructors and tutors must acknowledge our roles in creating and circulating students' personal narratives. Instead we encourage our readers to re-conceptualize students' personal narrative sharing as a form of participation in the community—rather than capital to be deployed. Finally, we illustrate how a focus on personal experience through the personal narrative assignment can inadvertently shift attention away from developing academic skills, particularly for Generation 1 learners with rich personal and academic experiences. By contrast, refocusing popular second language acquisition and Basic Writing theories may help to amplify students' ability to assign their own meaning to the narratives they share while disconnecting stories of personal persistence from expectations of academic persistence.

GENERATION 1 LEARNERS' PERSISTENCE NARRATIVES: THEORIZING PARTICIPATION AND SYMBOLIC CAPITAL

In differentiating the different types of students learning English as an additional language in college, Robert Terenishi and colleagues document the rise of immigrant-background students' entrance into higher education, noting that many of these learners begin their college careers in Basic Writing and other developmental education contexts. This literature focuses on Generation 1.5 students, who are foreign-born but U.S.-raised and educated (i.e., Doolan; Haras et al.; Kanno and Harklau; Roberge et al.; Rumbaut and Ima). In his exploration of the overlap between conceptualizations of ESL writers and basic writers, Paul Kei Matsuda describes Generation 1.5 students as "active learners of the English language who have received at least several years of U.S. high school education" (68), while Generation 1 learners are adult-arrival immigrants whose age prevents their participation in the U.S. K-12 system. Although they come with a range of previous formal education experiences, Generation 1 learners typically first enter U.S. education through adult ESL programs. Basic writing scholars who explore the intersections of BW and speakers of additional languages populations focus on Native English Speakers, Generation 1.5 students, English Language Learners or L2 writers, and advocate for translingual approaches to working with these students (Comeau-Kirschner and Shahar; Maloy; MacDonald

and DeGenaro).These approaches emphasize linguistic difference yet fail to take account of the important differences that exist between Generation 1 students and Generation 1.5. students in terms of their academic preparation, socialization, and life and cultural experiences.

One popular theorization of both Generation 1 learners and Generation 1.5 students' entry into the U.S. educational system and their language and cultural learning draws from Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger's communities of practice model (Becker; Gil; Mecom). According to Lave and Wenger, newcomers are apprenticed into community participation through mentorship by, and interactions with, other more experienced community members. Despite unequal levels of participation between community members, Lave and Wenger maintain that newcomers' limited engagement within the community is a form of "legitimate peripheral participation" (98), which invokes "relationships between newcomers and old timers. . . and activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice" (29). As participants gain increasing insight into the community and mastery of community participation rituals, they take on more central participation roles.

Lave and Wenger's communities of practice model has also been taken up in Basic Writing and postsecondary English language instruction contexts where students are introduced to academic writing conventions and participation expectations (Osman et al.; Razak and Saeed). Shannon Carter, for example, explains how Basic Writing classrooms can facilitate legitimate peripheral participation. Carter's description of the "groups of individuals who sanction and endorse particular ways of doing things and particular results" (102) illustrates the authority of community "old timers" (Lave and Wenger 29), such as instructors and tutors who may label certain activities or behaviors as "innovative and valuable [while] condemning others as ineffective, inappropriate, or even unacceptable" (Carter 102). Carter further documents how students come to understand the importance of the "rules" of writing and their instructors' authority in determining those rules. As one of Carter's students explained, "[W]hat I write really depends on my teacher and my surrounding" (109). This contextual awareness is essential to students' academic success: "If we are in school, this community of practice, then we have to follow the[ir] rules, because that's how this community works. People who can't follow the rules will be left out of the community, no matter how intelligent they are" (Carter 119). Understand-

ing the rules of what and how to share of personal experience may be even more challenging for recent-arrival adult immigrants.

Bonny Norton similarly explores how Generation 1 learners engage in the target language as a form of investment in various language-using communities. According to Norton, learners' participation in the language-using community is a process of acquiring and applying "a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will increase their value in the social world" (166). In other words, Generation 1 learners seek to leverage their education, relationships, and other resources for recognition of their community membership while simultaneously gaining a stronger sense of identity and additional capital through their participation. Norton draws from the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's *symbolic capital*, or the "fundamental powers" of economic, social, cultural, and linguistic capital that are recognized by others as legitimate. Legitimated symbolic capital offers the individual possessing it a level of control over the valuation of others' identity as members of the community of practice. Scholars such as Steven Alvarez have argued that instructors ought to include a personal statement assignment in their course to highlight the ways students' cultural capital transform in a system to what is considered academic merit. While Alvarez advocates for a return of authority back to learners as an essential component of learning, the explicit processes by which symbolic capital, such as personal experience, become legitimated—and that individuals have the power to legitimate that capital—remain underexplored.

Several scholars apply the lens of capital to research on emergent multilingual or immigrant-background communities' and individuals' educational experiences (e.g., Bunar and Ambrose; Igarashi and Saito; Shin). Drawing from Marx, the adult education scholar Helen Oughton argues that capital has high or low exchange-value (i.e., assumed level of prestige or transferability of capital to another context), as well as high or low use-value (i.e., the level to which capital is assumed to be practical but not necessarily valued in other contexts). Oughton warns of the dangers of overapplying educational theories of symbolic capital that perpetuate "the danger of the instructor or researcher imposing their own cultural arbitraries in deciding what 'counts' as funds of knowledge," or how to value students' personal experiences (70). Critical perspectives on the utility and symbolic value of personal experience, and how these experiences come to be recognized as relevant to students' academic development, therefore, remain especially necessary as educators continue to view personal experience through a

lens of symbolic capital and to assign symbolic value to learners' personal experiences.

As we describe above, personal narratives have the potential to afford students substantial amounts of symbolic capital. Because represented struggles are often already legitimized in the academic and public sphere, personal narratives of overcoming may provide an immediate "in" for students who experience "othering" due to cultural, educational, or linguistic differences. Personal narratives of persistence can also facilitate students' enactment of their desired identities by presenting the persona they wish to become (Brown; Dutro). However, scholars increasingly critique the use of narrated celebrations of grit as a pedagogical practice for supporting culturally or linguistically minoritized students. Their concern stems from a focus on personal vulnerability that does not finally empower students to action (Pollard). Merridy Wilson-Strydom argues against using notions of individualized responsibility to teach persistence since such frameworks fail to acknowledge the role of social context and the limits institutions can impose on individuals. Within the context of English as a Second Language education, Harklau critiques the over-reliance upon "coming to America" narrative assignments that similarly reduce students' immigration experiences to stories of individual effort while failing to acknowledge the nuances of individual students' immigration experiences. Such assignments frequently result in an overly simplistic storyline.

Additionally, we acknowledge quantitative explorations of the potential harms of personal sharing outside of assignments or the English classroom (Frisby and Sidelinger; Sidelinger et al.). Sidelinger and colleagues, for example, found a negative correlation between frequent personal disclosures by the instructor and reports of affective learning in public-speaking courses. In a study of student perceptions about the appropriateness of personal disclosures, Frisby and Sidelinger found students negatively responded to personal sharing they perceived as being too frequent, negative, or irrelevant to the class and course concepts. In her discussion of unintended consequences in assigning personal narratives, Booth notes the difficulty of authentically assessing such learning and addressing the unequal power relations which grant instructors significant control over responses to self-disclosure. Booth, who supports student self-disclosure, cautions, "We may find that students reveal personal information that raises questions about our boundaries, our roles, and our ethical responsibilities" (6). This l iterature indicates that violations in topic or amount of personal sharing negatively impact learning; however, additional research is needed to qualitatively un-

derstand how oversharing impacts students (particularly those from diverse cultural, linguistic, and age groups) and the impact of such sharing beyond the written page and into other campus spaces, as learners navigate their entre into the academic community of practice.

Because such a community is not limited to the physical boundaries of the Basic Writing classroom, we were particularly interested in how, where, and by whom these narratives are taken up in the college. Given the diversity within the human experience upon which such sharing is based and the uniqueness of individual learners, we also sought to understand nuances in faculty and staff responses to personal sharing and how such responses can vary by context. In transition to our methods, we restate the questions that guided our research: What personal narratives do Generation 1 learners share in their first term in college? And, how and by whom are Generation 1 learners' personal narratives received by others in the college?

OUR STUDY: METHODS

This IRB-approved study draws from a larger multiple case study examining the experiences of six Generation 1 learners who were all adult-arrival immigrants in their first term of transition from adult ESL into mainstream college classes (Suh, "Off"). Since the original study's completion, the first author has further developed or re-analyzed the data to explore several aspects of Generation 1 learners' transition to college, including learner resistance as engagement and identity enactment (Suh, "Engagement"; Suh and Shapiro), learners' literacy strategy use (Suh, "Strategy"), and learner and faculty expectations for being a college student ("Expectations"). In the initial study, six learners were chosen as a convenience sample based upon their transition into developmental literacy classes. All six learners were observed sharing personal stories through writing assignments, conversations with college personnel, and/or in class discussions/presentations. To address the guiding questions of the present study, however, the two cases with the greatest variation of outcome, Labiba and Olan (names are pseudonyms), were reanalyzed to examine the learners' use of, and instructor/tutor response to verbal personal narrative sharing in or emanating from the Basic Writing classroom, the writing center, and advising lab. Labiba and Olan were in their first term of college during the data collection. Although the first author was a faculty member at the community college, she was not their instructor during the study.

Learner Profiles and College Context

In her late 50s during data collection, *Labiba* was only seven years old when she fled her home country of Afghanistan after Mujahideen soldiers destroyed her village and murdered her cousin. She had lived the majority of her life as a refugee in Pakistan, Iraq, and Iran, marrying and raising her children abroad before immigrating to the United States where she completed several ESL courses as her children finished high school. Although Labiba had spent several years at the college completing ESL classes, she felt most connected to the Bridging Lab, an on-campus study space where advisors tutored students preparing to take the college's placement exam. Labiba had been a student in the lab before the study began, and she remained close to the lab advisors who had assisted her with each part of the application and registration processes. Lab advisors encouraged Labiba to view her personal overcoming as evidence of her ability to persist in college. Even after she began college classes, Labiba continued informal visits to the lab to visit with the advisors or study at a computer desk.

Olan entered the United States through a special immigrant visa program for military interpreters due to his support for U.S. troops in Iraq. As a Yazidi, Olan spoke his home language of Kurdish and had learned to read and write in Arabic and English. Olan was one of many Yazidi interpreters who had been settled by the federal government in the same town. As a result, Olan drew from his relationships within this tight-knit community in order to make informed decisions about college. Olan was open about his military service and the hardships he had faced in Iraq; however, unlike Labiba, his stories about his past were less central to his interactions with others about college—and in his view, less consequential to his academic progress. These two learners were chosen for the study because of their divergent ways of personal sharing and for how college faculty and staff perceived this sharing to be relevant to the learners' academic success.

Data were collected at a mid-sized community college in a midwestern capital city. Observations were conducted in the learners' classrooms, the writing center, and the learners' preferred study space. The learners were taught by the same instructor during different terms. Because both classes were small (fewer than ten students enrolled in each section), the instructor established an informal environment by emphasizing class discussion and peer work, including reading and responding to classmates' assignments. Students were thus familiar with each other and their writing. In interviews, the instructor described prioritizing relationship building, the results of

which were noted in observations of students' attentive listening to each other's personal sharing and the instructor's reference to learners' lives outside of the classroom.

The writing center similarly offered an environment for developing personal relationships with students. Writing sessions took place in a cozy, secluded space at the back of the library. The seating arrangements allowed both tutor and learner to simultaneously view and write on a shared document at small round tables slightly larger than those found in cafes. The center was staffed by professional (rather than peer) tutors who worked multiple shifts per week in schedules posted on a center bulletin board. As a result, students could work repeatedly with the same tutor, establishing relationships and developing storylines and academic skills over multiple sessions. Both interviewed tutors described how they came to know details about students' lives, which they encouraged students to share in their writing. Despite the welcoming environment tutors attempted to create, in interviews they lamented their limited opportunities for professional development to support multilingual, multicultural students and the complete absence of support from the college for working with survivors of trauma.

Data Collection and Analysis

The present study involved a reanalysis of data examining learners' experiences transitioning to college. For that data collection, the first author followed an open-ended interview protocol described in Suh ("Off"). Interviews occurred after observations in order to solicit clarification of observation tasks or the interview participants' perceptions of the observation. The first author asked learners to describe in their own words their study routine as observed and to identify additional ways they studied. Follow-up questions emerged in response to learners' statements about their studying routine and choices. For example, in response to Olan's description of studying in Iraq, the first author asked him to compare reading unknown English words in class and his work as an Army interpreter. Olan's resulting explanation of the irrelevance of his military service compared to his high school experiences provided a rich data source examined in our findings.

Similarly, the first author's interview protocol for instructors, tutors, and advisors elicited their observations and impressions about the learners' preparation for college. The first author asked participating faculty to describe in their own words moments they identified as important in the observed instructional period and to identify the learner's level of prepa-

ration for college success based upon their demonstrated academic and English language skills. However, in discussing observations, these college personnel frequently offered commentary about the connections they deemed between learners' past experiences and their present academic efforts. In their interviews, for example, the instructor and several tutors and advisors independently commented upon the negative effect that trauma had on Labiba's engagement, based upon their knowledge of Labiba's past and their impressions of her participation in class and at the writing center; these college personnel had decided that Labiba's struggles in college could be partially the result of PTSD. The present study included data from three interviews with each learner (199 minutes), two instructor interviews (52 minutes) one interview each with two writing tutors (68 minutes), and one interview with a Bridging Lab advisor who worked with Labiba while she studied (10 minutes).

Observation sites were likewise tailored to explore personal sharing's circularity and impact across the college and learning experience. The first author completed two observations in each learners' English classroom, an observation of each learner in the writing center, and an observation of each engaged in their studying routine (totaling 330 minutes). Data from the writing center were included to explore how content from a personal narrative assignment, for example describing how the writer overcame a struggle, could become a resource for student motivation as well as content for future writing assignments. The first author also observed the learners in their preferred study space. Inclusion of observations from these spaces allowed the research team to examine how learners' stories were taken up by other college agents when learners studied on campus. While Olan chose to study at home, Labiba studied in the campus' Bridging Lab located in the library. The advisors' desk was adjacent to the row of student computer desks, allowing advisors and student to converse with ease while student studied. Although Labiba was no longer a current lab student at the time of data collection, she often chose the computers and companionship of the lab over the relative silence of the rest of the library. Because Labiba chose to study in the lab during her observation, lab advisors were interviewed.

Through analysis of the thick, rich observational data (Geertz) and interview transcripts, and using the multiple case-study as model (Merriam), the research team captured the nuanced ways in which learners' personal narratives of persistence were revisited in conversations by the learners or instructors and tutors to influence their positioning within the college and their perceptions of their acceptance in the college community. Research

offered a rich portrayal of how learners' written narratives of personal persistence became part of larger discourses in class and around campus—in contexts beyond instruction about or the drafting of assigned narrative writing. As a result, the ways that faculty and staff took up and emphasized the learners' personal persistence narrative essays in subsequent conversations and class discussions, referencing learners' writing rather the written products themselves, became the focus of our analysis.

Before discussing the themes that emerged in the context of our learners' portraits, we first acknowledge the study's limitations. This study focuses on the sharing of narratives, or the stories that people tell, about their persistence and others' responses to those narratives. Persistence is a popular topic of educational studies, and a subsequent analysis of the data would yield germane insights into learners' persistence behaviors; however, as we have already noted, this study focuses on how the retelling of personal narratives of persistence can move beyond the essay and narratives of persistence into perception, to profoundly influence student experience. Additionally, our analysis examines the experiences of only two Generation 1 learners and the college personnel with whom they interacted. Further data collection, such as interviews with classmates or other college personnel might have illuminated how others less familiar with the learners perceived the appropriateness of their personal narratives. Future research could also examine Generation 1 learners' personal sharing in other college classes to ascertain whether their experiences bear out research on native students in these contexts (e.g., Booth).

FINDINGS: THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE NARRATIVES REVEALED

In this study, we explored how Generation 1 learners' personal narratives were received in Basic Writing contexts and the extent to which their narratives influenced the learners' entre into the academic community. We present student and instructor or tutor interactions in each academic context, interweaving observation and interview data in order to analyze the stories learners shared and the ways others responded to those stories.

Labiba: When Personal Narratives Become Too Powerful

Labiba in Class: Our opening description of Labiba's book report presentation illustrated how Labiba's sharing became powerful beyond the scope of her written work. During that presentation, Labiba's classmates

and instructor listened attentively as Labiba described her cousin's murder at the hands of the Mujahideen, her harrowing escape from the Taliban, and her experiences as a homeless single mother camping outside the U.S. embassy. Indeed, the instructor and several classmates were already familiar with these events after having read about them in previous essays. Despite the repetition and the disconnect between her oral presentation and the required topics to be included in the presentation, Labiba's classmates and instructor affirmed her persistence. Like Labiba, they did not address the book or Labiba's developing academic reading skills as required in the assignment guidelines. For instance, Labiba's use of the expert reading strategy of making comparisons between herself and the text (Horning) directly aligned with a course student learning outcome but was ignored in the ensuing celebration of Labiba's grit.

As the term progressed, Labiba's instructor and classmates became increasingly frustrated by her storytelling, which they perceived as interruptions. In a later observation, the first author noted classmates' eyerolls and refusal to respond to Labiba's frequent requests for clarification. Later in an interview, Labiba's instructor reported to the first author that Labiba could sense others' growing hostility. By the end of the term, the instructor noted that Labiba had increasingly withdrawn from class discussions although she continued sharing about her personal hardships. The instructor explained her choice not to directly address Labiba's participation with her , noting, "I know she's got the trauma."

Labiba in the Writing Center. Over the course of her daily visits to the writing center, Labiba openly shared about her life as a college student and her experiences as a refugee abroad. In interviews, tutors reflected upon the times that Labiba's personal and academic persistence would surface in conversations about school. One writing tutor described how "All of the kinds of tribulations that she had experienced usually fed nicely into what she was being asked to do [for class]. . . with its focus on narrative work." He recalled, "I spent a lot of time kind of validating her experience and that she was brave to be writing these things, that it was good, and therapeutic for her, and I don't know if that was really true, but it—there was a lot of encouragement, a lot of praise." Tutors actively encouraged Labiba to view her stories of past overcoming as relevant to her college experience, assuming that the stories themselves, and the persistence they described, were both content for writing assignments and motivation for college success. As a result, Labiba readily and uniformly shared these personal stories with her tutors, suggesting her internalization of the stories' power but not her

"rhetorical dexterity" for negotiating the changing literacy contexts of different writing assignments and academic genres (Carter 101).

The tutors noted Labiba's mounting struggles to negotiate the college's multiple literacy spaces. Although they encouraged Labiba to move beyond narrative support for her assignments, such as by engaging with assigned texts or conducting independent research, they described her growing agitation in response to their recommendations. One tutor shared with the first author how tutors collectively decided that "she [Labiba] has PTSD basically and that when she is stressed, she can't learn, and she is stressed all of the time." As a result of this informal, non-clinical diagnosis, these college personnel appeared to avoid offering directive feedback for fear of retraumatizing Labiba.

Labiba in Her Own Words. During the first author's observation in the lab, the advisor had warmly greeted Labiba and described her as the "hardest worker," recounting stories for the first author of Labiba's academic efforts and her work ethic as a single mother. Later that visit, the advisor described how Labiba was "here every day at the computer doing the work, yet despite everything that she's been through, she is such a happy person wanting to learn." Labiba in turn referred to the lab advisors as personal friends and continued to visit the lab daily to chat with tutors and study at the computers, despite the fact that she was no longer a student of the lab (which prepared students to take the college placement exam). As the term progressed, Labiba seemed to become increasingly distrustful of the lab and others who sought her out, including the first author (E). The following exchange occurred during their last scheduled interview, which took place in the student center at Labiba's request.

L: Why did you ask to talk to me?

E: Remember that we scheduled this time for your interview?

L: Everyone is always wanting to interview me. [Tearfully] They [a Bridging Lab tutor] called me too. [College] is full of bad men. Everyone is harassing me. Why can't they just leave me alone?

E: Did something happen?

L: My friend… they [other students] won't sit next to her because of

hijab [unintelligible speech as Labiba ate her sandwich and spoke in a distressed tone under her breath]. Why can't they just leave us alone?

E: Do you want me to leave you alone?

[Labiba agreed.]

The first author stopped the recording, but Labiba continued to speak, referencing on-campus hostility she felt and claimed to experience because of "bad men," a label she applied to college employees whom she saw as persecuting her. Labiba cried softly as she ate her sandwich and told the first author she was going to drop out of college because of these "bad men" and racist students. Ironically, the lab staff trying to reach Labiba did so out of concern for her mental health; however, because the college lacked in-house counseling, the advisors felt they had few resources to offer Labiba.

The exchange between Labiba and the first author illustrated the degree to which Labiba felt threatened by college personnel and other college students as she experienced the college's transition from a historically White, monolingual student body to one which was increasingly more racially and linguistically diverse. The campus's shifting demographics reflected similar changes and challenges in the surrounding community as it took in immigrants through a national refugee resettlement program. Labiba's perception of her treatment at the college echoed some of the negative experiences she had faced in the community as well; she felt fully the systemic nature of the racism within her college and community . Instead of the strength she had previously drawn from retelling stories of her persistence as an immigrant and her plans of graduating college, Labiba was now focused on the hardships she faced at the college because of her race and, as a result, she planned to leave school. Just as her instructor, tutors, and advisors linked Labiba's academic success to her personal persistence, Labiba now connected her past experiences to her struggles and her personal narrative to ongoing traumas too difficult to speak or write from.

Theorizing the Importance of Labiba's Narratives

Theories of adult language learners' investment of their symbolic capital (Bourdieu; Norton) or as members of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger) can offer important insight into Labiba's personal sharing.

According to Lave and Wenger, "participants [within the community of practice] share understandings concerning what they are doing and what that means in their lives and communities" (98). Within the college as a community of practice, the instructor and tutors were "old timers" (Lave and Wenger) who mentored Labiba into the community and whose invitations or encouragement to retell her personal experiences signaled her expected participation role. In particular, Labiba's personal sharing fed into the "bootstraps" narrative of immigrant success through hard work and determination (Villanueva). Through the tutors' and the instructor's encouragement of Labiba's sharing, her stories became a form of symbolic capital, or a good upon which Labiba could draw in order to gain recognition within the community. Despite overlap between Labiba's experiences and this celebrated trope, Labiba's retelling of her personal stories demonstrated that she did not understand the rules for engaging in this form of legitimate peripheral participation within the college. Rather than empowering Labiba, the tutors' recommendations to include personal narrative elements in her writing instead evidenced tutors' *symbolic authority*, or power, to name and identify certain forms of capital as valuable (Bourdieu).

Labiba's narratives lacked what Oughton refers to as use-value: the stories alone were not actually demonstrative of academic persistence. Labiba's stories overshadowed other aspects of her identity and, in their focus on Labiba's personal stories, faculty and staff did not acknowledge Labiba's academic strengths in other areas. Rather than positioning her as a capable student, Labiba's personal narratives in some cases became others' justification to refer to Labiba not as a survivor but instead as a victimized refugee. The writing tutors and college lab advisors grew increasingly concerned about Labiba's mental health as the term progressed. Witnessing her growing distress, one advisor sought Labiba out on campus and called to check in. Unaware of the advisor's intent, Labiba perceived the call as further evidence that everyone was trying to harass her. Labiba was threatened by these gestures and, during her last interview, explained how she now felt unsafe on campus because of the now unwanted attention she received from advisors and tutors—the "bad men." Her use of the phrase was telling as she had previously used the label for Mujahideen soldiers from her past. Her reaction suggested that Labiba's narratives held so much power that they led to her silence and facilitated her contemplation of victimized identity as she attributed others' responses to her status as a foreigner and refugee.

In applying a lens of symbolic capital within the community of practice, scholars can describe the power of Labiba's stories and the actors who

responded to them. However, such a reading fails to offer an appropriate pedagogical response. In particular, this framing does not sufficiently account for a fuller understanding of the role of the instructors and tutors. These individuals encouraged Labiba to draw upon her personal experiences as capital, but they did not explain how she could transform that capital so that it would be relevant to her college goals including actual, transferable academic persistence. Without that explicit instruction, Labiba's instructor and tutors became the shadowy figures Carter's students assume are responsible for creating "the rules of writing" (110), and who ultimately de-authorize the learner as a writing-speaking subject. The instructors and tutors were disconnected from their expectations about when and how to place personal stories in an academic context; neither they nor Labiba appeared to have the power to unpack those expectations.

In order to value Labiba's experiences and guide her in the application of that capital, college faculty and staff must enact a pedagogical stance that both makes visible the implicit rules of sharing personal experiences and honors learners' agency in determining how their stories are taken up in college.

Olan: When Others Command Learners' Narratives

Olan in Class. Olan's instructor encouraged students' personal sharing in class as inspiration for academic persistence and as narrative material for essays. When Olan shared that he had served as an interpreter for the U.S. Army in Iraq, his instructor emphasized the relevance of his service to his academics. For the instructor, the experience of translating from Kurdish or Arabic to English was highly relevant to Olan's coursework. In a private conversation, his instructor discussed with the first author how she felt these interpreting experiences contributed to Olan's developing inference skills and cultural context knowledge for assigned readings. However, Olan dismissed such a comparison, instead pointing to his previous academic achievements as evidence of his linguistic aptitude. He elaborated to the first author, "I studied British language in school. . . . I read and work and just practice." Ironically, Olan's rationalization that his persistence in his studies and on the job made the work unchallenging supported his instructor's comparison of the skills involved in interpreting work and writing for college. Yet Olan and his instructors drew upon different stories and interpretations of Olan's past. Despite his lack of conviction about the relevance of his interpreting experiences, Olan worked hard to incorporate narrative

elements into his assignments. In fact, by the end of the term, his instructor noted Olan's "difficulty transitioning to the more academic writing because he was still kind of wanting to tell a story."

Olan in the Writing Center. When he visited the writing center for assistance in removing first-person language from his problem-solution essay, Olan did not intend for his essay, "Immigrants Living in America," to focus on his own experiences. However, the tutor encouraged him several times to draw from his own life and "write a personal statement." After Olan completed a read-through of his essay for organization, he voiced his lingering concern: "The most, that was confusing to me" about adding in his personal experiences without using first-person language because, "She [the instructor] said like. . . can't use 'I.'" Such a shift would have required moderate revisions to the manuscript. In response, the tutor noted that "It doesn't say anything about not using [first-person]," and she recommended that Olan could return for additional assistance. Olan concluded, "So if I write about my experience, then it will be fine?" The question indicated his acceptance of the tutor's advice and expectation to incorporate a personal narrative into his problem-solution essay.

Olan in His Own Words. Readers might question whether Olan demurred from writing about his previous experiences because of the trauma those memories invoked. However, Olan openly and regularly shared about his past. For example, while Olan composed a draft of his essay on how to improve working conditions, he recounted for the first author his despair and helplessness as he worked a fast-food job while his family fled the ISIS attack on Mosul. Olan recounted this experience as he sat in his living room, composing an essay about the workplace. That same visit, Olan engaged in the following exchange with the first author (E), which further illustrated his dismissal of the connection between his previous work and his academic future.

> E: You continued to practice speaking English the whole time you worked [as a translator], all those six years. Did you do any other practice?
>
> O: No, you know the practice was not really, you know, they always—the security situation was very, very dangerous, even sometimes we cannot go from our rooms to speak to the soldiers more practice. . . . Not really much practice. You know for six years, if I always do like the practice talking, will be more even.... I [could] go

> right away to the Compass [placement] test, and then pass all the levels for English.

This study session offered an important glimpse into Olan's life and the experiences and relationships he most valued. Olan belonged to a tight-knit group of Yazidi interpreters and families, some of whom had immigrated several years before him and were now graduating from college. While Olan studied, his wife baked bread to share with these friends, and Olan told several anecdotes about benefiting from their advice regarding placement testing, advising, and tutoring. He also told stories about being a gifted student and language learner in Iraq: "Whenever teacher explain to me, sometime I do homework but not really a lot, not really well. When they teach me, when explain, I know everything." Although Olan's existing linguistic strengths and his relationships with other interpreters were much more valuable than his experiences interpreting, the first author found no evidence that other college personnel acknowledged or drew from narratives of Olan's mastery of Arabic as a second language to inspire his efforts to learn English.

Theorizing the Importance of Olan's Narratives

As we noted in the case of Labiba's experiences, investment theory offers several notable points regarding Olan's personal sharing and college personnel's responses, yet ultimately falls short of guiding our teaching of Basic Writing. Olan's ability to integrate personal narrative elements into his writing represented his peripheral participation at the college and suggested that he possessed a greater level of rhetorical dexterity (Carter) than Labiba did. Despite his deeper knowledge of the "rules" for participating, tensions emerged within Olan's interactions with the instructor and tutor related to their conflicting assessment of the value of Olan's experiences: While they wanted to celebrate his previous personal persistence, Olan instead wanted to capitalize on his relationships and linguistic strengths—both of which went unnoticed by the faculty. Conversely, faculty and tutors privileged narratives about Olan's Army service as it implied his mastery of English and therefore suggested his legitimate participation within the college's community of practice. While Olan dismissed these narratives, he lacked the symbolic power to control the value of experiences and relationships he deemed most relevant to his college success.

Whereas Labiba initially accepted college personnel's celebration of her personal sharing, Olan rejected their efforts to repurpose his narratives around his ability to "pull himself up by his bootstraps," as such an

understanding left no space to recognize Olan's social connections or his self-described natural language abilities. As a result, Olan and his instructor and tutor could not reconcile their contrasting understandings of how Olan should share his stories—or which stories to share. Ultimately, Olan's stories of his experiences as a language interpreter were symbolic capital with high-exchange and high-use value (Oughton); but in related cases, when instructors and tutors identify students' experiences as such, this labeling can fall short of transforming our teaching practice. Instead, we must make explicit the expectations for sharing personal narratives and the rules determining how narratives are valued so that Olan and others can "effectively read, understand, manipulate, and negotiate the cultural and linguistic codes of a new community of practice (the academy)" (Carter 99).

CONCLUSIONS

Our findings lead us to question both uncritical applications of investment theory for making sense of Generation 1 learners' experiences in Basic Writing and the ways that learners' stories of personal persistence come to be seen by others within the college as relevant to the learners' academic success. In this section, we begin with theoretical implications for this work. We then discuss practical implications f or engaging with students' personal sharing in Basic Writing.

Bonny Norton's investment theory and other theorizations of symbolic capital and participation in the community of practice have profoundly influenced teaching Generation 1 learners and other students enrolled in Basic Writing and beyond. While Norton's theory of investment focuses on learners' desired membership and participation choices, this study illustrates the powerful influence of *other* community members in accepting or rejecting learners' moves. Helen Oughton similarly critiques theories of symbolic capital that perpetuate instructor-imposed cultural arbitraries, or students' loss of control over the symbolic capital of their personal stories. In particular, we illustrate the problematic ways that college faculty and staff can come to value *stories of* persistence—rather than *actual* persistence—and how an overemphasis on this symbolic capital can misdirect our pedagogical response to these stories.

The study complicates our understanding of both symbolic capital and learners' ability to deploy it as a resource in the community of practice. In both cases, the college personnel erroneously assumed that personal narratives about persistence were directly translatable to the learners' persistence

within the academic community. Yet, we were ill-prepared to assist learners' application of the persistence featured in those narratives to their academic goals or their identification of other narratives with greater relevance to their college success. In both cases, the learners lacked control over the symbolic power associated with their narratives and became locked into a resulting "bootstraps" and "grit" trope not of their choosing. Our findings also complicate Lave and Wenger's assumption that even newcomers with peripheral participation are always received as legitimate members of the community. At times, the ways college personnel and students made meaning from both Labiba and Olan's personal narratives prevented the learners from engaging in more central participation despite their desire to participate and to make meaning of stories they viewed as relevant to their academic success.

Recommendations: Refocusing Personal Narrative Writing within the Learning Environment

We recognize that college faculty and staff's focus on Labiba and Olan's personal experiences indicated their genuine investment in these learners. In order to foster perseverance within Generation 1 learners—and all students—through narrative sharing, writing faculty must make explicit the connections between learners' personal sharing as a means of participation and the learners' academic goals. In particular, writing instructors must teach students to be aware of the way literacy is used, or what Carter refers to as "the 'rules' one should know and apply before she will be considered 'literate' by other literate members [of the community]" (106). While all students benefit from this meta-awareness, such knowledge is essential for Generation 1 learners who are more likely to experience academic, social, and cultural marginalization than their U.S. born and educated peers.

- **First, faculty should forefront student agency, or their ability to assign meaning to their own experiences**. Shapiro and colleagues' teaching for agency framework includes (1) acknowledging students as agents with control over their own acts and academic development, (2) teaching students to notice when action needs to be taken and to evaluate possible actions in light of contextual factors, and (3) creating optimal learning conditions for students to develop awareness and exercise their agency. Given instructors' inherent symbolic power in the writing classroom (Booth), adopting an agency-enhancing pedagogy supports students' meta-awareness and ability to assign meaning to

their personal narratives and academic development. For example, faculty could have encouraged Labiba and Olan's meta-awareness through a comparison of their personal and academic persistence and exploration of specific habits, behaviors, or relationships the learners identified as relevant to their academic success.

- **Second, the academic community must respect the participation goals of all community members, not just the writer.** In contexts, such as Basic Writing classes, where the primary goal is academic skills development, assignments should reflect and scaffold to that goal. This is not to say that personal narratives have no place in Basic Writing but rather that instructors who choose to assign them or privilege these stories when they emerge must also be prepared to assist the class in connecting the content of such narratives to learners' participation in the academic community. Brown further acknowledges the difficulty of ensuring that one student's personal narrative does not drown out other voices or foreclose academic discourse. This point is particularly salient given the students' frustrated responses to Labiba's frequent interruptions that were not immediately relevant to the current class topic. Instructors must take the lead to ensure that all learners are heard in the classroom community.

- **Third, Basic Writing instructors can educate themselves about trauma-informed pedagogy**. Carello and Butler encourage faculty to center learning as their primary goal and to remember that emotional safety is a precondition for learning. Instructors must be prepared to provide referrals to counseling or emergency services, acknowledge how trauma can impact learning even when it is not an explicit aspect of the curriculum, reject the romanticization of trauma, and understand the dangers of generalizing clinical research to nonclinical learning contexts. Carello and Butler conclude, "Teaching about trauma is essential to comprehending and confronting the human experience, but to honor the humanity and dignity of both trauma's victims and those who are learning about them, education must proceed with compassion and responsibility toward both" (164). Others similarly emphasize the academic goals of nonclinical spaces and encourage educators to both maintain high academic expecta-

tions for all students while also empowering students to protect themselves by offering choices about disclosure and participation (Davidson; Downey; Wolpow et al.).

Finally, participation in the academic community must be supported by explicit instruction and opportunities to engage in informed sharing of personal narratives. In assigning personal narratives, faculty can support learners' academic identity by maintaining the personal narrative's academic purpose. As Olan's instructor noted, even a skilled student can experience "difficulty transitioning to the more academic writing" if they have been trained "to tell a story." Learners need opportunities to transition into assignments requiring more than personal experience or opinion for support. Faculty must help students understand that sharing personal stories is but one of many possible forms of academic participation—and that personal sharing may not facilitate students' desired participation role within the community. Instructors must clarify the expectations for sharing personal narratives, the ways that those narratives come to be valued, and strategies for students to exercise their agency in determining when, how, and to what effect they will share their personal stories as a form of participating within the college's community of practice. It is only when learners are thusly empowered that they are truly free to engage in the academic community.

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Encouraging Student Voices: Toward a Voice-Based and Antiracist Culture from the MA Program to Basic Writing

Elizabeth Baez and Rosanne Carlo

ABSTRACT: The authors discuss their process of actively working to generate interest among graduate students and faculty to change approaches to Basic Writing pedagogy, emphasizing personal writing and antiracist pedagogies at College of Staten Island CUNY, a large public university. The authors argue that master's level coursework and faculty professional development can forward an agenda that values multilingual writers and their voices through code-meshing. In particular, we focus on MA student teachers' composition theory backgrounds and how they express them in Writing Program professional development workshops and further into the classroom. The lead writer, an alumna of the CSI MA program in English, discusses the content of her thesis—focusing on code-meshing and voice development—and how she showcased this work as a teaching assistant for our grad program, further serving as a voice and advocate for Writing Studies on campus.

KEYWORDS: antiracist pedagogies; graduate student mentorship; MA teacher training; responding to student writing; voice; Writing Program Administration

Writing Studies and the Golden Calf (Rosanne)

One of the dominant narratives of literacy education is student success—demonstrated through data that shows speedy advancement through courses, high graduation rates, and indexes of social mobility post-graduation. At least at our institution in the City University of New York (CUNY) system, we are not immune to such discourses because they are built into our ethos and mission. In fact, these narratives make their way into our

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advertising, our administrative agendas, and our assessments of our colleges and programs. Underlying this desire for student success, particularly when we focus on basic writing education, are harmful assumptions about language and its use. For example, professors may see code-switching as a way forward in successfully transitioning students from working class and minoritized backgrounds into the academic community and its current discourses; code-switching's advocates say that we should value students' home and school languages, thus teaching them language awareness and flexibility. Ultimately, in this view, students are taught to rhetorically choose Standard American English (SAE) for school and professional contexts (Wheeler and Swords).

Though there has been a push to abandon code-switching ideologies in the larger academic field of Rhetoric and Composition studies—as evidenced by the recent keynote speeches at CCCCs and in other scholarship (Baker-Bell; Inoue; Smitherman; Young)—there is still a lag from theory to practice, in how our Writing Programs and English Departments are actually run. This leads many PhDs and specialists in Rhetoric and Composition to mistakenly believe writing programs are adapting to become more antiracist when they are not.

When I started working at College of Staten Island (CSI) CUNY, in 2015, I realized that the Writing Program there—though process-based in its approach to teaching writing—had not been active in thinking about antiracist approaches to literacy. This does not mean there weren't individual instructors doing antiracist work, it just means it wasn't part of official programmatic messaging, curriculum, or professional development. Furthermore, CSI also had trouble maintaining tenure and tenure-track rhetoric and composition scholars for almost two decades, cycling through several hires. The CSI Writing Program's insular, conservative culture and workaday conditions (a high number of adjunct to full-time ratio, with the WPA managing 100 adjuncts every semester) most certainly played a role in the high turnover.

Though part of the CUNY system, CSI—in the middle of the island, in the most conservative borough of New York City—is hard to reach, both geographically and psychologically. As a result, CSI has a very insular culture and many of our administrative staff and adjuncts are Staten Islanders who would identify as working-class Whites from ethnic enclaves. However, this is less true of our students, who have become a more diverse population as the college continues to attract Brooklynites who can now take a limited stop bus to the school. Our working-class White adjunct faculty and administrative staff understand education as a hustle, playing to get ahead—hard

work will lead to a middle-class kind of lifestyle and success. Standards are standards; rules are rules. Keep your head down, don't get too invested, and get through it, like a shot at the doctor's office. Ira Shor discusses the dominant bootstraps ideology, of the insulation and slowness to change at CSI in his many monographs. The wall of "the status quo," he writes, is high and well-fortified; it ". . . has an inertial strength carrying along many people who actually resent the system, especially in times of diminished dreams and rising insecurity," yet at the same time, people keep buying into the hustle because it is "safer and simpler to nest in traditional methods than to risk official punishment and professional isolation by experimenting for critical change" (*When Students* 52). This "hustle" mentality ultimately leads to writing pedagogies and assessment methods that are damaging to minoritized and working-class students in first-year writing, as the status quo of correctness in writing is maintained and a bias is created against those who are not fluent in Standard American English (SAE).

CSI is not an outlier. For varying reasons, traditional approaches to teaching writing are normal operating procedure in many writing programs in this country. Full-time faculty with institutional and programmatic agency, then, have to follow through on a process of re-organizing the teaching of writing; this means they have to fully dismantle the foundations of bootstraps and merit-based success discourses. WPAs and others should replace these with a shift to expressive discourses that value student agency in language choice and an appreciation of students' experiences; our curriculums and pedagogical practices, then, should ideally engage students' "ethnic rhetorics, multilingualism, and culturally-plural literacies" (Kynard *Writing While Black* 6). This message becomes even more important when a university serves a majority of students who identify as minoritized and working class, like CSI CUNY.

In conversations between the coauthors, we agree that writing education isn't about "saving" poor, minoritized kids from their under-prepared educational and literacy backgrounds or pulling them away from their rich cultural and / or linguistic heritages (Baker-Bell 16); education isn't a promise of advancement that we can hold out, like a golden calf. Many in Rhetoric and Composition, including the authors of this article, are done believing in the myth of student success, in "the myth that the same language (White Mainstream English) and language education that have been used to oppress Black [and other minoritized] students can empower them" (Baker-Bell 34).

I'm indebted to the voices of Young, of Smitherman, of Baker-Bell, and many other scholars because this work helped me see how code-switching

"contradicts our best efforts and hopes for our students" (Young 51). A younger me, a naiver me, needed to read these texts and needed to imagine education differently, to keep returning to my White, female body and to interrogate the role it has played historically in education, to view myself as a historical subject, but also as a person who has agency, who can make choices, who doesn't have to reproduce the past. In thinking about my placement as an educator in the CUNY system, and College of Staten Island in particular, I can't help but feel the historical context of what we are doing in composition classrooms in the present and for the future. To talk about Basic Writing is always to encounter the history of CUNY, to understand its mission to educate New York's working class and its commitment to students of color. To extrapolate to the larger field, then, the endpoint of first-year writing (FYW) should be a pedagogical focus on student experience and voice as it is the "gain" we have to offer as writing educators; because, if we forward this goal, we can set the stage for real change in our society and we can stop worshipping the false idols of success discourses set before us due to capitalist, racist, and patriarchal norms.

As coauthors, Liz and I wish to explore the following questions throughout our article: How do we center student voice and experience in writing? How do we persuade writing instructors, particularly part-time adjuncts whose backgrounds are not in linguistic and rhetorical studies, that the tenets of code-switching uphold a racist hierarchy; that code-meshing (or incorporating multiple languages, the practice we will center throughout this discussion) can foster the development of student voices and more equitable classroom spaces? How do we administer writing programs with justice-oriented approaches to language pedagogy and practice?

What we are getting at here is an ideological shift in our thinking about the meaning of composition and education more broadly—at CSI CUNY, but also at other institutions across the country still largely adhering to traditional instruction and assessment. One dominant ideology, or counterclaim, is to defend the practice of a "liberal education" in which code-switching is thus cast as a tool of salvation, because it is seen as a way to economically better the lives of students (often working class, but not always) who speak multiple languages and dialects so that they can pass in "professional" or "academic" settings if they speak and write in SAE. As Vershawn Young argues, code-switching upholds "segregationist, racist logics" (Young 51)—in other words, the warrants (or minor premise) of this ideology is to continue the idea that other languages don't have the same value as SAE, that a whole lot of people don't have the same value as White people.

Advocates for code-switching may say that education is about securing paths to advancement for speakers of undervalued Englishes, upholding professional standards, and fostering ease of communication, and/or promoting language universality. This argument champions liberal education and SAE as a tool for class advancement, and many adjuncts in our CSI Writing Program would agree with this powerful logic. Donald Lazere's recent arguments in *College Composition and Communication* draw upon the same framework of understanding literacy education as a tool for class advancement. Using Audre Lorde as a case study, Lazere argues that Lorde used her "liberal education," and by extension standardized English, to advance in academia ("Response to Paula Mathieu and William H. Thelin"). In Lazere, I hear the implication that Lorde's passing somehow undermined the radical messages in her work, such as the idea that the master's tools will not tear down the master's house. In effect, Lazere claims that current economically "disenfranchised" students are being double-marginalized because they are now being discouraged from attaining a "liberal education" with SAE at its center, a circumstance framed as a "privilege" that will enable them to enter "critical discourse" and middle-class habitus (474).

First of all, education isn't a privilege, it's a right, and it should be free to all people who seek it; the difference of privilege and right is important because the former situates education as a vehicle for elitism and the latter situates education as a vehicle for democratic social change. Also, elite institutions don't hold a monopoly on quality of educational experience, and readers should remember that Lorde worked at CUNY for the SEEK program at City College (See Lorde). Most importantly, Liz and I see this point of view as a failure of imagination of what education can be. As if access to some sort of classical ideal (reading of "canonical texts") and a standard set of language practices makes a person able to enter the public sphere armed with force and reason. It doesn't. Was Lorde a brilliant poet and author only due to her elite, liberal education? I think not. Or, at least I think that assertion is reductive. Didn't Lorde also get a kind of education on New York's subways, from her Caribbean mother, from her years of marching with women in the streets? And, finally, does Lorde only write or speak in SAE? No. Not at all. Lorde code-meshes in her various books and poetry.

If we can agree that the force of writing is intimately connected to the development of voice, of a way of being and a style in the text, then, in a way, we have to imagine too that voices can work to reflect life experience, can house contradictions, can contain multiple ways of expression, and can draw upon many languages. How limiting it is to only imagine academic

discourse as the province of elite learning and SAE, as if we were planting a tree seedling into a clay pot.

This is a story of our full-time Writing Program faculty's efforts at CSI CUNY to create a voice-based and antiracist culture around and for writing and the teaching of writing. This is not to say that our department has arrived at this place—we haven't—we have a long journey to get there, just like other writing programs, our professional organizations, and academia on the whole. In this article, we are trying to name the convergence of circumstances and practices that undergird an ideological shift toward these goals for composition. Liz and I believe that master's level coursework and faculty professional development can forward an agenda that values multilingual writers and their voices through code-meshing. In order to facilitate these changes, our CSI Writing Program has added more opportunities for engagement with critical theory, both for our MA students and our adjunct faculty, which make up the majority of our composition program. For example: (1) We changed our MA program through adding a thesis requirement, with students completing theses in subjects in Rhetoric and Composition (Spring 2017); (2) We created an opportunity for MA students to teach in our Writing Program (Fall 2017); (3) We offered consistent opportunities for professional development for graduate students and adjunct faculty in the Writing Program (Fall 2017).

We specifically focus on how developing MA student teachers' knowledge in composition theory translates into this department cultural change that emphasizes personal writing and antiracist pedagogies. We co-wrote this article so that Liz's experience of writing her thesis, and how she showcased her writing as a TA for a class in our graduate program, could serve as a critical case study for this work. She details her process of writing her thesis, which focused on code-meshing and personal experience; our work together as mentor and mentee; the challenges she faced in writing; and the ways she understood how she was composing her own voice on the page. Liz's thesis journey, which beautifully shows the power of personal narrative and also represents that voice of students who are continually silenced by supremacist cultures of writing and its administrations, further illustrates the need to begin changing the culture of higher education now to a full embrace of code-meshing ideologies.

The CSI MA Program: The Thesis Requirement, New MA Instructors, and A Commitment to a Voice-Based and Antiracist Writing Culture (Rosanne)

The first step in encouraging student voices in a writing program—particularly focusing on minoritized students' experiences—should begin in coursework, professional development, and training for current and future writing teachers. When I accepted my job at CSI CUNY in Fall 2015, I knew I would be teaching in the MA program and also assisting the Writing Program with adjunct professional development. As I grew into my position and role in the department, and also as I later stepped into the role of directing the MA Program, I began to see how we can make critical changes and interventions in the Writing Program via training MA students to be instructors. This population, in general, is more open to institutional critique and change, perhaps because they have experienced first-hand the soul-sucking nature of a standards-based, depersonalized system and education—as Liz will describe in her narrative. This move helped in stabilizing the adjunct pool, but also afforded us the ability to hire people with some background in Rhetoric and Composition.

Our MA in English Program at CSI consists mostly of students who transition from our undergraduate program; many of them have a desire to work or are already working in high schools, or they want to work in higher education as writing instructors or in advising capacities. Very few of our students decide to go on to pursue PhDs. In the program, students can choose to concentrate on Literature or Rhetoric and Composition.

Because we do not have a concentration or minor in Rhetoric and Composition studies on the undergraduate level, many of our MA students are encountering critical theory about literacy and its acquisition for the first time. Successful English students at CSI—those who make it to an MA program—can sometimes view Basic Writers through a deficit stance due to their lack of engagement with theory. Like some of the professors they have encountered at CSI, they may subscribe to intensive grammar instruction and to notions of the superiority of SAE—even if they themselves have suffered through this type of corrective instruction. In practice, they may believe in an ideology of code-switching, without knowing the technical term. As Marcia Buell explains, because of this potential bias, instructors who train and work with pre-service teachers should "design MA courses which promote a *theorized pedagogy* that explores how history and social or institutional contexts drive pedagogical approaches. . . . [and] question why

and how they should be applied to particular contexts in order to best serve basic writers" (93). Furthermore, the reasoning behind reading and discussing content about basic writers and their right to their own language use can also be, as Susan Naomi Bernstein explains, "[to] cultivate compassion for the life circumstances and positionality of [BW] students" (11).

Because of important curricular and administrative changes made in 2017, our MA students can both teach for the CSI Writing Program and pursue writing a thesis in Rhetoric and Composition and often become important voices for Rhetoric and Composition among their peers and with our adjunct faculty. MA students in Rhetoric and Composition now complete a 28-page thesis on topics in our field; the thesis need not be original research, but should "explore a topic in a way that significantly adds to conversations among scholars in the field" (Rubric).

Due to the MA students' new roles, it is very important to design our MA classes to lead to more critical, thoughtful, and intentional teaching. In this vein, I've stripped away the need to cover some sort of "master narrative" of the field of Rhetoric and Composition and terms associated with our disciplinary movements, like "expressivism," "social turn," and "post-process." Rather, I focus my 15-week course on larger themed ideas, like "Developing Student Voice and Agency" or "Ethical Assessment and Feedback Practices." In essence, rather than weighing the class down in field-specific jargon, I've foregrounded the subtopics in the field most applicable to the populations that my students will most likely teach or advise: NYC public school and CUNY students, primarily minoritized and working-class students.

Therefore, I introduce students to the work of critical pedagogy, alternative assessment practices, and code-meshing because I want them to think about education as a place where White supremacy lives and has to be rooted out. Because my classes have a majority of White students and educators, my goal is to have them face their privilege, to learn the emotion of being uncomfortable, and to harness the critical skills of listening, reflection, and action to change the system. This translates to about half the class weeks (7) being dedicated to readings and themes that center around Basic Writing, such as its history at CUNY, writing assessment and feedback, voice development, code-meshing, and ESL pedagogies. Students are assigned several projects throughout the semester that ask them to reflect on the readings and apply them in pedagogy. Some of the assignments are practical in nature, such as creating a writing assignment or unit based on a weekly reading theme and leading class discussion / creating discussion questions for the class. Other assignments, such as composing short reading responses on our discussion,

writing a teaching philosophy, and doing an annotated bibliography with independent research, further aid students in writing a research paper on the topic of their choice. Ideally, students who concentrate in Rhetoric and Composition can begin laying the groundwork for specialization in the field, and can work with me (or another Rhet/Comp affiliated faculty member) as a mentor for their thesis projects. Liz, as a former student, started developing her thesis ideas when she took the Teaching of Writing course with me. All of these activities are planned out with the hope that the MA student can also translate this knowledge to classroom practice, especially if they continue to teach with us in the CSI Writing Program.

This article doesn't have the space or focus to review all readings that are relevant to developing a political orientation toward literacy education in the assistance of helping future teachers better serve critical student populations (Gray-Rosendale). I will, however, pause to discuss three readings and some critical questions we explored together. For example, students in my class grappled with Jackie Jones Royster's idea of "home-training," of outsiders entering African American communities to comment on the literacy practices of residents and what it means to be interpellated by a normative gaze, as she describes these in "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own" (32). I specifically asked students to think about the metaphor of the contact zone, or Royster's concept of "cross-boundary exchange" (30), in the case of this article, among different race backgrounds. I wrote to the class:

> Royster puts forward several ideas as to how these exchanges could go better; one of these ideas is "home-training" (32). What does "home-training" mean, and how does she develop this idea throughout the piece? How can we apply the concept of "home-training" to our work in the classroom with diverse populations?

Another week, students consider how traditional writing assessment is a practice that reifies racial hierarchies and biases, and how we can work to change our practices through alternative approaches such as contract grading. They read Asao B. Inoue's proposal for contracts in "How I Came to Labor-Based Contracts" from his book, *Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom*. Inoue argues for shifting writing assessment based on labor, not based on quality, because of these biases (Inoue 60). We specifically focus on Inoue's Marxist critique of writing standards and why we must question them. We specifically look to Inoue's own question at the end of the chapter: "What is so wrong with

'non-judgmental, unpunitive, encouraging' classroom assessment ecologies? Who says that judgmental, punitive, and discouraging assessment ecologies work better?" (72). We discuss the concerns about and barriers to practicing a contract-based grading system (particularly in the high schools), and we think about alternative assessment forms that can serve as a corrective to the problem of racial and linguistic bias.

Further, we discuss Black linguistic racism and how this is perpetuated in schools through particular pedagogical approaches, such as code-switching and contrastive analysis via April Baker-Bell's chapter of her book *Linguistic Justice*, "What's Anti-Blackness Got to Do with It?" We specifically focus on the section that discusses the internal impact these biases have on school children, where Baker-Bell charges that eradicating Black language via strategies like code-switching erases "Black people's ways of knowing, interpreting, surviving, being, and resisting in the world" (25). We talk about how, as literacy educators, we can be change-agents and activist in promoting antiracist pedagogies in our schools. I specifically have them discuss the ten framing ideas for "Antiracist Black Language Education and Pedagogy" (Baker-Bell 35), and offer potential practical strategies and approaches that value these ideas for the classroom.

The above readings, along with others that I include in their coursework, invite MA students to think differently about literacy education; they ask us to reflect on the ways that identity, language use and writing, and social context are inexplicably linked. Some students can begin to question received biases they may hold around literacy and its acquisition. Others, alternatively, can encounter—if they are ESL or dialect speakers—a recognition that the languages they speak are valuable and a part of their academic voice. Readers are exposed to ideas that may help them confront some of the inequalities that "business as usual" (i.e. rigor, grit, traditional grading, and other inherited ideas) in the writing classroom may perpetuate because of the common belief in the superiority of SAE. My hope, too, is that these readings act as a form of persuasion that, through their arguments of embracing voice-based pedagogies, such as code-meshing, readers will see the real value of student languages / dialects and life perspectives. Additionally, many students who concentrate in Rhetoric and Composition, like Liz, decide to write their thesis on one or more of these sub-topics, delving further into the scholarly literature and becoming even more conversant with the field.

Unlike some of their adjunct peers who may have little to no experience with composition theory, as they come from backgrounds usually in creative writing or literature, our CSI MA students bring a familiarity with concepts

like code-meshing. Their presence changes the dynamic of the conversations we now have in professional development workshops.

Professional Development Before and After: Bringing in Composition Theory Knowledges (Rosanne)

The important part of our mission at CUNY, the part Writing Programs and their administrators and faculty should hold onto, is to work to raise class and race consciousness and to overthrow social hierarchies (enforced through practices like code-switching) that perpetuate White supremacy. Liz and I believe that to teach in the CUNY system—and to do it with some sense of ethics—is to invest time in knowing and practicing current theories in the field of Rhetoric and Composition that perpetuate the spirit of the 1974 CCCC "Statement of Students' Right to Their Own Language." This landmark resolution, which has gone through several revisions, basically affirms people's rights to their own language in speech and writing, particularly in the context of schooling. In other words, it places educators as activists for a future where all languages can be leveraged for powerful rhetorical discourse and meanings. Educators who stand by the tenets of the resolution, then, believe students should not be taught to eradicate or switch their languages in formal speaking and writing settings in order to pass.

Yet, in our Writing Program at CSI, our sections (including developmental and ESL) are largely staffed by adjunct faculty—we employ around 100 adjuncts a semester, some of whom are also graduate students. The majority of our faculty are White and also do not have a background in Rhetoric and Composition; as such, some hold deficit stances toward students and believe in success myths, for example, focusing on the superiority of SAE in writing instruction, enforcing code-switching, and emphasizing the need to know SAE to advance in life. By contrast, Basic Writing is turning more toward a future with equity and access as a priority; for example, in the 2018 Special Issue of *JBW*, guest edited by Laura Gray-Rosendale, Marcia Buell and Barbara Gleason reiterate this importance in training graduate student teachers, advocating for the creation of teaching communities that bolster knowledge of composition theory and challenges deficit stances.

Culture and ideological changes in a Writing Program are often slow, and College of Staten Island CUNY still has a long way to go to improve its performance when it comes to antiracist work. Our Black and Brown students fail composition at much higher rates than their White counterparts, just as they do at other universities in the country.[1] We are in a broken system.

The CSI Writing Program—like many Writing Programs across the country—can only improve so much in a system of higher education that sustains such unfair hiring practices and such great income inequalities between full-time and part-time faculty. In some instances, we are able to pay adjuncts for their professional development time—when their efforts are connected to grant monies the department has earned or that our administration has given us. But a lot of our Writing Program workshops and reading groups are voluntary, and this can limit people's availability and incentive to participate.

Our Writing Program full-time faculty (which includes eight members: three tenure line professors; two PhDs in Rhet/Comp, one in Linguistics among them) has been working to expose our part-time faculty (close to 100 adjuncts) to the field of Rhetoric and Composition through our reading groups, workshops, and curriculum discussions while including composition theory. In these meetings, we now have a mixed audience of CUNY Graduate Center WAC PhD students, current and former CSI MA students with some familiarity of the field, and our other Writing Program adjuncts, with creative writing and literature backgrounds. We offer a professional development workshop in Writing Studies monthly, and additionally host a composition theory reading group every fall (two readings in the semester).

Prior to 2017, we focused professional development events solely on practice, bringing forward topics that are relevant to day to day classroom issues, such as commenting on student writing, designing writing assignments, and using Blackboard to facilitate discussions. These workshops assisted Writing Program adjuncts, but they didn't quite help them to reflect on their philosophy of writing, their purpose for educating students, and their reasonings behind their classroom practices. They also didn't introduce a critical element into the discussions that may have led to investigating language, racial and/or class biases and critiques of SAE toward antiracist pedagogies.

Because of the changing circumstances of the MA program, we started the composition theory readings groups in Fall 2017 to create more of a sense of a cohort among our MA student teachers and also to include adjuncts in these meetings; we have offered it every year since. The reading group takes up topics similar to those covered in my MA seminars, such as writing assessment and feedback, voice development, code-meshing, and ESL pedagogies.

Though we have read eight articles and book chapters since the start of the reading group series in 2017, I have the space here to focus on one session as an example of our work with adjunct instructors in professional

development. In Fall 2019, I along with Harry Thorne (another full-time faculty member), and CUNY WAC Fellows hosted a reading group on Asao Inoue's 2019 CCCC Keynote Address: "How Do We Language So People Stop Killing Each Other, Or What Do We Do About White Language Supremacy?"

The transcript, slides, and video of his speech were distributed to our adjunct listserv weeks in advance of the group to ensure time for careful reading and thought. Harry and I framed the invitation to the reading group by summarizing the text:

> In this address, Inoue describes how racial injustice in society is also present in the academy, particularly in the field of Writing Studies. He focuses on how White language supremacy influences the creation of academic standards and also in everyday assessment of student writing in composition classrooms. This address is an abridged version of his recent book, *Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom (2019).*

In the reading group we centered our discussion around these three questions, which were distributed to participants at the workshop:

1. What is Asao Inoue's main argument in his CCCC Chair's Address?
2. Inoue addresses 2 separate audiences—Why? How does this affect the delivery of his message?
3. Inoue states at the end of the keynote: "So I reiterate and reframe Royster's questions: *How* are you attending, exactly? What are the markers of your compassionate attending? How is your attending a practice of judgement that your students can notice? How is it a practice that recognizes their existence without overly controlling them?" How do we find the balance in the classroom between the feedback we are expected to provide and still giving students the space to express themselves in their own voice?

Through these questions, we framed the discussion around student-teacher relations and power dynamics in the classroom. We also drew attention to how Inoue challenges instructors with White identities to see their language as the center of a system that excludes others. As a follow-up to this workshop, full-time faculty met with interested instructors to discuss implementation of grading contracts; though contracts are not used by the majority of our faculty (yet), we believe that they are increasing in use throughout the Writing Program. Because we have been bringing in composition theory to allow

people to reflect and theorize their experiences in the classroom and their teaching practices, we hope that these efforts lead to more voice-focused and antiracist approaches.

These changes in our Writing Program—the newly-trained MA instructors we hired and the recent professional development workshops and reading and working groups we are hosting— are creating a community that is developing a way to talk about the teaching of writing that is professionally informed by scholarship.

This above description is not an argument for the superiority of "disciplinarity," or a belief that once we inject "disciplinary" knowledge into a writing program, the work is done. In our approach to the reading group and professional development overall, we want to use the scholarship of Rhetoric and Composition to guide instructors to reflect on their past educational and literacy experiences and the work they've been doing in the classroom. They can internalize and make sense of theory through their own lenses of identity and experience (race, class, gender, etc.), and then they can work to express that theory through their own thinking, writing, and classroom practices.

Furthermore, when we focus on voice-based work in MA classes and in instructor professional development, we are embedding a sense of importance around positionality (particularly via race and class) with the aim to persuade teachers and students that minoritized students' voices matter, and that they should be able to write in their own languages and dialects. We need to mentor instructors to hear the developing voices of their students, to be able to offer feedback that encourages their students to express their current understanding and their past experiences.

Valuing New Perspectives from the MA Program with a Focus on Language Work (Rosanne introduces Liz)

In reflecting on the ways I have known Liz over the years, first as a student in my MA Teaching of Writing course in Fall 2016; as a thesis writer in Spring 2018; as a TA in my MA Writing Across the Curriculum course in Fall 2018; and now as a coauthor of this article, I can see how our relationship has grown, and how our ideas on voice and pedagogy have also developed over time. We are trying to speak back to larger disciplinary discourses, but we are also inflecting our own experiences in this work. We are capturing what it is like to learn and teach at our school in the CUNY system. There is value in this kind of storytelling, a move "[t]o strengthen our sense of identity" by "describ[ing] how [we] were drawn to this work, how [we] pursued a

professional identity, and the kinds of bridges [we] see or have constructed . . . to basic writing" (Uehling 58). In the next section, Liz will elaborate on her story of writing her thesis—a process that helped her discover her writing voice—and how she has shared this research and writing with students as a TA for the MA Writing Across the Curriculum course, serving as an advocate for writing studies at CSI.

If we can summarize the spirit of our article it would be this: when you develop a voice, it isn't an echo; it's a shout in your own register—students are shouting to be heard, and we need to listen. Liz so eloquently demonstrates this attitude in her section of this paper.

"Oppression of Expression": The Beginnings of the MA Thesis (Liz)

I am a writer, and it is just as much a part of my identity as my ethnicity or social background. I wasn't the typical middle-class White student that speaks SAE coherently and was at the top of their class. I was a first-generation college graduate— despite being the youngest—coming from a working-class family with nine-to-five jobs, living paycheck by paycheck. I wanted to break the generational cycle and expand my mind and my passions by enrolling in grad school. When I started the English MA program at CSI back in 2016, I wanted to extend my knowledge in writing. I wanted to use the next two years perfecting my craft and to come out of the program not only a better reader but a better writer.

During my first semester, I took my first Rhetoric and Composition course, The Teaching of Writing, with Professor Carlo. Even with just an enrollment total of twelve students, that class offered more than just ways to teach writing to students. It offered an opportunity for me to dig deep within myself and come to terms with the educational issues I experienced as an undergraduate. Within my studies, I was passionate about writing yet felt like I didn't receive the kind of feedback on my writing that would help me develop my own voice. After taking Professor Carlo's class, there was no doubt in my mind that the issues discussed within that course needed to be showcased and talked about within our own Writing Program. I decided to write my MA Thesis on the lack of agency first-year college students have in developing their voices within their writing, particularly those who come from marginalized groups (i.e. social class, social background, and ESL students). I simply wanted to answer this question: *"If students' ideas in their papers are not respected or are misinterpreted by their readers, does their work*

really matter?" For the next two years, my thesis, "Oppression of Expression: The Reality of Student Writers in College Classrooms," was in the works of being the most rewarding piece I've written.

The article that first inspired me to write on this topic was Peter Elbow's "Being a Writer vs. Being an Academic: A Conflict in Goals," a piece that was published in 1995, 26 years ago. Elbow discusses the distant relationship between students and professors due to the fact that students are writing only for their professors. In view of the belief in hierarchy that professors are superior to the students, Elbow points out that "[writers] get to decide what [they] intended with [their] words; [readers] get to decide what [they] heard" (Elbow 75). As a student whose writing has been misread and misinterpreted by professors and who had been told my voice was "lost" and my ideas were not coherent, I wanted to use my voice to let other student writers realize that their ideas and their personal voices—not the one they created due to authority in academic settings—matter.

Discovering My Voice: Challenges I Faced Throughout the Writing Process (Liz)

While writing a thesis that focused on student writers and their right to use their own voices, I was learning how to use my own while writing this piece. This field and the freedom that this type of writing gave me initially left me lost and wandering with all of the things I wanted to say. In order to find my own voice and have it be heard through a committee that rarely read Rhetoric and Composition-based theses, I needed to figure out what it was about the writing process that not only worried me and silenced my voice in my college courses, but also the voice of thousands of other student writers who feel the same way.

One important aspect of the issue is that although more Black and Hispanic students are enrolling in college, they are also the two demographics with the lowest graduation rates according to information by the CUNY Office of Policy and Research, which I discuss later in the article. Throughout the thesis research process, I concluded that lower graduation rates for minoritized students were not only due to the stress of students balancing their college lives with their personal and social lives, but because some of those students don't feel like they belong in colleges and universities. When we give most of the classroom authority to professors, we lose a lot of the students' voices that should make up the majority of the classroom content.

Within my own experience in college, professors typically didn't show a genuine interest in the ideas I expressed in my own voice within my writing. In the essays I felt comfortable and confident in writing, I was still told my voice was not my own. My ideas were constantly overshadowed by grammatical and punctuation errors; the same errors that have been present in my writing due to the fact I was never properly *taught* how to fix them in my writing classrooms. In many college environments, there aren't many student-teacher relationships that offer extra support and help with these basic writing skills. Although my passion in writing never faded away, the minor mistakes on my papers reflected on my overall grades. For years, I thought I wasn't a good enough writer. I took that mindset with me while entering the English MA Program, and even while writing my thesis.

Code-Switching: The Realities Behind "Undervalued Englishes" and Multilingualism (Liz)

While exploring my own voice and also learning how to incorporate voice in student writing, I observed "code-switching" as a term that came up in a lot of my research. Vershawn Young defines the term as "the use of more than one language or language variety concurrently in conversation" (49). It's natural for people to switch their conversational talk in society; the way we speak to our friends and family isn't going to be the same way we speak to our professors in college or our supervisors in our workplaces. While there is a level of respect involved in the use of code-switching, it doesn't solve the issue of student ideas being silenced or underdeveloped because it still limits the use of their own voices in their writing.

On the surface, code-switching acknowledges that other dialects of English exist as well as multiple languages for English-language speakers. Looking deeper into code-switching within the classroom setting, though, I realized the solution to not incorporate different dialects of English and other languages in schools was another way to say that SAE is the appropriate language to use in school settings. Young concludes that "students are simultaneously required to recognize the superiority of standard English and the people associated with it" (55). In a nutshell, a writer who's lived in Brooklyn for the majority of their life should know better to not describe a cold day in the city as *"brick"* or to agree with someone's opinion with *"mad respect."* On the contrary, "code-meshing" introduces the balance between SAE and the student's own dialects or languages in an academic setting and was theorized to end the discrimination of minoritized students. While

code-meshing is a corrective that seeks to balance the informal and informative voice in academic writing, it is often still considered a "privilege" and reserved for writers high within hierarchy in the field, not for first-year composition students. The irony of making a first-year college student write an essay about their favorite memory or experience but not allowing them to use their own vocabulary, voice, and style in their writing is uncanny, to say the least.

By emphasizing the importance of using SAE in the classroom, we do not allow students to identify themselves as being multilingual. Telling students that their language is not welcomed in writing classrooms is basically saying what they identify as isn't allowed, and that's when students start to lose their voices. For example, a student's own experience with oppression regarding their race could emphasize the major themes in novels discussed in an African-American Literature course; or, a student's migration story could provide a more personal perspective on a part of history that is usually too decontextualized. Without the unique qualities of each student's cultural and racial background being present in their writing, students aren't writing to say what they want to say and are now being more oppressed in their classrooms.

Being a multilingual student who wanted to challenge the concept of code-switching, I was still being told by some of my professors that my voice was undefined in my writing. I think back now, after having this opportunity to freely tell my story in my own voice, that the voice those professors demanded was a robotic one; the one that they encouraged me to use is the same one they said was "lost" and "undefined." This is because it wasn't a voice of my own; I was speaking in a space and register that felt foreign to me. It was a challenge I had to face while writing my thesis; how do I undo the years of authority silencing my real voice, the one that always felt small in comparison to the professor's ideal?

Expressive Voices Being Present in High-Stakes Writing (Liz)

During the drafting process, I was conflicted sharing the experiences I had within my college years and the lack of my own voice in my writing. Would my thesis expose some of the defective methods that professors at CSI had regarding the teaching of writing in their courses and commenting on student papers? Would I offend the readers who believe in professorial authority and SAE? Would the committee see my colloquial language and "undervalued Englishes"—as scholar Vershawn Young describes the under-

appreciated dialects of the English language—as inappropriate language? Would taking the risk of writing how I wanted to write and saying what I wanted to say jeopardize my passing of the MA Program exit requirement?

Having been in the program during the time my MA peers were starting to teach first-year composition (ENG 111), I was cautious every time they would discuss how their students' writing was underdeveloped and insufficient for the college level. What truly concerned me about their comments was that they seemed like they gave up on trying to help their students become better writers. When I was a graduate student back in 2017, the adjunct teaching position for MA students was in its early stages and didn't require MA students to take a Rhetoric and Composition course. Because of that, many of them entered these adjunct positions believing that good writing was strictly written in the academic voice. It's important to expose prospective adjuncts to the practices of Rhetoric and Composition because the traditional practices are still present even when the scholarly community is evolving and becoming more progressive. I worried whether or not writing about something so current and active within my own university was the right thing to do. I didn't want to offend anyone or expose any of my peers for their own ideologies in pedagogy. As much as I wanted to simply say *"maybe if our MA program pushed these students to take rhet/comp courses before pursuing teaching paths, maybe then they will realize just how toxic their beliefs in teaching writing are to students."* Ultimately, I voted against it. In a sense, I felt myself censoring my own voice in a piece where I spoke about how important it was for student writers to use their voice in their writing. With some inspiration and motivation toward telling the story in the most honest way possible, I wrote the following in my thesis:

> Within my graduate program at CSI, English graduate students are granted the opportunity to teach the required first writing composition course: ENG 111. Some of my peers have expressed their frustration with their students; they've complained how difficult it is to read and understand what they are writing about because of "how awfully bad their writing is." (26)

My peers' comments on their student's writing reminded me of Tiffany Martinez, a Latin-American student whose blog post on her college paper went viral on the internet in 2016. She posted a photo of her paper with her professor's comment saying, "this is not your word," after circling the word "hence." Her story angered me; how could a professor say to one of

their minoritized students that they had no right to use a word as simple as "hence?" Her story saddened me; I understood how it felt to be defeated by a professor's words and not good enough to succeed in academia as an aspiring writer that wasn't the top English student in their classes throughout their education experience. "How many degrees do I need for someone to believe I am an academic?" was a question Martinez asked in her blog post; it was the question I kept asking myself throughout my studies as well as during the thesis writing process.

These concerns of mine were voiced in my thesis meetings with Professor Carlo; she understood the challenges I faced balancing the informative, academic voice that was present in my thesis with the voice that was unique yet not widely accepted in academia. I was comfortable enough to have these discussions about voice with Professor Carlo; her office always allowed me to have the space to speak out about my worries, my frustrations, and my ideas that were always welcome. I remember entering her office for our meetings and immediately voicing out my feelings and talking about my experiences being a distraught student in this field, and no matter how defeated in my writing process or within my coursework, I was heard. I was encouraged to talk about them in my writing; it was a piece about voice and my voice was the most important voice there was in this piece. I never felt like my voice was simply a whisper in her office.

In her office, I was reminded that my experiences were just as important as the data and research presented in my thesis. Many first-year writers feel they too have to minimize or erase their experiences in their writing. For example, Sarah Stanley, a professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, offers a classroom case study where one of her first-year writing students, Tejada, wrote the following sentence:

> I, (as part of a minority group) have witnessed and experienced how a single word or action on the part of those who are not categorized within the dominant culture, has contributed to the growth of stereotypical racial views as well as the choices of expression among those who are victimized by prejudice ideologies. (14)

When Tejada is asked why she decided to include that statement within parenthesis, she nervously responds that she can relate to the struggle minoritized students face in society because she identifies as one, and she felt it was important to include it in her writing. It still raises the question of why her identity is in its separate bracket within her writing, and many of her

peers notice it in that discussion. While Tejada dismisses the importance of that part of her sentence, Stanley and Tejada's classmates disagree and discuss how it's the most important part; it adds a real-world perspective to the piece that makes the evidence and research more practical than theoretical. Stanley adds Tejada's reflection to the class feedback: ". . . I think that is a big part of the sentence. . . and yet it's in parenthesis which is like I'm being kind of. . . [whispering] I'm whispering" (17). This is the reality for many students that are not considered the ideal student writer. Many students go through this process of having their identities stripped away from their writing, leaving their voices silenced completely. One of the most exciting parts about writing is students having their experiences present and ultimately sharing that information in their writing that is not just words on a page, but true to their reality. It adds an element of realness that is missing in student writing these days.

With my own thesis writing, my mission was to not only encourage other students to feel safe to take that risk in their own papers, but I personally wanted to feel safe enough to take such a different approach with my thesis. Half of that courage came from Professor Carlo listening to my voice and to the ideas I had; she made sure to remind me throughout the process that my voice was important, and what I was saying was important to put out there into the world, despite the response I may get from readers who disagree with the way I'm using my voice in academic writing.

Within the reviewing process of my thesis, I found myself having to defend my voice and my experience to one of the readers within the MA committee. At this point in the process, the first two readers passed my thesis and there was one last reader that had to pass it as well. In reviewing the comments on my thesis for one last revision, I came across a comment on one of the pages that the reader left on it. My thesis discussed how marginalized students were "restricted from expressing themselves and their individuality in their student writing" and "how professors are biased towards those of a different social background, language, and race due to stereotypes of [said] groups." The comment that was left on that page said simply the following: "This is a huge generalization and not at all consistent with my experience." The irony of having someone in authority (let alone a reader that was not a POC) argue that their experience as an educator isn't accurate to the experience POC students have in classrooms left me wondering how unaware academics in authoritative positions are to the fact that students are silently suffering within their writing courses because professors believe their traditional methods of teaching are actually efficient and

correct. As a student writing about other student writers in this academic community, I chose to keep my original words in my thesis whether or not a reader disagreed with me. My voice was my voice, and it mattered just as much as every other student that has been discouraged or afraid to speak up and write with their own voices.

The feeling was bittersweet by the time I completed my thesis at the end of the Spring 2018 semester. My thesis felt like it was more than just a 42-paged assignment to end my graduate studies; it was a representation of the person that I was in the six years I was a student at CSI. I found freedom in my voice throughout the process of completing my thesis, and it's a body of work that I will always be proud of, yet always feel will never be fully completed. To this day, we are still having conversations within the field about antiracism in our college courses and debates on the freedom of student voices in them. They are conversations that I aspire to have with prospective graduate students and current graduate students who haven't been exposed to Rhetoric and Writing Studies in their college careers, especially those who are preparing to teach our next generation of college students.

Post-Grad: Teaching, Mentorship, and Joining Ongoing Conversations (Liz)

Being a TA for Professor Carlo's class was a challenge to take on: How would I take what I learned in my MA class and from writing my thesis in Rhetoric and Composition, and initially practice what I preached? As an authoritative figure in a classroom now, how can I let students know that their ideas and opinions mattered just as much as mine and Ro's? It took trial and error to learn that there is always going to be conversations with different voices speaking about the same topics in Writing Studies. Being able to have these conversations with current and future educators in the field makes the words I wrote in my thesis that more real and practical.

In the middle of our semester, I ran a day of class to showcase my thesis to our graduate students. I opened my thesis presentation discussing the Excelsior Scholarship at CUNY colleges. The scholarship, as described within my thesis, "allows students who come from low-income families to attend a CUNY or a State University of New York (SUNY) college by providing them with tuition money" (2). It was a scholarship to help students graduate on time and it required the students to take 30 credits a year while maintaining a passing grade point average. I presented some statistics within our CUNY system about our graduation rates since Fall 2012; in comparison to the

59% of White college students graduating from CUNY schools, only 45% of Black students and 48% of Hispanic students are graduating within six years. Within a 4-year Bachelor's program, only 15% of Black students and 16% of Hispanic students are graduating from CUNY schools, according to the CUNY Office of Policy and Research. This information was presented to the CSI English Department back in 2018. I concluded that the outcome of these numbers could be for various reasons: students are not able to only prioritize their studies for personal and financial reasons, they aren't getting the individual help that they may need due to overcrowded classrooms, or they are simply not being seen or heard within their studies.

Our graduate students surprisingly had questions about how I was able to speak so freely in such a high-stakes paper. How was I able to say what I wanted to say, get my point across, and still have a mixture of both my informative voice and expressive voice present in my thesis? I answered their questions in three parts: First, *your thesis isn't just a paper; it's you joining in on a conversation.* While we are taught to write about ideas and themes in our papers as students, we never write our papers with the thought that there's an audience we are speaking to. Who do we want to speak to in our writing? Second, *write your thesis on something you're genuinely interested in and passionate about*. The importance of writing about something we're interested in or passionate about is that without even knowing, our voice becomes present in the piece. Third, *What drives you? What are you saying in your thesis that you want people to listen to?* Whether these MA students were writing their theses in Literature or in Rhetoric and Composition, the most important part of writing my thesis was that my passion and identity as a writer drove me to join in on the current conversations acknowledging and understanding that there is a lack of voice within student writers, specifically students in marginalized groups.

I am still reminded that balance and encouragement of other voices in the class are important elements to run a successful classroom. Carmen Kynard states the following in the syllabus she hands out for her college classes:

> Writing critically with and from multiple, informed sources is the most common trademark for the kind of writing that is expected of you in the academy. However, this does NOT mean: you write about things you don't care about, that you omit your own voice and perspective in order to be taken seriously. . . . ("Stank 2.0")

The way we get our students to break their strict use of their academic voice, we as educators have to encourage their expressive voices in our classrooms. Their ideas are important, their thought process is important, and their stories are what makes their writing unique to them. John Bean supports the idea of assigning "exploratory writing," because it "[adds] insights and signs of life [because] I'm not reading for error or coaching revision... often the thinking pieces are lively with voice and personality" (122). Allowing our students to discover the voice that is truly their own starts with the professor giving them the opportunity to do so.

Valuing Student Voices at College of Staten Island CUNY (Rosanne and Liz)

Since Liz graduated in 2018, six other students have completed an MA thesis in Rhetoric and Composition and six more intend to do so. We've talked about how the writing concentration within the MA program is now developing and also influencing our Writing Program. Readers might wish for some sort of proclamation, or wide-sweeping evidence, that the CSI Writing Program has changed, that we now have persuaded faculty to value students' voices, their rights to their own language, and to work against deficit stances in their thinking—that's not the case. The change is in the conversations we have with faculty. We still have a long way to go; our field still has a long way to go in throwing off its myths of standard English as a meal-ticket out of poverty. We have to keep talking about these issues; we have to keep publishing about these issues. We have to keep educating faculty, particularly graduate students and adjuncts, in the writing classroom about the harm that code-switching creates.

Rhetoric and Composition, however, has helped us see why developing a positive teacher-student relationship is so important—on the MA level and in Basic Writing. What truly concerns both of us are the comments that MA students and adjunct instructors sometimes make about their basic writing students' writing. To us, their comments could be construed as defeatist or negative. Often, instructors hold on to the belief that "good writing" is written strictly in an academic voice and they want to enforce the use of that voice. However, through this article, we are seeing how important the relationship between students and teachers is in helping students listen to and develop their own voices, rather than parroting that of the teacher. We hope that our current MA adjuncts and Writing Program instructors—as well

as our readers—look at writing instruction with a voice-focused and antiracist lens, and we think this happens through three main beliefs and practices:

- **Valuing Language Choices and Narrative**: All writers of scholarly discourse have the right to use their languages and dialects (i.e. to practice code-meshing) and to speak from their past experiences.
- **Challenging Deficit Stances**: Recognize biases around language use and actively challenge the supremacy of Standard American English.
- **Following Best Commenting and Assessment Practices**: Be positive and avoid an authoritative tone. Engage students and read their writing with the intent to listen for their developing voices rather than to correct them. Grade student writing based on content and labor, and not correctness.

We feel it is essential for MA students and other adjuncts to be exposed to composition theory as they pursue careers in NYC public schools or as college-level instructors of writing. A Rhetoric and Composition course aims to provide contextual, historical, and theoretical knowledge about education that can help instructors be able to practice these pedagogies within their own classrooms. As Liz discussed, she found her passion and drive to help college students through the issues and topics addressed in Rhetoric and Composition courses.

(*Liz's Closing Note)* My experience from taking Ro's class to writing my MA Thesis and now co-writing this article speaks for itself: I am determined to be a part of the conversations happening within the Basic Writing community in hopes that they are addressed and heard by many. I'm constantly thinking back to a quote from Gloria Anzaldua's book, *La Frontera: Borderlands;* "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity—I am my language" (81). My social background, my upbringing, my story and my identity are what make up my voice. I am the voice that I speak. No matter how many times someone could try altering it or changing it completely, it always finds its way back to me. With my voice—the one I discovered on my own—I hope to help college students realize that it's okay to use their own voices and to use this crucial time in their lives to discover themselves.

Notes

1. According to department data, from Fall 2019 through Fall 2020, Black students in FYW exhibited a 16% higher rate of failure than their White and Asian peers and were twice as likely to withdraw, officially or unofficially; Hispanic students exhibited a 10% higher rate of failure than their White and Asian peers, and also were 1.6 times more likely to withdraw, officially or unofficially ("Why We Should Investigate Anti-Racist Writing Pedagogy," CSI English Department, Spring 2021).

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