Volume 9
Number 1
Spring 2015

Open WORDS

Access and English Studies

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Access and English Studies

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Editor's Introduction:
Scratch Beyond Scratch

As the articles in this issue of *Open Words* were undergoing review, I was transitioning out of a five-year term in an administrative position, served primarily at my school's main campus. During this administrative stint, I still worked with students at my home campus, one of Miami University's open-access sites, but I taught exclusively studio writing workshops. Studios rely on students to set the curriculum; in other words, I had no role in planning a course calendar. I also had little to revise in terms of course policies from semester to semester. This past fall, my university was generous enough to award me with a Faculty Improvement Leave, for which I understood my goal was to learn how to teach (again). I had to prepare for three courses that I had not taught in ten years. My previous syllabi talked of things like "floppy disks." Just reproducing the old curricula didn't seem like an ethical option: even if there had been no developments in the fields that these courses represented or developments in technology (Youtube and Facebook were nonexistent the last time I tinkered with these syllabi; I doubt I even owned a cell phone), I just couldn't quite be sure why certain assignments, exercises, grading scales, policies were present on the old syllabi, let alone confidently decipher how they might all speak to one another to produce a coherent learning experience for students.

One thing I (re)learned quickly during my leave was just how difficult it is to map out an ecosystem for a course—to articulate to students and to oneself the assumptions that shape absentee policies (or lack thereof), the grade percentage devoted to participation, to drafting, to final papers, the order and selection of readings. Even more difficult, however, was the task to develop these syllabi without yet knowing the students they would impact. How might these undergraduate students be different from those I had taught in these classes a decade ago? My worries stemmed not only from being out of touch with students in these more standard courses for so long, but also being out of touch with the various learning ecologies to which students were now accustomed on my home campus. While I am certainly grateful for the leave, I came to view it as a plot to coerce me into generating plot lines that could not possibly consider the multiple interests and concerns students would bring with them. I felt more or less in a situation in which I had to either develop an ecology that fell in line with whatever ecology the campus now expected teachers to construct or to develop an ecology that was too far out of sync with anything that might be remotely familiar to students unfortunate enough to enroll in my courses.

I wanted to start from scratch, but that turned out to be tricky. I probably just needed to seek out more community during the leave and to spend less time in isolation, where I kept manufacturing fears to combat imagined situations. I'd like to think my anxieties mark a form of literacy that understands an instructor cannot anticipate all the various interests and concerns of

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students, or even the multiple institutional concerns that might press into classrooms, but that an instructor must always anticipate diversity, nonetheless, and that anticipation must be open-ended, ready for what's next, what's unanticipated. I wanted to start from scratch, but I couldn't. In fact, working on this issue (and, indeed, the previous eight volumes of *Open Words*) made me suspicious of scratch. This journal serves in many ways to connect me with a community that consistently anticipates and responds to diversity, not to mention broader institutional and social factors that might seek to disappear diversity in favor of a certain notion of scratch. What I'm talking about is the sense of scratch that is divorced from students, the type of scratch, I take it, that I was supposed to conform to over the period of the leave in which I was to revise my syllabi—all alone, with no students.

This situation reflects a bad type of scratch, a type, I was beginning to perceive, that the essays we'd accepted for this issue were challenging. I found this sense of scratch evident in the Academic Affairs committee that cancels the course Kelly Kinney describes in "The Quick Rise and Untimely Fall of 'Writing Your Way into Graduate School,'" the course her program developed to counter a taken-for-granted process (preparing written documents for application to graduate schools) and to provide additional access to students who might otherwise lack familiarity with that process. The committee wanted her to start from scratch, a scratch founded on committee members' conceptions of relevance and rigor. Scratch of this sort would surface again as the racist components that pervade student presentations in Jody A. Briones's "Identity, Voice, Social Justice, and Blundering in Critical and Cultural Studies Composition" and that sustain the ground upon which she must stake her perspectives as a working-class Chicana compositionist. In Genesea Carter's "Bypassing the Silence," I saw bad scratch buttressing traditional approaches to Technical and Professional Writing classrooms. Scratching beyond this scratch, Carter argues that a discourse analysis approach that engages the literacies of peripheral students can help these students develop the agency they need to make language choices that not only demonstrate the communication skills they need for jobs and promotions, but also for personal and civic situations. Also taking into account the literacy practices students bring with them to college, Scott, Hockenberry, and Miller's "Tutoring the 'Invisible Minority': Appalachian Writers in the Writing Center" helps readers relativize a starting-from-scratch approach to writing center tutorials that might otherwise disappear the interests and concerns of Appalachian students. In this essay and others collected here, scratch is an always already that diversity disrupts, disrupts to guide us to a scratch beyond scratch where teachers engage with the "non-traditional" and seek new grounds.

The last time I taught the courses that I am scheduled to teach this spring, my co-editor Bill Thelin and I were preparing our first issue of this journal. Working with our board and our contributors and their accounts from their various institutions over the last decade, I find that my views on scratch have grown more complicated, less stable. While Bill and I worked through the revisions for the articles collected here, I was also revising the three syllabi for the courses I would be returning to this semester. There was some old material and old assignments and policies I could still make sense of, and there were some new things I developed along the way. Nevertheless, these courses are still incomplete, not because I started from scratch, but because I couldn't. I couldn't start from the scratch I was expected to start from. Now, as I am writing this, my spring classes start in less than 24 hours. When I meet my students for the first time, there and then I will know it's really time to start from scratch—and to keep on scratching.

John Paul Tassoni
January 2015

Kelly Kinney

The Quick Rise and Untimely Fall of "Writing Your Way into Graduate School": A Dramatic Dialogue, a Discarded Memo, and a Course Epitaph

As the title suggests, this story doesn't have a happy ending.

I offer this tale as a kind of allegory—a parable, if you will—that demonstrates both the struggles writing studies professionals face and the missteps they may take, particularly when designing courses to support first-generation college students. It is a situation that might arise on any campus, public or private, open access or highly selective. But this tale happens to take place on a campus that serves a resolutely diverse student body: 38% are students of color; 36% speak a home language other than English; 30% are first-generation college students. Perhaps like your own institution, many faculty are concerned with the quality of their students' writing, but they aren't quite sure what to do about it. The institution hires a writing program administrator to build a New Writing Program. They choose a junior faculty member, who joins a department full of faculty who don't share her scholarly background, nor necessarily understand the values her field embraces. Some colleagues are supportive, some indifferent. Faculty outside her department are perhaps even more perplexed by her field, and they are at odds with the upper-level writing-in-the-disciplines general education courses offered in their own departments.

There are some early successes. Transformation of the first-year writing program for students. Professional development and teacher preparation for graduate assistants. Higher per-course salaries for adjuncts. Full-time hires with specializations in writing studies for the New Writing Program. But the tale I wish to tell isn't about first-year writing, it's about the design of an upper-level, general education composition course. What Our University calls a "C" course.

Some of the dialogue I'll offer to construct this allegory will sound forced. Blame it on lack of practice in creative non-fiction. I don't intend to represent all sides of the tale, nor the intentions or motivations of all of its characters. I don't want to construct a fiction that would give depth to some of the characters I portray. Rather, I want to emphasize the points of contention that arose around the course the New Writing Program designed, and the battles it faced and finally lost.

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More than anything, I want this story to sound to readers as it sounded to me, to experience the situation from my perspective: an authority in writing studies whose authority was undermined. I also want to describe what students lost in the process.

The tale begins late during a fall semester, on a campus not unlike your own, with an impromptu visit from the Academic Affairs Representative. He steps into the Writing Program Administrator's office, a yellow course advertisement flapping in his hand. The flyer describes an online course the New Writing Program planned to offer for the first time during the upcoming winter session, "WRIT 381: Writing Your Way Into Graduate School." Small talk ensues. Recent conference presentations. The weather. Hiring. Then he gets down to business.

A Dramatic Dialogue

AAR: Concerns have been raised over this flyer. There are questions about the course's rigor. Why should the New Writing Program give students credit for writing graduate school application materials? For revising writing samples and application documents they've already written? For researching graduate program websites? And you call attention to the abbreviated winter session timeline, and to the course carrying general education credit? Students are going to take this course because they think it's easy. And several Important Faculty have complained. Why should we give students credit for writing something that they would write anyway, and for researching schools that they would research on their own?

WPA: Hold on. Let me see the flyer.

Well, sure, we make mention of the general education "C" credit, and the abbreviated winter session timeline. But this course satisfies the general education composition course guidelines. And yes, it is being taught over the winter session, but so are many other "C" courses. And well, all "C" courses are required to focus on revision. That is the defining characteristic of a "C" course.

AAR: But you can't let students rewrite things and give them credit. The faculty have concerns about that. Where is the rigor? Where is the subject matter? Do you define reading as looking at graduate program websites? Do you define writing as revising papers and documents they've already written? It's just not done. You've got to pull the flyers. And you've got to change these assignments. The reputation of the New Writing Program is at stake.

WPA: Listen, the New Writing Program faculty committee really came together in developing this course. We're using a solid textbook that focuses on expectations across the disciplines, and we've developed assignments based on principles of genre theory and professional writing. We spent a lot of time thinking about what students on this campus need and want from an upper-division "C" course. Given the fact that many of our students are first-generation college students *and* have intentions of applying to graduate school, and that the institution is pushing us to offer more online versions of "C" courses over abbreviated sessions, well, we believe this course fits both the student demographic and the pedagogical scope of the shortened winter session. We have developed excellent assignments and there are many other good reasons to offer this course. Specialists in writing studies designed it—it calls on our experiences teaching writing-across-the curriculum and writing-in-the-disciplines courses, and professional writing courses, and online writing courses, not just on this campus, but on other campuses where we've worked, institutions that have national reputations in writing studies.

But if the flyers are causing undue commotion, we can take them down. Let me talk with the New Writing Program faculty committee and see if we can adjust the assignments to accommodate some of the concerns. Maybe we can rethink the writing sample assignment—we've gotten emails from students saying they want to take the course, but haven't written a substantial paper in their major. Maybe we can kill two birds by revamping that assignment. But you've got to understand, we're not scrapping the emphasis on revision or the analysis of graduate program websites. These kinds of activities are perfectly legitimate for a course that places writing and revision at the center of its curriculum.

AAR: Yes, thanks, do take down the flyers. We're going to let the course stay on the books because too many students have already signed up. But the online instruction committee will continue to watch this class and other winter and summer "C" courses. We will be watching all the online courses using Blackboard. The reputation of the New Writing Program is at stake.

WPA: Look, I hear you, but I want to say out loud that I'm leaving this conversation disturbed, and that if an instructional review committee is already taking aim at our course, the New Writing Program has got to be given a forum to discuss its merits, to defend the course from our perspective as experts in writing studies.

AAR: Of course. You will be hearing from us.

And behold, the Writing Program Administrator did hear from the Academic Affairs Representative that following spring, just as students were signing up for summer session sections of WRIT 381. As all had predicted, the winter session offerings were popular, and Important Faculty voiced concerns that the trend would continue in summer session. Indeed, rather than viewing the course's popularity as indicative of WRIT 381's value to students, Important Faculty viewed it as proof that the course lacked rigor, or so the Academic Affairs Representative described. What's more, it didn't help that the New Writing Program made nearly as much revenue on WRIT 381 as fully-fledged Old Academic Departments made on their winter and summer session "C" courses.

The Writing Program Administrator was given a week to assemble a defense of the course, to submit the syllabus, assignments, and volumes of samples of student writing. But there would be no forum for open discussion. So she decided to write a memo.

A Discarded Memo

DATE: Spring Semester

TO: Online Composition Instruction Committee

FROM: Writing Program Administrator, New Writing Program, Our University

After a conversation with the Academic Affairs Representative, I write to offer evidence of rigor in the distance learning course WRIT 381: Writing Your Way into Grad School, which the New Writing Program offered for the first time in winter session. Because I suspect some misunderstanding over the course grows out of a lack of familiarity with writing studies, this memo offers an overview of the learning goals and educational values the field promotes, explains the theories that inform WRIT 381 and other WRIT courses, and examines the merits and pitfalls of offering general education composition—or "C" courses—during abbreviated winter and summer sessions.

What Is Writing Studies, and What Educational Values Does It Promote?

As Derek Owens and other leaders in the discipline make clear, writing studies has its origins in the field traditionally referred to as "composition and rhetoric," or simply "composition." In an effort to expand conceptions of the field beyond the teaching of "first-year composition," however, many programs are embracing the name "writing studies." Specialists in the field study a wide range of interdisciplinary subjects beyond first-year writing, including art and craft pedagogies, critical race theory, digital rhetoric, gender studies, genre theory, multi-lingual writing, online writing pedagogies, professional writing, working class studies, writing-in-the-disciplines, writing program administration, and many other areas of interest. Programs in writing studies embrace the new name not only to suggest the field's expansiveness, but also to distinguish themselves from English departments, which are typically dominated by scholars who privilege reading and the consumption of literary texts over writing and the production of student texts. In writing studies courses, student writing takes center stage: the primary reading material is not a canon of work—or, for that matter, another facet of knowledge from a particular discipline—but students' texts themselves, as well as sample models of those texts, including publications from scholarly and professional discourse communities. Put another way, many writing studies courses do not ask students to focus on a discrete body of knowledge and, in turn, demonstrate their mastery of that material in their writing; instead, they ask students to study the rhetorical moves and written conventions of particular fields or larger civic communities, and demonstrate their mastery of those moves and conventions within their writing. This may seem like a subtle distinction, but it is eminently important, as it points to the educational values writing studies promotes.

Since a reconfigured focus on the teaching of writing emerged in the 1970s, the field has worked to cultivate institutional and classroom atmospheres that promote democratic education. In fact, if one thing ties together the disparate and interdisciplinary work currently being done in writing studies, it is the field's commitment to helping all students reach their potential as literate members of a larger society, no matter their race or gender, no matter their economic, linguistic, or educational background. Prior to the passing of the GI Bill and the large numbers of working- and middle-class students entering universities after World War II and the Vietnam War, however, courses that required students to write too often did not make transparent the disciplinary, cultural, or class-based conventions honored by instructors or their disciplinary communities: instead, such courses assumed prior knowledge of conventions, or worse yet, assumed that there is only one way to write well, and that everyone who is in college should already know how to do it. As social theorist Michel Foucault teaches, it's not a stretch to suggest that such assumptions put students from disadvantaged backgrounds at a further disadvantage, and reproduce systems of advantage for students born into privileged, highly literate households.

"such assumptions put students from disadvantaged backgrounds at a further disadvantage"

To be sure, as fifty years of research on college writers reveals, many poor, working class, minority, or otherwise disenfranchised students begin their college careers as inexperienced writers. As they progress through college, they do not elicit the kind of mentoring privileged students of a bygone era received—as writing studies scholar John Warnock makes clear, they don't have access to the class-biased support network common in higher education prior to the GI Bill, or its predecessor, the Morrill Act. Indeed today many college students, regardless of educational or class background, are not good at finding a mentor willing to coach them in productively using writing as a tool for self-promotion. This kind of mentoring—particularly one-on-one feedback on writing—is absolutely necessary for student success in graduate school. All students—but especially first-generation college students, minorities, and second language writers—benefit from someone making visible the conventions that privileged students and well-intentioned faculty sometimes take for granted. Because programs in writing studies establish their raison d'être in helping writers achieve their potential as active agents in their personal, professional, and civic spheres, we see it as our mission to design courses that help students succeed, especially those students who might not consider themselves "graduate school material."

In short, WRIT 381 advances writing studies' commitment to democratic education. It is particularly well suited for the Our University student demographic, which has a significant percentage of first-generation college students, second-language writers, students of color, and economically disadvantaged students. Rather than replicating the elitist educational conditions of past generations—that is, when faculty expected the teaching of writing to be done off the grid—we argue to keep the kind of literate activity WRIT 381 embodies fully visible, and fully credit bearing.

What Pedagogies Inform WRIT 381, and What Projects Are Assigned in the Course?

Our commitment to democratic education clear, let me also make clear that the New Writing Program's commitment to disenfranchised students does not preclude the development of rigorous courses. Notably, while the New Writing Program is only in its fourth year of operation, it serves as an international model of excellence for any writing program, but particularly those seeking to fundamentally restructure the teaching of writing on their campuses. Since its inception, the mission of the New Writing Program has been to foster the academic and civic literacies essential for success in the university and beyond, and our work has been honored by the oldest and most prestigious professional organization in our field, the Conference on College Composition and Communication.

Said another way, it is clear to our national scholarly community that our focus on writing has not simply been an attempt to help students acquire rudimentary skills, but to prepare them to articulate complex positions in a variety of genres and contexts. Grounded in genre theory, our courses promote writing as a way of learning and seek to help students examine assignments, analyze genres, practice writing processes, and determine what kinds of conventions are appropriate for different contexts, audiences, and disciplines. Specifically, WRIT 381 is a critical analysis of genre sets applied to a particular task—applying to graduate school. Students research and write a twenty-to-twenty-five page guide on graduate schools and writing conventions in their disciplines, and this research influences the development of two documents submitted in their final portfolios, the curriculum vitae and personal statement (for students applying for entry into advanced scholarly degree programs) or the cover letter and résumé (for students applying for entry into advanced professional degree programs). As our Associate Director argued in a private correspondence with me (and I thank her for bringing this to my attention), some instructors even push students to go a step further, asking them to perform rhetorical analyses of research in their discipline, particularly research written by faculty members who teach in the graduate programs students are interested in. As we continue to strengthen and modify the course for the upcoming summer session, we are making such rhetorical analyses a required segment of the research guide.

We think of the research guide as what members of professional writing communities call a "usability report": it is written for classmates and future students who need to learn more about the conventions and guidelines for applying to graduate programs in particular disciplines, and some students even go so far as to offer advice in the guide about applying to particular programs in particular institutions. But the research guide is more than a report; it is a meta-cognitive activity fashioned in the spirit of writing studies scholar Edward M. White's "Phase 2" portfolio. I invite you to take a closer look at the syllabus, assignments, and sample student writing attached, both to get a better sense of how the guide functions in the portfolio and to see how the guide influences student revision of graduate school application documents. In short, the guide serves as a tool to teach potential student readers about the field, but it also serves as a frontispiece directed at the instructor, justifying the rhetorical decisions the writer has made in the application documents. In this way the faculty member teaching the course—and by extension of her expertise, the entire writing studies discourse community—serves as an important scholarly audience for both the research guide and the portfolio as a whole. The course assignments are much more than merely practical. They are scholarly and professional.

As I understand it, one criticism of the course stemmed from an early flyer the New Writing Program distributed, a flyer that suggested students would be working with documents they had already drafted. Our assumption was that most students with junior standing (a requirement for the course) would have already developed some form of a résumé, if not a formal personal statement. Early on, we also planned to invite students to bring in a research paper previously written for a course in their major, one that they could use as a writing sample in their application. The idea was that part of the work in the course would be to revise that piece to meet the scholarly or professional expectations of a particular graduate program or programs. As I came to understand, some members of the campus community objected to our emphasis on revision—arguing that the course should focus on the creation of entirely new documents—and thus I made the executive decision to scrap the writing sample portion of the course portfolio. In hindsight, we were glad to have made this decision, not because we agreed that an emphasis on revising previously written work was inappropriate—that claim does not hold weight for experts in writing studies—but because many students emailed us prior to the beginning of the course, explaining that they had not written a substantial research paper in their major. While responding to this last point is beyond the scope of this memo, these emails suggest a need for more upper-division general education "C" courses, particularly those that require students to seriously investigate, practice, and produce *writing conventions in their fields.*

This is all to say that rather than viewing "Writing Your Way into Graduate School" as lacking rigor, the campus community might think of it as complementary to courses offered within the major, a kind of capstone, if you will, where students synthesize and reflect on their learning, as well as extend their understanding of the way writing gets done in their fields.

Who Teaches WRIT 381, and Why Should Specialists Teach Online "C" Courses?

As you read between the lines of this too-long document, I'm sure you can sense my frustration. With that acknowledged, let me emphasize that I offer these words not in an effort to offend or annoy an important committee with the legitimate task of reviewing on-line course instruction. As a specialist in writing studies, I am acutely aware of the problems that surface when graduate students or other inexperienced instructional faculty are offered online courses without the training or mentoring it takes to develop them legitimately. In fact, the lack of mentoring of graduate students teaching "C" courses throughout the calendar year was one of the factors that allowed me to support the establishment of the New Writing Program at Our University, a program that places great care in preparing graduate students to teach "C" courses. I appreciate the time and care the committee is taking to take online instruction seriously, and invite you to contact me and other faculty specialists in the New Writing Program as you make decisions about online "C" offerings.

But unlike the instructor pool many departments draw from to staff online "C" courses, "Writing Your Way Into Graduate School" was not the creation of an under-compensated graduate student with little experience in the teaching of writing or online instruction. Last fall, I asked our faculty specialists to come together, to examine why our winter and summer courses were not making capacity, and to devise a new course that would not only be of high quality, but fit the very specific needs of the Our University upper-division undergraduate student body.

The development of the course was a distinctly collaborative faculty effort. I drew on my many years of experience teaching not just professional writing, but writing-in-the-disciplines courses in one of the most well-regarded independent departments of writing in the nation. Another faculty specialist in our New Writing Program likewise drew on his experiences and training, not just as a graduate of a Top-Five PhD program in writing studies, but through his current affiliation with the Our University Career Development Center, as well as his work teaching professional writing at a number of institutions across the region. Drawing on his research expertise in digital writing and online pedagogies—and holding a PhD from another well-regarded program in writing studies—another of our faculty specialists also offered invaluable insights on the creation of the course, insights that are enhanced by his work with English language learners as a Peace Corps writing instructor, as well as his work with inexperienced writers who enroll in our first-year writing course designed to support Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) students. Similarly our Associate Director also brings to the table her many years of experience working with EOP, McNair Scholars, and other programs designed to support disenfranchised student populations, and she too has been a driving force behind the EOP effort. What's more, she draws on a PhD in English with a secondary concentration in writing program administration, as well as a Master's degree with emphases in composition and rhetoric and small press publishing. Finally, the New Writing Program's former graduate student Assistant Director, a soon-to-be graduate of the Our University PhD program in English with a concentration in writing studies, helped us design the course given his experience teaching professional writing in the Department of Writing at Acclaimed Research University—a department that has an undergraduate major in writing studies. This former Assistant Director took a leave of absence from Our University last year to pursue this distinguished opportunity; will defend his dissertation in late April (I am his dissertation chair); and is the only Our University English PhD student in recent memory to have secured an Assistant Professor position during the same year he completes his degree. He will be joining the Department of Writing at Prestigious Humanities College this fall.

I appreciate the time and expertise that these writing studies specialists devoted to developing WRIT 381. And for fear of any suspicion to the contrary, let me also emphasize that as Director of the New Writing Program, I would never authorize the mounting of winter or summer courses by anyone without scholarly expertise in and demonstrated commitment to online writing instruction. Although I have no doubt that we could fill more sections of WRIT 381 if our only goal was to expand (admittedly quite modest) New Writing Program coffers, I share the concerns of many faculty at Our University about offering winter and summer courses for the sake of profit.

A Closing Comment

As I understand it, a second objection to the early flyer advertising WRIT 381 was that it explicitly stated that students who enroll would earn general education "C" credit over the abbreviated winter session. I had little quarrel with pulling the ad given concerns that it might lead students and faculty to presume the course lacked rigor, but it strikes me that the real issue is not WRIT 381's academic integrity, but the institution's insecurity about offering "C" courses during winter and summer sessions. While I vehemently object to the conception that WRIT 381 is "popular because it is easy"—how could anyone make such a claim before they had a chance to examine the writing produced by students—I am sympathetic to the idea of restricting "C" courses to fall and spring semesters. But if you share assumptions about lack of rigor in our course, I urge you to reexamine these assumptions in light of evidence offered in this memo, to consider the possibility that our course is popular because it offers students something of value, and to recognize WRIT 381 as a rigorous course opportunity previously unavailable to Our University students.

It takes a specialized understanding of the teaching of writing to create a compactly designed course that legitimately fulfills the general education "Composition" requirement, including an emphasis on revision. Given the lack of expertise of the vast majority of the winter and summer "C" instructorate—that is, graduate students who may be skilled in their academic fields but who have little and sometimes no training in teaching writing, teaching writing-across-the-disciplines, or online instruction—I would endorse the elimination of "C" courses in the abbreviated winter and summer sessions. Without a uniform policy, however, it would be patently undemocratic to cancel WRIT 381, to change its full credit-bearing status, or to remove its general education "C" designation. The course is grounded in the theories and values of writing studies, and has demonstrated value for Our University students.

Attachments:

WRIT 381 Syllabus

WRIT 381 Assignments

WRIT 381 Sample Student Portfolios

Note: As I have referenced throughout, I draw heavily from ideas offered by WRIT 381 faculty in the construction of this memo, but also from members of the writing studies community, particularly members of the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) who answered my call to help defend the course. I wish to thank the following members of the WPA-listserv whose ideas I use and whose language I modify in this document:

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An Epitaph for WRIT 381

Through collaboration born,
high hopes we had for you:

educational democracy and
Mentoring student writers was at your core.
our students valued you, and our faculty specialists argued that you were
rigorous,
egalitarian, and
Theory-driven, that you
honored writing studies' commitment to talented and disenfranchised students. But our
independent and New Writing Program's dream course is
no more.
gone is our
students' opportunity to examine genre conventions in their discipline, and
Changed is our faculty's optimism for the New Writing Program.
how will the Academic Affairs Representative respond to other new courses
and will Important Faculty continue to dismiss us in the future?
no tellin'. After all, reading Great Books and instructing the finer points of High
grammar are still
everything. Perhaps the only thing Our University ever wanted.

Coda: On Parables and Unanswered Questions

Mixed-genre parables about life in the academy aren't exactly common, and my attempt at offering one here speaks as much about the adversity writing programs and student writers face in the academy as it does about how junior faculty learn to navigate institutions. Admittedly, my representation of characters is flat. As with most parables, there are good guys and bad guys in this story, and a less experimental piece would have painted a more complex representation of both the Academic Affairs Representative and the Writing Program Administrator, and responded to unanswered questions. What pressures did the Academic Affairs Representative face that led to the formation of the online instructional committee and, ultimately, the university administration's decision to prohibit future offerings of WRIT 381? Did the WPA's memo insult the committee? The AAR? Did readers roll their eyes when they read references to Foucault and "Phase 2" portfolios? Who discarded the memo, the instructional committee or the WPA herself?

In *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*, Bruno Bettleheim suggests that most parables leave some mystery to be solved by the reader and, in as much, have a therapeutic function: in such genres readers find their "own solutions, through contemplating what the story seems to imply about [readers] and [their] inner conflicts at this moment in [their] life" (25). So, I end with some unanswered questions, in part to keep within the genre. And in part because I still don't have all the answers.

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Jody A. Briones

Identity, Voice, Social Justice, and Blundering in Critical and Cultural Studies Composition: Calling Out Racial Microaggressions at a Hispanic-Serving Institution

In *Writing/Teaching: Essays toward a Rhetoric of Pedagogy*, Paul Kameen states, "We are never who we are when we teach. Nor should we try to be . . . . Teaching is in fact the means by which we may become *other* than ourselves . . ." (256). As a woman of color within a majority White male academe, I disagree with Kameen. I am *always* me when I enter the classroom because I am the embodiment of difference, of "Other," within the academy. I have no choice but to be myself, a working-class Chicana compositionist. These positionalities inform my pedagogical approach to composition, through a critical and cultural studies lens.

Critical pedagogy promotes the critiquing and questioning of social systems through democratic dialogic. Largely influenced by Antonio Gramsci's call to question and resist hegemonic power structures and Paulo Freire's *conscientização*, an emancipatory educational approach "by which students, as empowered subjects, achieve a deepening awareness of the social realities that shape their lives and discover their own capacities to re-create them" (Darder, Baltodano, and Torres 15), critical pedagogy allows students to critique asymmetrical power systems to expose oppressor/oppressed relations. Building on Gramsci and Freire's concepts of critical pedagogy, Henry Giroux explains, "cultural studies provocatively stresses analyzing public memory [.] . . . blasting history open, rupturing its silences, highlighting its detours, acknowledging the events of its transmission, and organizing its limits within an open and honest concern with human suffering, values, and the legacy of the often unrepresentable or misrepresented" (68). In other words, cultural studies pedagogy excavates historical, ideological, and cultural contexts of oppressive systems.

Using critical and cultural studies pedagogies in the composition classroom allows for dialogue regarding cultural, political, and social justice issues relevant to my students, who are mainly working-class and of Mexican descent, and relevant to my life as a working-class Chicana teaching in a South Texas Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI). However, I am often at odds as to when and how much to use my identity and voice to contribute to the class' dialogic, especially

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when encountered with student racial microaggression, defined as derogatory rhetoric "or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color" (Sue, et al. 271). If I voice the slight, I risk overpowering the discussion with my positionality as teacher and risk being labeled "overly sensitive" to racial and gender issues as a Chicana. If I remain silent, I allow discrimination and social injustice to occur in my classroom.

In this essay, I describe my handling of a racial microaggressive student presentation in a rhetoric and composition course I examine how the use of my identity and voice to call out this racial microaggression was simultaneously an act of social justice and a teaching blunder, defined as a "conflict for critical pedagogues between their aims as teachers, aims which they like to think as liberatory, and their practice" (Thelin and Tassoni 5). I argue that teachers must have a voice in their classrooms, especially teachers of color who have historically been marginalized and silenced from such discussions. However, I nuance this argument by questioning how teachers can have a voice in the classroom without becoming authoritarian, without blundering.

Identity, Voice, and Social Justice

As Maxine Hairston acknowledges, power relations in the classroom between teacher and student will always favor the teacher because the teacher assesses and issues grades; however, she states it is "unprofessional" for teachers to use their power in the classroom to promote their own political agendas (188). According to Hairston, educators should not put "dogma before diversity, politics before craft" (180). To do so risks silencing students who do not agree with the teacher's prescriptive ideology (Giroux 73; Hairston 189). However, Giroux argues that teachers must have a voice in the classroom, but must use it in a way that "teaches students by example the importance of taking a stand . . . while rigorously engaging the full range of ideas about an issue" without becoming authoritarian (73). Lisa M. Toner refers to this balance of teacher-voice and dialogue as discursive ethics, which creates a student-centered classroom where students are empowered to participate in a classroom dialogic that examines polemic issues.

Toner believes that to achieve an open dialogic in the classroom, teachers must "situate their political advocacies and interpretative predilections in relation to alternatives" (3-4). In other words, to use discursive ethics is to openly discuss multiple perspectives, including, but not favoring, the teacher's perspective. However, because the power structure in the classroom inevitably favors the teacher, Toner states that the "responsibility for respecting conflicting interpretive methods and political advocacies lies first with writing teachers, then with students" (4). Ira Shor explains how a teacher should approach this student-centered dialogic:

> The teacher, backloading her or his comments, has earned the right to speak by honoring the student-centered, dialogic process. Serious educators have a right and a responsibility to share their academic knowledge and perspectives. They must not impose their values or interpretations on students, but when their turn comes in a participatory process they

> can set an example of the love of knowledge, of a well-informed mind, and of a critically thinking intellectual and citizen. . . . The dialogic lecture allows the teacher's knowledge an important place in the study as long as the students' idiom, perceptions, and right to disagree have been established first. (247)

Although I agree with this student-centered approach, Shor's comments here seem to limit the teacher's voice to academic epistemologies. What academic rhetoric do educators use in the classroom to teach social justice, especially in the critical and cultural studies classroom?

To teach social justice, educators must be self-aware of how they are affected by course content so that they may gain insight as to how content may affect students. This self-awareness calls for the examination of teacher-as-person, an inclusive pedagogical approach that resituates the positionality of teacher by taking into consideration the teacher's lived experiences and value systems when analyzing teacher identity and voice in the classroom (Goodson 234; Kelchtermans 198). Viewing teacher-as-person is tied to sociologist Charles Wright Mills' concept of the sociological imagination, which asks researchers to situate themselves within their research, and Ivor Goodson's educational focus of life history research, which calls for the analysis of biographical information and how it influences approaches to teaching.

As educators, how do our identities influence ways we approach our role as teacher in the classroom? When should we speak up, interject in classroom dialogic? When should we remain silent? As a woman of color teaching a critical and cultural studies composition course, the answers don't always come easy to me. I am always myself when I teach, that is I am conscientious of my positionalities as a working-class Chicana academic, but I struggle to situate myself in the classroom because I don't want my identity or voice as teacher nor my personal experiences, beliefs, or ideologies as a woman of color to overpower student identity and voice.

Although there is scholarship discussing faculty of color through a teacher-as-person analytical frame (see Foster; Housee; hooks; Alsup; Douglas; Nganga), there is limited scholarship regarding Chicana/o faculty identity within a critical and cultural studies composition classroom in an HSI (see Anzaldúa; Cantú). Furthermore, as of this writing, there is no scholarship that addresses the role of identity and voice of Chicana/o faculty when encountered with a student's racial microaggression in a critical and cultural studies composition course in an HSI. What follows is a description of a racial microaggressive student presentation and student and teacher responses. First, however, I will describe the rhetoric and composition course in which the presentation occurred to better show how my handling of this racial microaggression diverged from the democratic dialogic already established in the class.

Rhetoric and Composition I

In my Rhetoric and Composition I course, student writing is geared towards the critical analysis of socio-cultural and socio-political issues found within their communities, cultures, and generation, with each of the four-part essay sequence scaffolding critical inquiry. For example, Essay 1 asks students to reflect on how their multiple communities, cultures, and the generation in which they grew up have influenced who they have chosen to become as young adults. To help students broaden their insights and conceptions of these terms, the class reviews multiple definitions of "community" and "culture" and discusses examples of each. We also read two opposing articles regarding the millennial generation and discuss which aspects of the articles best fit their personal experiences and observations.

For Essay 2, students critically reflect on three socio-political and/or socio-cultural issues within their communities, cultures, or generation. In their discussion, students reflect on the personal significance of each issue, in which they explain how they are directly and/or indirectly affected. To help students develop critical inquiry, we read selected narrative and investigative articles from a program-approved reader, watch socio-cultural documentaries, and discuss the social and personal implications of each. Article and documentary topics include gender stereotyping, body image, working-class culture, child migrant labor, the educational system, and social media.[1] It is during the discussions of these readings and documentaries that I ask students to reflect on the author's/film maker's perspective, target audience, argument, and purpose of the work. These discussions are mainly held in small groups of three or four students for a limited period of time. The class then convenes as one large group for the last 10 minutes to voice what students discussed in their individual groups. In this large group setting, I serve mainly as facilitator (directing discussion) and moderator (correcting misinformation and monitoring for offensive language). I purposely limit my interaction with the groups to ensure that I do not silence student voices with my own. Most students become lively and engaged during these discussions.

Essay 3 is a research-based paper that asks students to choose one issue they wrote about in Essay 2 and then to discuss the causes and a/effects of the issue from multiple perspectives. To better understand and identify perspective, we discuss how rhetorical strategies and authors' biases inform the argument and purpose of a work and influence the target audience. To demonstrate this investigative process, I conduct a rhetorical analysis on an excerpt from an article and a short clip from a documentary we discussed during the inventive and writing processes of Essay 2. We identify rhetorical strategies used, how they fit into the overall purpose of the works, and how they appeal to the target audiences. In addition, I also conduct an online search of the author and director. Students are able to see the author's and director's educational backgrounds, political, religious, and special-interest endorsements, if any, and their overall bodies of work. We then look at how this information can be used to frame a cause and a/effect critical discussion regarding the selected issue. Using these demonstrations as examples, groups of three or four students are assigned an excerpt from a previously read article or a short clip from a previously watched documentary and are asked to conduct their own rhetorical analysis and online search. This exercise shows students how to critically analyze sources and incorporate multiple perspectives when composing Essay 3. Once students have composed a first draft, we conference to discuss their overall approach to the essay and any concerns they or I might have regarding their draft. After revising, students compose a second draft that is then peer reviewed in class. This second draft is revised to compose their final Essay 3.

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[1] Articles read include "Little Girls or Little Women? The Disney Princess Effect" by Stephanie Hanes, "What Ever Happened to Upward Mobility" by Rana Foroohar, and "Affirmative Action for Men" by Scott Jaschik. Documentaries watched include *Waiting for "Superman"* directed by Davis Guggenheim and *The Harvest/La Cosecha* directed by U. Roberto Romano.

For Essay 4, students propose at least three realistic and research-based solutions to the issue they have discussed in Essay 3, with each solution stemming from a different perspective, one of which may be their own. Students must then argue for the best solution and persuade an imagined reader to help enact the solution. To prepare for this essay, we look at how claims can be turned into arguments by providing supportive, credible evidence. In addition, by referring back to our discussions of perspective and purpose of a work, we discuss how to use textual rhetorical strategies to persuade readers. Once the first draft is composed, as with the methodological process of Essay 3, we conference to discuss how they are approaching the essay and any concerns they or I might have regarding their work. A second draft is peer reviewed in class and revised for the final draft of Essay 4.

The essay sequence culminates with an end-of-the-semester, 10-minute oral presentation in which students, either as a group or individually, identify the issue they researched, discuss the causes and a/effects of the issue, identify the best solution, and persuade their audience (the class and me) to act on the issue (call-to-action). As a visual component, presenters are asked to show one image, either self-created or published, that encapsulates the many aspects of their issue, and students explain their rationale for displaying the image. After students present, a five-minute question and answer session with the class follows. To ensure all students participate in the discussion of at least one presentation, fellow students are required to ask a total of two questions throughout the presentation sequence, while I ask at least one question to each presenter. During the question and answer session, students become lively. They ask presenters to explain what they uncovered during their research methodologies, and students discuss their own personal experiences regarding the issue, often adding to what others have stated, creating a democratic dialogic in the classroom. This did not occur, however, with one particular presentation. What follows is a description of a racial microaggressive student presentation regarding undocumented immigration in the U.S. and how the presentation affected the class.

Racial Microaggressive Student Presentation

One week before presentations began, I wrote on the board the issues that had been researched by multiple students, along with the students' names, in case some students would like to present as a group. Students then signed-up for presentation days, which were scheduled for the last two weeks of the semester. During these two weeks, presentations were well received by the class, meaning that the question and answer sessions generated so much dialogue with students that I, as moderator, often had to curtail conversation to give the next presenters equal time. This did not occur, however, with the presentation described below.

Only two students, white males, had researched undocumented immigration in the U.S., so they decided to present as a group and selected the second to the last day of the semester to present. With one day left in the semester, then, these two students (who I will refer to as Presenter 1 and Presenter 2 for the discussion below) took center classroom to present on undocumented immigration in the U.S., but before beginning their oral presentation, they displayed a photograph, titled "How Many Mexican Illegal Immigrants Fit in the Trunk of a Car?" by BlameItOnTheVoices.com, as their visual component. The photograph shows at least five adult-male Mexican undocumented immigrants who have hidden themselves in the storage area of a car to evade U.S. border patrol, using the vehicle as transportation to enter the country illegally. The image shocked me, and I could see it had a similar effect on many of the students, especially those of Mexican descent. In fact, I saw many Mexican American and Mexican-national students stare at the photograph in disbelief, disgust, anger, and some in shame, choosing to keep their eyes down on their desks rather than on the photograph being displayed. I even heard, "Oh my God," from a Mexican-national student appalled at the photograph. Although the image made me and many students visibly uncomfortable because of the inhumane and desperate conditions in which these men were found, I chose not to address the provocative photograph because I wanted to give the presenters the opportunity to explain their rationale in choosing it.

> "I saw many Mexican American and Mexican-national students stare at the photograph in disbelief, disgust, anger, and some in shame"

As they began their presentation, Presenter 1 identified their issue as "illegal" immigration in the U.S., and explained it was mainly caused by immigrants' desire of the "American Dream," a better life. However, the presenters did not discuss the reasons why immigrants pursue better lives in a country that is not their own. Instead, they showed a cartoon clip that depicts two white men, dressed in cowboy hats and boots, wearing western-style button-down shirts with handkerchiefs around their necks, atop horses. These cowboys are policing the U.S.-Mexico border, which is depicted by a barbed-wire fence and is surrounded by rocks and cacti. One white man says to the other, "They're all exaggerating the size of the illegal immigration problem, don't you think?" (Foden). Instead of a reply from the second white man, the viewer reads "Si!" ("Yes!") coming from underneath multiple rocks, seemingly from the many undocumented Mexican immigrants who have crossed into the U.S. undetected (Foden). The presenters did not explain their rationale for this image either.

The presenters then took turns stating the effects of illegal immigration: an increase in job loss for Americans because "illegals" were willing to work for substantially less pay than Americans; an increase in identity theft because "illegals" stole Americans' social security numbers or "aliens" would buy them from willing Americans; and the loss of sales taxes because instead of purchasing high-priced items, many immigrants send their money to their remaining family in their home country. [2] Throughout this discussion, both presenters used the words "illegal" and "alien" interchangeably, sometimes using "illegal alien," when referring to undocumented immigrants.[3] They then showed another cartoon clip, which ironically expresses the paradox between political unfairness and political correctness. This cartoon clip shows four school-aged children (two white males, one white female, and one African American male) hiding in fear from Julio, an undocumented Hispanic immigrant depicted as a physically violent bully and thief who beats his white classmate for his lunch money. The first white male student, who has a black eye and cuts on his face, states to the rest, "I'm hiding from that new kid Julio...He beat me up and took my lunch money!" (Wise). The white female student responds, "Julio is an illegal! You should have him kicked our of school!" (Wise). The African American male student replies, "No! You can't do that! You'll look like a bigot!" (Wise). The second white male student says, "If you tell they'll put you in detention and give Julio your new bicycle" (Wise). The rationale for displaying this image was not explained.

Ending their presentation, Presenter I explained that the best solution for "illegal"

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2. I remembered reading these effects in Presenter I's first draft of Essay 3. During his conference, I explained that although these effects were accurate, they reflected only an American perspective and framed the issue of undocumented immigration in the U.S. as a *problem* for Americans. To better understand perspective, we conducted a brief rhetorical analysis on one of the sources and investigated the author to uncover any potential biases that may contribute to the overall argument or purpose of the work. I encouraged Presenter I to critically analyze all of his sources. In his final draft of Essay 3, Presenter I kept the three effects from his earlier draft, but added an effect framed from an immigrant's perspective that discussed the substandard living conditions of undocumented immigrants as a result of their inability or reluctance to complain to landlords or afford better housing.

3. I had previously explained in conferences and in essay feedback that these terms were derogatory and asked that "undocumented immigrant" be used instead. Presenter 2 made this change within his essay while Presenter I did not.

4. In their Essay 4, both presenters discussed solutions from differing perspectives. While Presenter 2 argued that the best solution for undocumented immigration was for the U.S. to work with the Mexican government to improve their economic conditions so that Mexican nationals would not feel the need to seek advancement in the U.S., Presenter I argued that the best solution was to allow volunteer Minutemen to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border alongside Texas border patrol agents, thus significantly increasing manpower without an increase in cost to tax payers.

immigration was to allow volunteer Minutemen, armed U.S. citizens, to help border patrol agents guard the U.S.-Mexico border.[4] As their call-to-action, they urged their classmates, many of whom still showed signs of shock at the racial microaggression experienced, to write their congressional representatives in support of this measure. The presenters did not explain their rationale for using the images, nor did they explain why they chose to show three images instead of one, as instructed by the presentation guidelines.

Enacting Social Justice through Voice

Afterwards, the presenters were given time to answer questions from the class. However, the class remained silent. My students' decision to remain silent when presented with an opportunity to use their voices to call out racial microaggression directed at them (those of Mexican descent) confounded me, as they had been vocal during all question-and-answer sessions up until this point. For me to have remained silent would have communicated acceptance of this social injustice, which was unacceptable to me as a women of color. Therefore, I used my voice and identity as a Chicana and teacher to call out this racial microaggression and enact social justice in the classroom.

I began by asking the presenters to explain their rationale in selecting the images and to explain why they had chosen to show three images instead of one as instructed. With a slight smile, Presenter I answered, "Because we were trying to make light of a serious issue," explaining they wanted to make their audience "laugh" at the issue and they believed all three images were humorous. This response confused me, so I asked him to explain how he believed the images were funny. Presenter I stated, "Well, you know, because the first one shows illegals crammed like sardines and the last two are cartoon strips." I informed them that I did not find the images funny; rather, I found them offensive and racist against those of Mexican descent.

I explained that although the first image was accurate in how undocumented Mexican and other Hispanic immigrants have entered the U.S. illegally, showcasing the photograph without commentary about the desperation and dehumanizing humility the men in the photograph must have felt as they withstood the inhumane confinement for the opportunity for a better life signified that the presenters did not believe that these humanitarian issues mattered. I also explained that although the two cowboy caricatures are passively monitoring the U.S.-Mexico border, their cowboy attire closely resembles that of Texas Rangers, a Texas law enforcement agency that historically killed many Mexican and Mexican Americans in Texas (Acuña 60). In addition, the voices of the undocumented Mexican immigrants are coming from underneath rocks, where dirt and insects lie, denoting a subhuman subject position. The Mexican immigrants' "hiding place" gives them a subaltern subjectivity in comparison to the Texas Ranger-like Anglos, who are "above" them on their horses. I also explained that the third image stereotypes undocumented Hispanic immigrants as violent individuals who steal money from documented citizens and argues that undocumented immigrants should not be allowed to attend public schools. The image also implies that to voice such a belief risks being labeled a racist and punished by authority figures.

Presenter 1 was adamant that the images were not racist, while Presenter 2 looked ashamed. Presenter 1 stated that I was being hypersensitive about the issue because of my identity as a Chicana and, therefore, was not reflecting on his presentation objectively. At that point, I addressed the class and asked those of Mexican descent to raise their hands. Eighteen out of 24 students raised their hand. Then I asked how many of them (those of Mexican descent) were offended by the images displayed during the presentation. Sixteen hands remained up, with one student vocally acknowledging to the presenters that she was offended by their chosen images and overall presentation. Defending himself, Presenter 1 explained they were merely presenting already published information; they were not responsible for the content of that information. I then explained that I did not expect them to alter factual or published data on the topic; I did, however, expect them to be aware of whom their audience was—75% of Mexican descent. Furthermore, I reminded them that their issue was undocumented immigration in the U.S., not undocumented Mexican immigration in the U.S. I explained that while I certainly understood why they focused on the U.S.-Mexico border (its proximity to South Texas), their lack of discussion of undocumented immigration in other U.S. border areas, as well as their lack of discussion of other nation-specific undocumented immigrants, showed they did not understand the breadth of their topic, or perhaps showed their prejudices against undocumented Mexican immigrants. Presenter 2 understood; Presenter 1 did not, and remained defiant that his presentation was not a racial microaggression.

Teaching Blunder

Presenter 1 accused me of being hypersensitive about the presentation issue because of my identity as a Chicana, and he was right. As I watched the presentation, I was not thinking of how the research presented or images could be used to begin a dialogue regarding the works' biases, perspectives, target audiences, arguments, and purposes nor of the oppressor/oppressed power systems portrayed. In other words, I did not critique the presentation using the critical and cultural studies pedagogical approaches we had practiced throughout the semester. Instead, I viewed this presentation as a Chicana and discriminatory towards my Mexican ancestry.

For example, I found the use of the terms "illegal" and "alien" racist and discriminatory because they connoted the representation of undocumented Mexican immigrants as illegal other-worldly, nonhuman beings. In addition, the images were also discriminatory because they portrayed undocumented Mexican immigrants as people of no value whose existence in the U.S. is intolerable and, when caught and deported, serve as entertainment. The presenters did not discuss or show: the poverty conditions in Mexico many undocumented Mexican immigrants choose to leave in hopes of earning enough money in the U.S. to sustain their families, the many life-threatening risks they must overcome to make it across the border, the racism they face when they finally arrive in the U.S., the substandard labor jobs they must endure to earn an income, the illnesses they suffer without having access to medical assistance, and the constant worry of being found out and deported back to Mexico. In short, the presenters did not consider the perspective of Mexican immigrants nor did they research the economic issues that cause many Mexicans to immigrate to U.S. or critically analyze the role U.S. imperialism has played in these economic hardships. Instead, the issue of undocumented immigration in the U.S. was framed as a *problem* for Americans with only American perspectives.

Furthermore, I did not understand why the class did not verbalize their already declared offense to the presentation. I thought, perhaps, the issue of undocumented immigration was so personal to many of the Mexican descent students in the class that to discuss it openly with unsympathetic individuals would have been too painful. Another possibility was that the presenters were Anglo and the class, which consisted mainly of students of Mexican descent, felt the implications of the historic oppressions suffered by Mexicans and Mexican-Americans at the hands of whites. In "Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life," Sue et al. provide another possible explanation for students' silence when confronted with racial microaggressions:

> Deciding to do nothing by sitting on one's anger is one response that occurs frequently in people of color. This response occurs because persons of color may be (a) unable to determine whether a microaggression has occurred, (b) at a loss for how to respond, (c) fearful of the consequences, (d) rationalizing that 'it won't do any good anyway,' or (e) engaging in self-deception through denial ('It didn't happen'). (279)

Silence can also be viewed as passive resistance, the refusal of marginalized students "to provide the point of view of the 'other' for the benefit of the White student" (Wagner 265). Regardless of the reason for the class' silence, I felt a need to use my voice to speak for them, and myself. I felt a need to be the teacher-hero, a situation in which the authoritarian teacher "rescues" students from their perceived role as "victims" (Thelin and Tassoni 5). Although the presentation was a racial microaggression, the way in which I handled the situation was a teaching blunder.

Instead of questioning the presenters on the perspective of their research and images, I reprimanded them in front of the class for what I had labeled a racial microaggression. Instead of beginning a dialogue with the presenters regarding the rhetorical strategies used in the works they discussed, any biases uncovered when they researched the authors/artists, and how they believed these issues influenced their presentation, I polled the class, or rather, only those of Mexican descent (as if the presentation affected only those of Mexican descent), to see how many of them also believed the presentation to be a racial microaggression. When I saw that most students agreed with me, I felt justified in my teacher-hero role and believed I was enacting social justice for myself and my students. Upon reflection, however, I realized my students did not need to be rescued; they, along with the presenters, needed to be given an opportunity to join a democratic dialogue regarding perspective that I had failed to begin.

As stated above, this teaching blunder occurred on the penultimate day of the semester. Although the class met one more time to finish out the presentations, the audience minimally participated in the remaining question-and-answer sessions, and Presenter 1 and Presenter 2 did not to show up for class. Unfortunately, this teaching blunder is how the semester ended, without time to discuss the impact of the presentation and how it was handled.

Conclusion

I struggle with my decision to have allowed the students' presentation to continue because racism and discrimination should never be tolerated. However, to not give the presenters the opportunity to present their research or explain their choice in visual rhetoric would have impinged on their rights of expressivity in a student-centered dialogic and created a teacher-centered politicized classroom, which, according to Giroux, would have given my perspective and ideology credence over the student- presenters' perspectives, silencing them. Ironically, this is what I did anyway.

I have learned some significant lessons from my teaching blunder. I have learned that not fully being self-aware of how racist and discriminatory material regarding undocumented Mexican immigrants would affect me negatively impacted my response to the presentation. As Nina Asher points out in "Engaging Difference: Towards a Pedagogy of Interbeing," "if I am not aware of how various forces of oppression affect me and how I respond to them, how would I be able to get my students to think about the same?" (245-246). More importantly, however, I have learned that no matter how much I am affected by student dialogue, I cannot place my own political ideologies ahead of pedagogical craft, as Hairston advises (180). To do so silences student voice, which should never occur in a critical and cultural studies classroom. But I don't believe a teacher's voice should be silenced either. Critical and cultural studies teachers should use their voices to progress classroom dialogic by critiquing multiple perspectives, including their own. As Anzaldúa states:

> a teacher teaches what she or he needs to learn. Transformation does not happen unless we explore what threatens us as teachers and students; what we sweep under our desks; what we silence; what we're angry about; what causes us anxiety; what brings us into open conflict and disagreement; and what cultural prescriptions and cultural teachings we're rebelling against. (241)

If I could redo my reaction to my students' racial microaggression, I would create a dialogue with the presenters regarding the perspectives, arguments, target audiences, and purposes of their research and images. In retrospect, more exercises in rhetorical and visual analyses on their research and images, as well as conferences before the presentations, would have better prepared students and myself against microaggressive presentations. By not facilitating democratic dialogue with the presenters, I blundered what could have been significant learning experiences for my students and one hell of a discussion for the class as a whole.

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Genesea M. Carter

Bypassing the Silence in the Technical and Professional Writing Classroom: Encouraging Agency through Discourse Analysis

In 2004, the National Commission on Writing (NCW) published *Writing: A Ticket to Work...Or a Ticket Out*, a survey of 120 American business leaders about writing in the workplace. In the first sentence of the report, the NCW announced, "[T]oday's workplace writing is a 'threshold skill' for hiring and promotion among the salaried" (3), a fact that is not surprising to writing instructors. Perhaps most shocking was the revelation that American corporations spend as much as 3.1 billion dollars annually upgrading their salaried employees' writing skills (4). Wrote one survey respondent: "We're likely to send out 200-300 people annually for skills-upgrade courses like 'business writing' or 'technical writing'" (4). In particular, respondents emphasized the importance of clarity and concision in written communication, noting that writing should be "in a tight, logical manner" because "good writing is a sign of good thinking," as two survey respondents wrote (8). Supervisors, it seems, intend/hope that their employees will learn how to write more effectively and efficiently—everything that encompasses what they define as "good writing."

As writing instructors, we know that "good writing" includes rhetorical awareness, an understanding of genre choices, audience analysis, and authorial intent. Applying writing skills effectively is an issue of know-how and agency. If writers, whether in first-year writing courses or corporate America, are unaware of their agency—that every written word, formatting choice, and design decision, for example, is a choice that they can exercise—they will not be able to effectively adapt their writing skills to the multiplicity of situations in which they are required to be successful. Preparing students for the kind of writing skills expected of them beyond their college career necessarily begins in the classroom. For students enrolled in a business or technical writing course, often the only career-related writing class they will ever take, learning to seize their discursive agency is an invaluable skill.

For writing instructors who teach peripheral students populations, such as first-generation and working-class students, there is an increased challenge to teaching their students about the agency they have in communication situations. These students are often unaware that they are agents, or they lack the know-how to seize such agency. This gap exists, in part, because

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peripheral students lack confidence in their own voices, and/or they are not prepared to assume a position of authority. Carolyn R. Boiarsky, with Julie Hagemann and Judith Burdan, write that peripheral student populations are "novice learners" who often live in "an authoritative environment, with little control over decisions related to their lives" (12-13). This lack of decision-making directly affects students' perceptions of their agency. Raised in an environment with little choice or autonomy, they often enter the classroom as passive participants, and this passivity also affects their discursive choices.

The peripheral students at my former university, a Hispanic-serving institution (HSI) with a large population of working-class, first-generation, heritage, and Native American students, encounter an additional challenge: the disconnection between their home communities and the academic community. Joseph Heathcott writes, "The weight of obligations to families back home coupled with the tension and ambivalence working-class and first-generation college students experience on campus, in the classroom, and in their new living spaces puts enormous pressure on them to succeed and to excel" (106-107). The pressure for students to remain connected to their communities while bringing financial and social success to their families will affect students' transition from academic outsiders to insiders as they struggle to remain "true" to their families and cultures while adopting new literacies and discourses.

This is a particular problem at HSIs. According to Rafael Vásquez, HSI student populations need "to feel at home in college. The issue of familioso or family interdependence [is] salient along with creating classroom supportive environments while readying students for employment in less supportive environments" (84). Students' feelings that their home and academic lives are discordant, or feelings that the academic community is not a safe space, will affect how they engage with their fellow classmates and instructors. "Too often, working-class and first-generation see or are made to see their backgrounds as liabilities, as their student status a break from the past," Heathcott writes (113). Peripheral students need to feel supported and believe that their home communities and discourses are valued. This does not mean that students do not need to learn to transition into the academic discourse community. But it does mean that peripheral students are wary and may believe that the academic discourse community intends to drive a wedge between them and their home communities. This affects classroom dynamics in a multiplicity of ways. But in my own classroom, I have noticed that students tend to be more introverted, hesitating to share their thoughts with the class, which can be perceived by instructors as an unwillingness to adapt to the academic community.

In my commitment to meeting my students' needs, I have discovered that discourse analysis, defined as "the study of language-in-use" by sociolinguist James Paul Gee, is a promising framework for teaching students how to adapt to new discourse communities and teaching students that they are agents in all communication situations (*An Introduction* 8). Within the Technical and Professional Writing classroom, discourse analysis can teach students to apply their discursive awareness to professional communication situations. Discourse analysis is a vital skill for all students, yet for those specifically focused on obtaining salaried positions after graduation, writing skills "could be [their] ticket in." Conversely, a lack of these crucial skills "could be [their] ticket out" (National Commission 8).

Moreover, discourse analysis is an especially useful framework for writing instructors teaching in minority-serving institutions. Discourse analysis can be used to teach peripheral student populations that adapting to new communication situations does not mean their home communities' discourse(s) are less respected or valuable. Instead, discourse analysis can show students how to successfully transition to the academic community without feeling that they are betraying their families and cultures. This transition requires that students feel safe in the classroom to explore unfamiliar discourses, as well as opportunities to critically analyze and reflect upon unfamiliar language practices. Furthermore, discourse analysts' emphasis on language as personal, ideological, and cultural may help students bridge the cultural and linguistic gap commonly found in institutions with a large number of monolingual, multilingual, and heritage speakers.

This article traces my own reflections upon my pedagogy and classroom activities. Kathleen Blake Yancey calls for writing instructors to be "reflective practitioner[s]": to "adjust [our] teaching, [and] engage in constructive reflection over a set of teaching experiences" (15). Through my own reflections, I have learned that peripheral student populations need individual reflective writing exercises and assignments. Individual reflection is a silent, non-threatening space for students to share their knowledge and growth—but it is a more comfortable space, as I will show, than in-class discussions.

What's Discourse Analysis Got To Do With It?

Understanding workplace communication through the lens of discourse analysis has been increasingly explored since the late 1980s.[1] However, little scholarship examines teaching technical and professional writing students how to use discourse analysis to analyze their own and other's communication choices. Pedagogically, discourse analysis is often applied to the second-language or multilingual learning classroom in order to better understand the linguistic choices students make. However, in scholarship focused on teaching business and technical communication, scholars dance around the concept of discourse analysis without explicitly naming it or applying its conventions to curriculum. For example, Nancy Roundy Blyler writes about the importance of teaching authorial intent in business communication because "readers are not passive receivers of text" and readers "create discourse and purpose as they read" (17). Likewise, Mark Mabrito explains in "The E-Mail Discussion Group: An Opportunity for Discourse Analysis," that an in-class email analysis activity can teach students about genre conventions. However, he does not mention discourse analysis within the article. Finally, David R. Russell implicitly acknowledges the importance of discourse analysis within the business and technical communication classroom, but he fails to call it as such. He writes, "[The] microlevel textual negotiations that workplace writing mediates show the deeply social and often political nature of written communication that students become enmeshed in when they enter disciplinary and professional networks" (256).

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[1] A few representative examples include John Hagge and Charles Kostelnick's "Linguistic Politeness in Professional Prose: A Discourse Analysis of Auditors' Suggestion Letters with Implications for Business Communication Pedagogy" (1989); Rachel Spilka's edited collection *Writing in the Workplace: New Research Perspectives* (1993); Susanne Niemeier, Charles P. Campbell, and René Dirven's edited collection *The Cultural Context in Business Communication* (1998); and Paola Evangelisti Allori and Giuliana Garzone's edited collection *Discourse, Identities and Genres in Corporate Communication* (2010).

Heeding Bertha Du-Babcock's call to "introduce new theory and build new teaching approaches to our [business and technical writing] pedagogy" (261), my article closes this gap by showing how discourse analysis can be integrated into the technical and professional writing classroom to teach students ways to reflect upon their discursive choices, an implicit nod to the knowledge they bring into the classroom. By instructors teaching students, novice and expert learners alike, to recognize the transactional nature of communication, they can learn how to harness their discursive agency, an essential factor to their academic and professional success.

"they can learn how to harness their discursive agency, an essential factor to their academic and professional success"

Discourse analyst Barbara Johnstone explains that discourse represents "ideas as well as ways of talking that influence and are influenced by the ideas" (3). Furthermore, Gee offers this perspective: "Discourses are ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing, that are accepted as instantiations of particular identities (or 'kinds of people')" (*Social* 3). Both scholars describe discourse as fundamentally social, undergirded by a transaction between people and their interpretations of and experiences in the world. For peripheral student populations who have not learned how to engage in social transactions, discourse analysis can help them reclaim some agency.

Discourse analysis is a useful framework precisely because it is not an "abstract system," Johnstone notes, but rather a method that seeks to understand

> what happens when people draw on the knowledge they have about language, knowledge based on the memories of things they have said, heard, seen, or written before, to do things in the world: exchange information, express feelings, make things happen, create beauty.... (3)

Similarly, British linguist Norman Fairclough uses the term "critical discourse analysis" (CDA) to define the "transdisciplinary" nature of discourse analysis as a "relational form of research .

. . on social relations" (3). CDA is not an analysis of discourse itself but the "dialectical *relations between* discourse and other objects, elements or moments, as well as the analysis of the 'internal relations' of discourse" (Fairclough 4, emphasis in the original).

Thus, according to Johnstone, Gee, and Fairclough, discourse analysts examine the social nature of communication. Although most discourse analysis scholarship examines the linguistic aspects of language, discourse analysis can be applied more broadly within rhetoric and composition scholarship and pedagogy to examine how and why people communicate—as well as the associations, experiences, feelings, knowledge, and memories connected with language choice. Like compositionists and rhetoricians, discourse analysts recognize that language choices are not accidental, whether or not individuals consciously realize that they are making such choices.

Discourse is also personal. People use language significant to them as individuals. Words and phrases carry private associations, beliefs, connotations, and values that once uttered, contribute to the construction of society. Gee writes,

> Arguing about what words (ought to) mean is not a trivial business. It is not a matter of "mere words," "hair splitting," "just semantics" when these arguments are over socially contested terms. Such arguments are what lead to the maintenance and creation of social worlds. (*Social* 6)

People influence how language functions; they are the agents who decide how language is created and modified with every utterance. "Meaning is not a thing that sits fixed in the mind," Gee writes. "It is not something that sits in dictionaries" (Social 21). However, in order to successfully communicate, there must be common understanding about how language functions between people. Without such an understanding, miscommunication or no communication occurs.

Discourse analysis can be more easily explained by using practical examples. For instance, in the United States, we have a particular understanding of what the word "desk" represents: a relatively flat, horizontal surface where people stand or sit to do some kind of activity that requires a flat, horizontal surface. The surface space varies in size, the materials vary, and the features undoubtedly vary. But if we were to hear the word "desk" in conversation or on the television or radio, we would visualize what that word meant to us: perhaps a roll top desk, a metal desk; one with a filing drawer, one without drawers; one neatly organized with art projects, one messy with mail. Some may remember their father or mother paying bills at a family desk; some may think of the grading they have to do at their campus desk; some may remember how uncomfortable their home desk is because it is too tall or short; some may covet their colleague's/neighbor's/friend's desk.

Although we have different visual associations when hearing the word "desk," we do share a common understanding of the desk's purpose. Our shared understanding of the word "desk" — thus making conversation about desks possible—is a result of many influences. Visualizing "desk" in a similar manner allows us to share and collaborate in ways that would be vastly different if we had unrelated, dissimilar definitions of the word. However, because we share a definition of "desk," we can collaboratively discuss, design, critique, manufacture, purchase, use, and sell desks.

Because discourse is social, collaborative, and transactional, much of our discourse is influenced by the discourse communities of which we are members. According to Patricia Bizzell, discourse communities are comprised of people drawn together by similar uses of language. Therefore, it is by "the use of language" that discourse communities are established even though they are often "bound . . . by other ties as well, geographical, socioeconomic, ethnic, professional, and so on" (Bizzell 222). Discourse analysis and discourse community scholarship are natural partners in that they both teach us how to respond to the social communications around us. For peripheral student populations who need guidance transitioning from academic outsiders to insiders, they need to learn how to become socially aligned with the insiders they need to engage. One of the ways to become socially aligned is through a sharing of discursive practices (Gee *An Introduction* 35). Therefore, instructors interested in preparing their students for diverse discourse community should consider how to utilize discourse analysis into their curriculum. For peripheral students who are learning to become academic insiders, the blending of discourse community concepts with discourse analysis is especially important: many students believe that they must leave their home discourses and communities at the classroom door. However, this is antithetical to both frameworks as they emphasize adapting to communities' needs—but not as a method for denying students' heritages, cultures, discourses, or communities. Thus, teaching discourse analysis and discourse community in concert with each other can to create a non-threatening space where students can learn about community membership without feeling threatened.

> "they emphasize adapting to communities' needs—but not as a method for denying students' heritages, cultures, discourses, or communities"

According to John Swales, one characteristic of discourse communities is that the community "has developed and continues to develop discoursal expectations. These may involve appropriacy of topics, the form, function and positioning of discoursal elements, and the roles texts play in the operation of the discourse community" (212). Swales's point resonates with my purpose for integrating discourse analysis into the technical and professional writing classroom. Neither writers nor audiences live in bubbles, protected from outside influences. As a means for understanding the relationship between authorial intent and audience, students need to learn about the complexity of discourse, particularly that discourse is community-created and -defined. For peripheral students who may be less adept at exploring, analyzing, and reflecting upon the diverse communities around them, discourse analysis can help facilitate that learning.

Discourse analysis also provides critical insight into genre conventions, an especially important skill for students learning to communicate in a variety of academic and professional genres. For example, students enrolled in Technical and Professional Writing will be expected to write memos, emails, proposals, and reports for professional audiences. These genres are not "sexy" topics of discussion by any means. However, teaching students how to effectively communicate through workplace documents is vital to their professional success. Students new to writing workplace documents often perceive of them as "boring" writing styles and genres, and many of them approach writing such documents with the mindset that they are fill-in-the-blank templates with little to no thought given to their discursive choices. Instead, technical and professional writing students must be taught that their discursive choices affect the success of those documents as they respond to particular professional audiences (clients, managers, committees, boards of directors, etc.). Genres are not birthed from isolation; they are an exchange between people. Thus, genre analysis complements discourse analysis in that it teaches that genres are social with cultural meaning (Devitt 337). Discourse analysis can unpack those social and cultural contexts.

My Story: Institutional and Course Context

As a second year doctoral candidate in the Rhetoric and Writing program in the Department of English Language and Literature at the University of Mexico, I began teaching Technical and Professional Writing in 2009. The University of New Mexico is a Carnegie-designated very high research university and is "considered one of the largest producers" of Hispanic undergraduates and graduates (Maestas, Vaquera, and Zehr 238-239). The university's HSI designation highlights several demographic realities about the student body. By definition, HSIs have a full-time enrollment of at least 25% Hispanic students, as well as a 50% student population who are enrolled full-time and receive federal financial aid (Hispanic Association). As a result, HSIs serve a large number of students who are historically marginalized and are from a lower socio-economic bracket. Moreover, since New Mexico is one of the poorest states in the nation, many of the institution's non-Hispanic students face similar financial and educational access challenges. Furthermore, HSIs have very diverse student populations; this diversity significantly affects their sense of belonging, sense of community, and social interaction (Vásquez 86). These factors both affect students' willingness and abilities to transition from academic outsiders to insiders.

The Core Writing Program, housed within the Department of English, is responsible for the 100- and 200-level general education writing courses and places a strong emphasis on rhetorical awareness through a genre-based curriculum. A rhetorically focused, genre-based curriculum, as Anis Barwarshi explains, teaches students "ways of discursively and materially organizing, knowing, experiencing, acting, and relating to in the world" (9). Program stakeholders believe this curriculum teaches Core Writing students how to adeptly engage with the diverse people and communication situations around them. Carolyn Miller refers to genre analysis as engaging in "social action" (153). This social action is conceptualized in the Core Writing Program's emphasis on "the rhetorical situation," an overarching outcome for all 100- and 200-level courses. Writing instructors' curricula include a multiplicity of genres with different real-life audiences and purposes. In Technical and Professional Writing, common rhetorical situations include designing and writing instruction manuals for various companies, writing recommendation reports to the university's Board of Regents, and writing career dossiers for internship applications.

English 219: Technical and Professional Writing is part of a two-segment general education requirement offered by the Core Writing Program. After passing English 101 and 102, students take either Technical and Professional Writing or Advanced Expository Writing depending on their program requirements or personal preferences. English 219, according to the course description, teaches students to "focus on how to analyze and understand readers' needs as well as develop a coherent structure, clear style, and compelling page layout" ("Core Courses" n. pag.). In Technical and Professional Writing, typical genres include emails, memos, reports, proposals, and instruction manuals. Most students who take English 219 major in Business, Engineering, Physical Education, and Pre-Med programs and are required to take the course. Sophomores primarily enroll in the course, with male students often outnumbering female students. In my spring 2013 section, for example, fifteen out of twenty-three students were male. Most of the students are still fulfilling general education requirements and have little or no knowledge of the field-specific writing in their majors or future careers. While this blank slate is certainly useful to build upon, students' lack of knowledge regarding workplace writing or writing in their disciplines can negatively affect their investment in the course.

It was not until teaching Technical and Professional Writing that I fully experienced the impact of students' discursive dexterity on their professional goals. Teaching at a HSI where many students attend the university to gain employment that (hopefully) grants them financial stability and economic mobility, I was keenly aware of the student-as-customer perspective that often bleeds through campus. I do not disparage this point of view. On the contrary, it gave me an additional exigency for preparing my students for writing and communicating in the workplace. Knowing that most of my students were attending university to begin a career, with many of them already supporting siblings and other family members while parents were across the border or while their families lived on pueblos and reservations, I took seriously their needs as communicators. As much as I relied upon rhetorical awareness to help them become better writers and communicators, my methods were not creating the results I wanted to see. What was lacking, I observed, was students' understanding of their own language choices. While they could analyze the rhetorical situation of every writing assignment, they could not talk about their discourse choices or the discourse choices other authors made. However, discussing discursive choices was a vital part to completing the rhetorical situation: if they could not reflect upon or talk about how discourse is used, how would they be able to effectively use discourse in professional, academic, and personal communication situations?

To test whether my students knew how to reflect upon their discourse choices, I began asking them in 2011 during class discussion, if they ever thought about "why you said what you said." Perhaps not surprisingly, my students seemed dumbfounded when I asked them this question. Their raised brows, silent responses, and blank stares indicated to me that either they did not think about or did not know how to articulate their choices. Even when casually inquiring about their communication on social media, students were unable to express how they made decisions about their language choices. I soon realized the need to step back from the rhetorical situation and start small—with the examination of the very words we use. I decided to experiment with adding discourse analysis more formally in the spring of 2013. Broadly, I intended to complicate students' understanding of the rhetorical situation while teaching them that adapting their discourse to meet the needs of different audiences would not mean that they are betraying their home discourses and communities. When considering my HSI student needs, however, I also recognized that I needed to teach them that discourse analysis might give them the agency that peripheral students often lack. This article recounts my stumbles in my own deep learning as I tried to help usher students into the technical and professional writing discourse community.

To stress the importance of discourse analysis within all communication situations, I framed my spring 2013 Technical and Professional Writing course with discourse analysis. In the first week of the semester, I explained that our discussions would be focused on examining discourse and how we use it. Reflecting upon and analyzing discourse is vital to professional, academic, and personal success because the use of discourse can (and will) affect jobs, grades, and relationships. To steep students in discourse analysis, the opening two weeks were devoted to reading the first two chapters of Barbara Johnstone's *Discourse Analysis*. Chapter one, the introduction, defines discourse analysis and chapter two, "Discourse and the World" covers topics of discourse, culture, and ideology. These two chapters marked important starting points because Johnstone emphasizes the personal, ideological nature of discourse. Both of these chapters highlight the personal nature of discourse, thus implicitly celebrating and honoring students' own discourses, while providing them with skills that will teach them how to become insiders into the communities they so choose. However, students cannot learn to transition from outsiders to insiders on their own; they must have insiders guide them (Bizzell 228). Thus, instructors who teach technical and professional writing are uniquely positioned to guide their students through this transition.

Using Freewrites to Unpack Students' Discourse Analysis Knowledge

My first challenge was getting my students to open up and engage in course discussion. I had never taught such a silent group, and I did not know how to bring them out of their silence.

Because they would not talk in class, in week three I asked them to complete a 300-word freewrite homework assignment on the class's online discussion thread. In the prompt, I asked students eight different questions from our discourse analysis readings, such as "Why as budding scholars, professionals, and citizens, do we need to be, as Barbara Johnstone writes, 'interested in what happens when people draw on the knowledge they have about language' (3)?", "Have you picked up on any strategic discursive choices in your own reading?", and "Have you noticed any ideologies in your language choices or the language choices of others?"

Yancey writes that if instructors "want to know how" students "arrive at certain conclusions" and "what discourses they are drawing on," she declares, "*Try asking 'em*" (5, emphasis in the original). Reflection is not unrealistic for 100- or 200-level students because they are "intelligent agents who can engage in frequent and deliberate self-awareness" she notes (8, emphasis removed). But the methods in which we ask students to reflect, such as a public class discussion, may not be the best way to facilitate conversation—especially if they are insecure or inexperienced, like peripheral students are. Kelly Belanger and Diane Panozzo write that peripheral students need a "safe environment" because they can be easily "intimidated into silence" (95, 96). Therefore, students may need a more private space in which to reflect. Freewriting is one method to help silent students gain voices—voices that may be too quiet, too unsure, or too insecure to share with the class. And freewrites can be a last-ditch effort on behalf of the writing instructor to figure out what his/her students are thinking.

Students' responses were thoughtful, albeit a bit vague, and showed their understanding that discourse is a powerful, influential tool. For example, Monica[2] writes,

> Another thing that I found interesting was where it states that 'discourses are ideas as well as ways of talking that influence, and are influenced by ideas.' This interested me because it goes along with what we are talking about in classes. Like with this first assignment, we are going to have to influence people into thinking that the job we are presenting is the best job on campus.

She identifies the tension in communication: there is a speaker and hearer, giver and taker, enmeshed in a cycle of communication. While she does not explicitly identify this cycle as addressing the rhetorical situation and audience expectations, her response illustrates a basic understanding in how adeptly applied discourse can make or break a rhetorical situation—exactly what I sought to accomplish in the first few weeks. As well, her ability to link together course assignments with discourse analysis readings indicate that students may find the discourse analysis tools useful to completing their coursework.

Some students were able to show the interconnectedness between discourse, life experiences, and ideology. This is a vital part of discourse analysis: that communicators are aware of the ideologies that underpin their language uses. Highlighting what he found interesting in chapter two, "Discourse and the World," Marco wrote, "The whole idea of language ideology is to define how and why people speak and put their ideas together, and we can define how they think by studying certain aspect of their language." Marco succinctly expresses how communicators can better understand discourse through the process of learning about speakers' (and writers') world experiences with open curiosity. Marco's reflection indicates how discourse analysis can expand students' perceptions of language use: first, discourse analysis can teach students how to embrace diversity (of discourse, of discourse communities, of people's experiences, etc.). Second, discourse analysis can teach students to willingly adapt to the discursive needs of their audiences and communities without feeling like they are betraying their home discourses and communities. By exploring discourse from a perspective of inquisitiveness, students can learn to analyze discourse and its uses in ways that are non-threatening. In the classroom, this process may take the form of investigating job description phrasing, jargon in a request for proposal, or design elements on a website.

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[2] All students have been assigned pseudonyms, and their writing style is unedited.

Students also connected with discourse analysis insofar as it taught them about discursive diversity, an important aspect for HSI campuses on which students struggle to find a sense of belonging. Thomas writes,

> The chapters connect to our in-class conversations in that writing is designed to say exactly what the writer wants it to say. There should never be any misconceptions as to what a certain passage is supposed to mean. Instead, the text should clearly convey it's message. There will always be room for interpretations but never room for miscommunication . . . Discourse analysis is not just the study of the content within the text. It is the holistic study of text by the way it is constructed, the ideas of the time, and how those ideas are being carefully crafted in order to convey them to its reader.

Discourse analysis is particularly illuminating for students who have grown up in a bilingual household or community. Miscommunication, as Thomas notes, impacts the message, widening the gap between speaker and hearer, writer and reader. For institutions, like ours, with a large peripheral student population that feel disenfranchised, the recognition of such communication challenges—as well as knowing how to mitigate those challenges—can be empowering.

Moreover, students' responses illustrated that discourse analysis could help them bridge the cultural and linguistic gap commonly found within multicultural communities. Steve, a first-generation American, explains how discourse analysis helps him better understand and communicate with people from different cultures:

> Coming from an immigrant Chinese family, I believe i am able to observe many examples of multi-voices. Growing up in a bi cultural setting, I have been able to see many conflicting instances where one thing in once culture may mean something different in others. For example, when drinking hot soup, I often made a slurping sound which in

> Chinese culture dictates an appreciation for the taste, is seen as a negative behavior in the United States frowned upon in formal settings. Since communication is not necessarily spoken or written, I believe this illustrates how non-verbal communication can mean two different things depending on perception and surroundings.

Since student populations at HSIs often feel disconnected with their campus community, it is vital that students embrace the linguistic and cultural diversity instead of resisting it. Some of this resistance comes from students believing that they are alone in their experiences. However, Steve's reflection illustrates that discourse analysts' emphasis on multi-voices—that people use discourse in different community situations—can help students recognize that they are not alone. Most people have to adapt to different communities and cultural norms, whether they are first-generation American or seventh-generation American.

On the whole, students' responses to the freewrite prompt were more honest and thoughtful than in any of the large-group class discussions that semester. For instructors teaching at HSIs or other institutions that face challenges building community within the classroom, freewriting may encourage a safe space where students' voices can be heard. As well, freewriting can help usher novice students into the academic discourse community by asking them to blend their personal experiences with the course content.

Identity Branding, Discourse Analysis, and the Career Dossier

Four weeks into the semester, when students were in the midst of working on their career dossiers (a résumé and cover letter for a job or internship application), I had them apply discourse analysis to their examination of job and internship application materials. The freewrites had shown me that my students could apply discourse analysis to their personal lives; however, I needed to teach them how to apply discourse analysis to situations where language was their ticket in or out. In class, I teach this point by emphasizing that every discursive and communicative moment is a moment in which writers "brand their identity" and "market" themselves. Just as Apple or Google brand themselves through trademarked phrases and products, students brand themselves through the discourse that they (do not) use. Consequently, discourse analysis is a vital component to teaching them how to recognize the brand they are creating, as well as how to re-position or rebrand themselves. One way in which people identity brand is through the discourse they use in job documents. Likewise, companies and people use discourse to market particular job descriptions. As students worked on their own job or internship documents, they had to identify key words and phrases in position descriptions or on websites that alerted them to important values, skills, or knowledge that application readers may want (or demand) to see in submitted documents. Particularly for peripheral student populations who are learning to become academic and professional insiders, as well as learning that they can have agency, relevant and effective identity branding is critical to their success.

To reinforce the importance of discourse analysis when composing workplace documents, I assigned a reflective memo as part of the students' dossier documents. This memo was submitted with the dossier. One element of the prompt asked them to explain "how your knowledge of discourse analysis, discourse communities, and/or literacies affected your document creation." This was a broad, open-ended prompt because I wanted to see if students were actively thinking about how to meet their audience's needs and how specific they could be in their reflections.

Students' reflections illustrate that, with varying levels of specificity, they recognize the importance of meeting their audiences' expectations by incorporating key words or phrases to show their experiences and skills. Frank writes in his reflection,

> I used many words emphasizing my previous experience as a bike mechanic, and also my mechanical and budgeting ability. I used these because the employer was looking for someone with past experience working with bikes, and also wanted someone with experience helping customers while staying within their set budgets. As I have had experience working in small, and large shops before, I wanted to emphasize my experience as a whole.

He recognizes that his job success depends on the how well he meets the expectations of the application readers. Because career dossier documents are discourse-sensitive, meaning that committees include carefully chosen nouns and verbs to denote the qualifications they want from applicants, assignments that ask students to articulate their choices, like this reflection memo, provide timely opportunities for teaching the importance of discourse analysis in high stakes situations.

Amanda more specifically explained her word choices to highlight that her documents were attuned to the job specifics: "I had to choose specific words in my letter of intent for the Student Support Aide job that would help make it stand out and stronger. Some of the words and phrases I used were: experience, highly qualified, collaborative skills, and exceptional work experience." Both of these examples illustrate how students can apply discursive awareness to their own real-life rhetorical situations. And if students can articulate the discursive choices they make and why, such as Frank and Amanda did, they may be able to apply their analysis skills to all communicative situations. Perhaps most importantly, these examples show that students can be taught to capitalize upon and embrace their agency.

Refining Discourse Analysis with the Help of TED

While the reflection memo illustrates that students were able to draw connections between discourse analysis and their personal and professional lives, they still had difficulties engaging in classroom discussion about discourse analysis. This was a bit problematic for me because my pedagogy emphasizes the classroom as community of respect and community of sharing. My pedagogical beliefs meant that I could not just accept students' silence. Therefore, midway through the semester I integrated TED Talks[3] into the course material to see if visual content would get students talking amongst themselves. If anything, I hoped that students would be willing to talk about what they liked or found interesting from the Talks, thus encouraging a community of respect and sharing—the first step toward creating a sense of community within the classroom.

The three TED Talks I selected apply to technical and professional writing and discourse analysis in that they emphasize agency: Sheena Iyengar's "How to Make Choosing Easier," Rory Sutherland's "Life Lessons from an Ad Man," and Sebastian Deterding's "What Your Designs Say About You." Each presenter speaks to the complexity of choice, perspective, and audience; this made Iyengar, Sutherland, and Deterding natural fits with discourse analysis and the course content. Iyengar encourages listeners to "practice the art of choosing," reminding listeners that each one of us possesses agency. Sutherland questions, "How many problems in life can be solved actually by tinkering with perception rather than the tedious hard working and messy business of actually changing reality?" An apt reminder about how we hold the power of perception. And Deterding asks, "What are your intentions?"

TED Talks do get students talking—and in-class chatter and conversations related to the content they liked or the new information they learned but not discourse analysis or technical and professional communication. Nevertheless, it was much easier to generate class conversation about the power of choice, perception, and intention that students have on a daily basis. The Talks encouraged students to think about their agency in different ways, learning that professionals—whether ad men or designers—must capitalize upon their agency in order to succeed. This vein of thought allowed me to fluidly transition back to discourse analysis, reiterating that professionals and monarchs use discourse analysis in almost every situation. For example, in Sutherland's talk, he tells the story of how the Emperor of Prussia, in an effort to encourage the populace to accept the potato, planted potatoes in the royal garden. Leaving the garden loosely guarded, the Emperor wanted the people to steal his potatoes. And they did. Soon the potato was widely accepted and eaten across his empire. I used this particular segment as an example of how discourse analysis can impact rhetorical purpose: the Emperor changed the perceived value of the potato simply by classifying it as a royal food item. Language "is inherently powerful in creating and sustaining realities," Mo Yee Lee explains, and it becomes "the medium through which personal meaning and understanding are expressed and socially constructed in conversation" (462).

Despite students' willingness to talk about TED Talks, they were still unwilling to share how they might synthesize the TED Talks with technical and professional writing or discourse analysis. In one moment of classroom silence during week seven, I used class time for students to freewrite in a discussion thread posting about their understanding of discourse analysis thus

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3. TED is a non-profit organization "devoted to spreading ideas, usually in the form of short, powerful talks (18 minutes or less). TED began in 1984 as a conference where Technology, Entertainment, and Design converged, and today covers almost all topics" (TED n.pag.). "TED Talks" is the term for the conference presentations. TED Talks can be watched on TED.com, Netflix, or YouTube.

far. Their homework had been to watch Sebastian Deterding's talk and read Johnstone's fourth chapter, "Participants in Discourse: Relationships, Roles, and Identities," and I thought/hoped that students would be willing to share their ideas in class. But they did not. Although assigned in a moment of frustration, the freewrite showed me that students were grappling indeed with high stakes issues.

Students' responses noted the challenges they face balancing the discursive expectations of different discourse communities while also trying to develop the identities that they want to have. In a particularly representative example, Monica reflects,

> I think this whole semester has been using language to shape how we want people to see us. My purpose is to get through college, get a job, and one day a lambo.[4] So, when choosing words I have to consider how people are going to view me. I have to think about how I wan't them to view me in a professional way, so that I can get a job that is well paying. Then on the other hand I have my friends, and they wan't a whole other side...they don't want to think business...They don't want me to sound professional...they wan't me to entertain...To be there to make them laugh when things aren't going so well.[5] It is two completely different type of audiences with two different purposes, and both of them require completely different types of wording. . . . Yep, so who you are talking to, and what your goal of the conversation is shapes your word choices.

Monica's response highlights the difficulties students face transitioning from one discourse community to another while wanting to please both. There is a real challenge for students to figure out how to be true to themselves and their needs (like Monica's desire to get through college and get a job) while also maintaining their support systems (like Monica's friends). In first- and second-year writing courses where students are learning to balance work and life, they need our support as they learn to balance their discourse communities and the expectations of each. Aside from encouraging open and honest conversations about the challenges students face adapting to different discourse communities, instructors of peripheral student populations can use discourse analysis to help students think about how discourse is used in different yet meaningful ways.

Another important theme for students was Johnstone's emphasis that "participants shape, and are shaped by what goes on in discourse" (128). Students connected the most with ideas of discourse, identity, and agency. These are relevant emphases as many of my students were still trying to figure out their academic, personal, and professional identities. For example, Jake writes:

> I've had to think about this stuff a lot lately. What type of identity do I want to create in

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[4] Lamborghini.

[5] These first four ellipses were in Monica's reflection. I added the fifth and final ellipse for brevity.

> my personal life, business life, student life, etc? Do I want them all to the same, or do I want to complement each one with the others? The difficulties for me have been compounded by the fact that I'm thinking about changing direction of my student life during my senior year.

College often presents students with the opportunity to confront questions about identity as they are thrust into new experiences with new people. However, students' strong ties to cultural heritages and histories sometimes impede that opportunity. As Jake illustrates, discourse analysis is more than just learning about discourse uses; it can also affect how students reflect upon their lives and chosen paths. So while Jake did not write about how he uses discourse analysis, his post does indicate an agency that he had not expressed previously.

In another example, Joe writes about learning to recognize how his identity informs his worldview and the power he has to shape his image:

> Through the last few months I have seen how my image, as presented in everyday society and online, reflects my world and how my worldview reflects me. I believe that my efforts in life may not actually be reflected in my person or in my public image, but, with recent considerations taken into account, there may be something to be done about this.

Joe recognizes that language is powerful and can be used to project the identity(ies) he wants to present to different discourse communities. Seeing his trajectory of growth, Joe is beginning to embrace the agency he does have in creating the brand he wants to project to those around him. What is most important in Joe's response is that he knows he can do something about his brand should he want to. This agency instills confidence in students by teaching them that regardless of their backgrounds and experiences they do have power to create an identity that is a more accurate representation of who they are and what they can contribute. This rebranding can bolster their academic, professional, and personal success.

Moving Forward: Embracing the Private Space and Surveying Students' Knowledge

Embracing Personal Reflection

When I began polling my classes in 2011 about their discursive choices and when I received silent stares in response, my first reaction was to assume my students were unaware of their roles as agents in the communication process. This was not an entirely accurate assessment of my students' capabilities or thought processes, however. What I learned from the spring 2013 section is that my students may need a more private forum for expressing their ideas. Based on the sample of student responses, it is obvious that they were grappling with high stakes questions about identity, worldview, perception, and agency, to name a few. As an instructor who wants my classroom to be a safe space for learning and growth, I embrace such questions because I know it is impossible to divorce learning from personal growth. Particularly for marginalized students who are struggling to balance their academic and home lives while learning to transition from academic outsider to insider, personal reflection is one genre that may help them process through their growing pains. As well, these types of low stakes assignments may be the only opportunity that students have to honestly reflect upon their struggles.

Reflection is equally important to helping students embrace their voices. When Yancey charges writing instructors to ask their students about their reflection processes, we may immediately apply that charge to our classes as a whole, assuming that all students are comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas with the class. Writing instructors teaching peripheral student populations may need to be more aware of (and sensitive toward) students' silence as an issue of confidence and not their abilities or knowledge.

Surveying Students' Knowledge

While I learned about students' application of discourse analysis through freewrites and a reflection memo, instructors may want to gather a more accurate baseline of their students' knowledge and abilities. I recommend creating a simple pre- and post-test that is given once at the very beginning of the semester and once at the very end of the semester. The pre- and post-test should include open-ended questions like "How do you think about your language choices?" and "How do you analyze your audience before deciding which word and phrases to use?" that encourage thorough and detailed responses. The results can be used to alert instructors to the knowledge that students bring with them into the classroom, as well as help instructors avoid inaccurate assumptions about their students' experiences, beliefs, and practices. Moreover, if crafted with the intention of learning as much as possible about their students, the pre- and post-test can help instructors develop and refine assignments, readings, and class activities that better meet their students' needs. Instructors can present the pre- and post-test to their students as a honest and genuine effort to learn about them; this interest and caring about students' knowledge can significantly impact peripheral students who feel disconnected from academia and/or the classroom, or who believe that their instructors do not value or respect the knowledge and experiences they bring into the classroom.

Fostering Thoughtful Language Choices and Agency with Discourse Analysis

My students' reflective writing indicates that they are capable of thoughtfully applying general principles of discourse analysis to their writing choices and to their lives. Discourse analysis, and especially Johnstone's text, is difficult to grasp. And I knew that introducing it in English 219 might be a bit like "throwing students into the deep end." However, this experience taught me that students will wrestle with difficult reading and difficult ideas if the instructor places enough emphasis on it. I often told my students to try to understand at least one or two things from the chapter readings and not to get "bogged down" with language or ideas that were complicated. And, much to my excitement, they worked through the text.

It is impossible to tell if all of my students learned to see themselves as having discursive agency, but based upon many of the examples shared in this article, it is apparent that students can grapple with complicated ideas about workplace communication, identity branding, and discourse analysis. In addition, I learned that students do connect with discourse analysis insofar as it helps them reflect upon their own lives. Especially for student populations that feel disenfranchised or disconnected from the classroom and academia, it is vital that instructors connect course material to students' own lives. Asking open-ended questions about how students can apply discourse analysis to their lives is one way to make discourse analysis personal.

Discourse analysis impacted students in a variety of ways: from learning about their own identities, learning about their communities, and learning to embrace diversity. The common thread between these learning gains is that discourse analysis exposes students to the power of language—a much needed tool as they learn to become expert writers and communicators. Teaching students to embrace that power provides them with tools to make important communication decisions within their personal, professional, and academic discourse communities. In the workplace, this agency can ensure job promotions, budget increases, and hiring decisions, among others. Thus, those who become discourse analysts have the potential to influence the world around them. In academia, this agency can help students learn to communicate with their professors, to build community among students, and to embrace the campus diversity around them. Effective communication, particularly writing, "is a ticket to professional opportunity" in an economy where "employers spend billions annually correcting writing deficiencies" (National Commission 3). As a professional, I am aware of the reality that my students' communication skills will directly affect their abilities to get jobs and promotions. Therefore, my adoption of discourse analysis intends to begin the process of teaching students to reflect on their language choices as they plan effective writing and plan and present documents, two outcomes of the course. In the long term, I hope my students will apply discourse analysis to other professional, civic, and personal situations in order to succeed beyond the classroom.

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Marc Scott, Jacklyn Hockenberry, and Elizabeth Miller

Tutoring the "Invisible Minority": Appalachian Writers in the Writing Center

Introduction

Whether or not people visit Appalachia, they probably feel like they know something about the region. Movies, music, and television programs paint a grim and partial portrait of an area stretching from Northern Alabama, Mississippi, and Georgia to Southwestern New York State. News media contribute to these representations as well. For example, a *New York Times* ranking of U.S. counties determining the "hardest place to live in the U.S." featured six Appalachian counties in its bottom ten (Flippen), and numerous other pieces detail the ills of the region: poor access to healthcare (Portnoy), ecological disaster (Osnos), and perhaps the most significant issue confronting Appalachia, systemic poverty (Gabriel). The representations of Appalachia often draw from economic realities, but consistently seem to also draw from caricatures and stories half-told. Poverty, for example, is a real issue in Appalachia. However, the way the story is told makes poverty in Appalachia seem like a self-inflicted wound when in reality, there is plenty of blame inside *and* outside of the region to go around.

For many in the area, education exists as one of few ways to escape systemic poverty. Sara Webb-Sunderhaus explains in her study of a college level composition course in Appalachia, "academic literacy practices and a college degree are forms of economic power and capital that will assist them in gaining even more economic power and capital—valuable commodities in a region as disenfranchised as Appalachia" (212). While education provides opportunity, some Appalachian students see classrooms and schools as a reminder of what they lack. Kim Donehower in writing about rural literacies argues that "Since many negative stereotypes about the rural intellect center on language practices, literacy, in rural areas, serves both as a site of stigmatization and as a set of tools to manage that stigmatization [...] In general, the acquisition of literacy was fraught with the potential for shame and stigma" (57). While not all Appalachian students come from rural backgrounds or experiences similar to those Donehower describes, many Appalachians will see college simultaneously as a place of opportunity and as a space where their real and/or perceived lack of preparation will be laid bare.

Given the complex experiences many Appalachians face with respect to education and literacy, Appalachians present unique challenges for writing center consultants and directors.

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While much diversity exists in the region and amongst the Appalachian students who consult and visit the writing center at our small, public institution in Appalachian Ohio, we notice that many lack preparation for academic work, successful study habits, and familiarity with academic conventions. We also notice that many of the Appalachian students who visit our writing center work hard, handle significant responsibilities outside of their academic work, and possess unique perspectives of the world that make for often interesting and refreshing reading. In the course of the last year, we—two writing center consultants and the writing center director at our institution—have engaged in an inquiry project to determine how we might tailor our services to support the Appalachian students visiting our writing center. In the spirit of reflection and transparency, we note that the authors of this work are either from Appalachia and/or have strong ties to the area. We will refer to this fact later when it becomes relevant.

Our experience working with Appalachian writers and our understanding of scholarship relevant to Appalachians suggested three issues for further inquiry:

- How to discuss the language differences students bring to the writing center,
- How and when to integrate directive and nondirective tutoring approaches in a session,
- How to establish rapport effectively.

Our recommendations, while culled after a review of relevant literature and careful consideration of what might work in a tutoring session, will need implementation, testing, and assessment to contribute to the "replicable, aggregable, and data support[ed] (RAD) research" (12) called for in Writing Center Studies by Dana Driscoll and Sherry Wynn Perdue. Through such work, we may well find that other concepts may be more important altogether or that one or a combination of issues above will generally have more significance than others. Because there is little research in the field of Writing Center Studies that specifically addresses Appalachian writers, we will note instances where we consult scholarship that does not directly address Appalachian writers, and we will explain why that scholarship remains relevant for the context of our inquiry.

Despite this study's limitations, this project and other studies are needed to make writing centers more responsive to the diversity of students visiting them. And while it might be tempting to think of working with Appalachian writers as an issue solely for writing centers located in the region, it is important to consider that Appalachia is a geographically large area and many Appalachian students attend college at schools across the midwest and institutions not located in Appalachia. In addition, Appalachians are, as both Amanda Hayes and Kim Donehower have argued, an invisible minority: a minority because Appalachians are a distinct culture with specific language patterns and social mores and invisible because they are often categorized as part of a monolithic, white U.S. culture. Our project seeks to honor the difference amongst Appalachians, an issue scholars such as Nathan Shepley notes in his work with Ohio's Appalachian students in a first-year writing composition context (78), but we also want to introduce general yet adaptable approaches to working with Appalachian students that can benefit directors and consultants, but most importantly, Appalachian student writers. In what follows, we will share our inquiry work and recommendations that may be applicable to other writing centers.

Language Differences

Not all Appalachian communities are identical. In discussing Appalachian Ohio, for instance, Shepley explained that it would be misleading "[t]o characterize all Appalachian Ohio students as identical because they hail from the same part of the state" (78). Appalachia is diverse due in part to its size, but also due to waves of European immigrants and African-American migration. Despite this diversity, Appalachians are often treated as a monolithic culture at once removed from and subordinated to mainstream U.S. culture. Victor Villanueva goes so far as to label such misconceptions about Appalachia as racism: "There's an Appalachian 'look' and Appalachian ways: buck teeth or no teeth and freckles, laziness and loose sexual mores, inbreeding and infighting, and a disparaged dialect. Sounds like racism to me—prejudice based on stereotypes" (xiv). Amanda Hayes addresses the "disparaged dialect" of Appalachia directly and applauds the intent behind NCTE's Students' Right to Their Own Language position statement, and notes that the resolution states, "A nation proud of its diverse heritage and its cultural and racial variety will preserve its heritage of dialect." However, given the way Appalachian English (AE) is characterized in popular media and ignored in the field of composition studies, Hayes also wonders, "If this is true, well, America ain't so proud of us" (171). How writing center consultants engage Appalachians and the "disparaged dialect" some bring to the writing center can make a significant impact on Appalachian writers. Below we provide some background about salient features of AE followed by some recommendations for discussing language differences with Appalachian writers.

Based on our research and our experience in the writing center at Shawnee State University, we have found some common trends of AE include a-fronting, a different use of the suffix "ing," a variation in vowel pronunciation, and words that are unique to the region. For example, *Mountain Talk*, a documentary that explores the culture and language of Appalachians, features the use of words such as *airish* (chilly or cold outside), *jasper* (an outsider or stranger), or even *gaum* (meaning cluttered, messy, or dirty) (Hutcheson). These Appalachian-specific words, combined with a variation of syntax unique to AE, can make it hard for a consultant to understand what the writer is trying to convey. Consultants might also notice that Appalachian writers use a-fronting, omit auxiliary verbs from their texts, and include double negatives and non-standard spelling and verb forms in their drafts. The following examples provide a glimpse at some of these linguistic features:

> They wouldn't tell 'em they lived down hur because they hear'd some of 'em a-talkin' about the people that lived hur [...] They was afraid they'd say something to 'em. But they never did say nothin' to me. (Smith Jones 149)
>
> I lived in Virgina my whole life. I'm proud to be a plain ol country boy in Elkton, Virginia.

> [...] In the country you can walk outside and it be peaceful and quit... You can sit out here in a chair and you want be disturb. (Crotteau 29)

The passages above possess complexity, but unfortunately academic readers rarely exhibit the patience needed to unearth the meaning in texts that deviate from Standard Edited American English (SEAE). Consultants want their clients to succeed, and given SEAE's cultural capital and the fact that SEAE is often the benchmark for measuring successful writing, texts like those excerpted above can seem woefully off the mark. Some faculty at our institution, for example, have a frequent habit of requiring their students to visit our writing center specifically to address some of these issues and sometimes insist that they won't read the student's text until the essay has been "corrected." Clearly, ignoring the issue won't help Appalachian writers.

When writing center consultants work with students using nonstandard Englishes such as AE, how the consultant broaches the subject will make a significant difference to the student and the effectiveness of the session. Beth Bir and Carmen Christopher suggest that consultants can discuss language differences by beginning a conversation about a student's home language and "acknowledging the validity of the tutee's home dialect" while also keeping in mind that learning or taking on a new dialect is frustrating. Bir and Christopher recommend that consultants "accept frustration and anger as possible and reasonable responses" from a student writer (5). Scholarship in the field also suggests that when discussing a student's home language use in an academic context, educators should avoid what Jennifer Beech describes as "false binaries: all-or-nothing assimilation into middle-class discourse or total legitimation of students' home dialects" (183). Amanda Hayes, in writing specifically about students use of AE, urges for a move away from "The perception of Appalachian English as deficiency" (172). Writing center consultants can assist Appalachian students in learning more about the contexts in which their home dialects might be appropriate and the contexts in which other Englishes might be better suited, and they can take one step in the right direction by resisting the impulse to position a language difference as an issue of "right" or "wrong." Rather, the issue is always context. Consultants can also take another step in helping Appalachian writers by sharing their own experience of learning the conventions and uses of academic writing. As we mentioned earlier, several of the consultants and the director at our writing center have close ties to Appalachia and in our collaborations in writing this article, phrases such as "this part needs revised" and "this section ain't workin'" occurred frequently. When we share those experiences and the contexts in which we communicate, we can assist Appalachian writers—or any writer struggling to find a voice in academic discourse—in demystifying SEAE.

We can also help Appalachian students succeed and reposition their language practices by placing language choices first in the student's home context. There are privileges that come with the ability to write in SEAE, and ignoring language differences can hurt students. Amanda Hayes suggests that composition instructors should practice "Foregrounding regional language, and by extension regional culture" (176) in order to honor students' home languages while also equipping

Appalachian students with the ability to employ SEAE when the context calls for it. In a writing center context, we can enact this approach by beginning a discussion about language differences on the students' terms first. Once a consultant and student arrive at an understanding of the students' home language, consultants should help students understand other contexts and how writers approach those audiences. This might occur by simply asking, "could you talk to me about what these words mean to you?" instead of treating the language difference as inappropriate or an issue of "correct" or "incorrect." By asking the student to explain or define her language choices, the consultant might be able to better understand the writing and gain a better appreciation for the piece. That appreciation or understanding is essential for establishing trust between consultant and student, which is important for every writing center session. However, for Appalachian students whose home languages are often the source of ridicule, seeking understanding of a student's home language may prove essential to the writer's development.

Directive/Nondirective

When working with a student who may have a language difference, it is important to identify effective tutoring method(s) tailored to the student. However, due to fears of plagiarism and due to influential scholarship in the field promoting a "hands off" approach, consultants and directors have been trained to adhere to nondirective tutoring methods. While practitioners will also keep directive approaches in their repertoire, nondirective approaches are often the orthodox approach in many writing centers. Nondirective tutoring, though, may not always facilitate learning for some writers. While recommendations such as making the student the primary agent (Brooks 129) can lessen the threat of plagiarism or dependency, this approach could become frustrating and embarrassing for some Appalachian students who are already anxious about visiting the writing center.

Many Appalachian students are the first person in their family to attend college and may have little familiarity with academic culture. That unfamiliarity may leave them unsure about the writing process and unaware of terminology associated with the writing process. Because terminology such as revision (as opposed to editing), thesis statement, and topic sentence are ubiquitous to writing centers, consultants and directors may assume all college students are familiar with terms related to writing. However, Appalachian students unfamiliar with academic writing might have a difficult time communicating with consultants about assignments. For example, an Appalachian student might visit the writing center and request for a consultant to "look over" or "correct" a paper. For most consultants, such phrases raise red flags and when confronted with such a situation, many consultants spend the beginning of a session explaining that their writing center doesn't proofread or correct essays for writers. Nonetheless, many students may use a term such as "correct" or "edit" a paper when they may simply mean, "Will you help me understand how to make changes to my paper?" In many cases a student is aware of the process but lacks the proper term to describe what she needs help with. The lack of terminology is an issue that can be found among English Language Learning ELL writers as well as Appalachian writers. Sharon Myers explains that many ELL students depend on natives of a language to explain and teach them effective approaches to academic writing (290). Consultants and directors can better assist Appalachian students in learning about the writing process and communicating in academic contexts by providing more directive instruction about that terminology and how it's used in academic contexts.

While nondirective approaches are the orthodoxy in most writing centers, directive approaches can be more beneficial to Appalachian writers who lack understanding of the writing process or who lack exposure to academic writing. Linda Shamoon and Deborah Burns illustrate the effectiveness of directive instruction by providing examples of graduate students receiving directive tutoring. A graduate advisor might take a student's paper and rewrite sections or replace words with his own (137). Many would see this as appropriation, however, as Shamoon and Burns revealed, this process gave students more knowledge about academic writing and the ability to complete the next assignment with confidence (137). Rather than creating dependency, directive approaches give consultants the ability to show a student options for approaching an assignment. After a consultant shows a writer how to structure a paragraph or clarify a sentence for an academic audience, the hope is that the student will be able to perform, or mimic, what the consultant showed. For instance, say a student visits the writing center and is unsure of how to format a paper in APA. Instead of telling the student, "your format and citations are wrong," a consultant might show the student how to fix the error. A consultant might find a style guide or handbook that provides APA examples, show the student how to locate information in the book, discuss the examples with the student, and write on the student's paper to show her how to cite. By doing this, a consultant shows the student not only the proper way to format but also models effective study habits that can help the student on the next assignment. In our writing center, consultants have found that when working with underprepared Appalachian students, directive approaches, such as showing, can create learning opportunities and more successful sessions.

While directive tutoring benefits students unfamiliar with academic writing conventions—like many of the Appalachian students we work with—that does not mean that writing center consultants and directors should abandon nondirective approaches. Peter Carino argued for a sliding scale informed by the knowledge and authority a consultant and writer bring to the session:

- More student knowledge, less tutor knowledge = more nondirective methods
- Less student knowledge, more tutor knowledge = more directive methods (124).

A session might begin with nondirective questions that seek to probe the familiarity and comfort level the student has with her essay. Carino's example of nondirective questions might be appropriate for a student with more knowledge and confidence in her writing. In his example, consultants ask, "Is this the way you want it? [...] "Do you see what I mean? [...] Could you add a transition to get the reader from one to the other?" (118). While this approach may work for students with a knowledge of academic writing conventions, for students with less familiarity they may not. Appalachian students who lack familiarity with academic writing often become frustrated when we rely too heavily on nondirective questions. Sometimes, identifying a place needing a transition, for example, and then providing writers with a few options can better facilitate learning. We often follow up that example by identifying another place needing a transition and using some nondirective questions that help students apply what we initially show them.

Nondirective questions at the beginning of the session can help us assess a student's comfort level, but once it becomes apparent she is uncomfortable or unresponsive to the questions, abandoning the questioning and becoming more directive may be the most effective way to help a student writer. Carino provides an example where directive methods result in a successful session with a student who is unfamiliar with academic writing. In his example, the consultant asks questions including "Have you ever written this type of assignment before? [...] Did your teacher explain the assignment" (120). After receiving responses that revealed the student was unfamiliar with the assignment, the consultant proceeded with a directive approach by explaining to the student the purpose of the assignment. The consultant told the student what to cut from her paper and what sentence to use as a topic sentence (120). Many will view this as editing the students work, but Carino sees this as the consultant using power and authority appropriately by sharing knowledge and assisting the student in learning the proper way to write the assignment (121). For the Appalachian students we work with in our writing center, a blend of methods is essential to gauge a student's knowledge and respond adequately. We employ directive approaches not because Appalachian students are inferior writers, but because some have simply not been exposed to formal academic writing.

"not because Appalachian students are inferior writers, but because some have simply not been exposed to formal academic writing"

Rapport

Rapport is an important part to working with any writer, and naturally it's a ubiquitous part of writing center training. For example, the textbook for many writing center pedagogy courses (our institution's included), *The Longman Guide to Peer Tutoring*, refers to rapport as a way to "create an atmosphere of trust" and describes it as "one of your best assets as a tutor" (Gillespie and Lerner 8). Recent studies of rapport suggest that it may be an even *more* important issue for working with students lacking familiarity with academic culture. This scholarship, which mostly includes studies of ELL students, addresses populations different than Appalachian student writers. However, their work remains relevant because the issue is not necessarily the linguistic differences students bring to the writing center, but the lack of familiarity they possess with regard to academic writing and culture. In the context of this inquiry, rapport appears a uniquely important issue for Appalachian Writers. According to Kathryn Russ, a professor of Counseling and Human Development at Lindsey Wilson College, Appalachians often have difficulty communicating with people whom they do not know. The issue stems not from an inability to communicate, but a distrust of outsiders that's steeped in how Appalachians have been portrayed, represented, and in many respects, oppressed by individuals and institutions both inside and outside of the region. Gaining the trust of any writer is important in a writing center consultation, but with Appalachian students, it's essential. The rapport we build in a consultation doesn't just set a positive tone, it establishes trust, and in the context of Appalachian writers, rapport alone may determine the effectiveness of a session.

Rapport can be created in how a consultant greets a writer, but in many respects consultants generate and maintain rapport by how they respond to a student text (Bell, Arnold, and Haddock). Some scholars who study rapport in writing centers focus on politeness and how consultants use politeness strategies to establish connections with student writers. Politeness theory posits that when people interact—particularly in a scenario that might be awkward or embarrassing—individuals will seek ways to protect and preserve "face." How this is accomplished is often overlooked, but when observed and examined, efforts to save face are an intricate dance combining recognition of issues that might be awkward and employment of strategies that seek to minimize that awkwardness. According to Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, "it is in general in every participant's best interest to maintain each other's face, that is to act in ways that assure the other participants that the agent is heedful of the assumptions concerning face" (61). Writing center consultants certainly "threaten face" because they are expected, on the one hand, to act as equals with the students they work with, and on the other hand, they're also expected to review a student's work and call the writer's attention to aspects of the text that work and to parts that need revision. Consultants have to couch their feedback in such a way that they impress upon the writer the importance of the needed changes, but do so in a way that "saves face" and even encourages students that they can make the needed changes. Writing center consultants accomplish this by employing strategies that minimize the severity of their feedback (negative politeness) or buffer a negative comment with praise (positive politeness) (Bell and Youmans 35–36; Bell, Arnold, and Haddock 39–40). Again, studies of politeness strategies in a writing center context are not specifically related to Appalachian students, but they do take as their subject students who lack familiarity with academic writing and the customs of higher education—a central issue in working with Appalachian students who are often the first in their families to attend college.

To better establish rapport with Appalachian writers, writing center consultants will need to reconsider politeness as a rapport building strategy and engage in practices that may seem unnatural and counter to ways we work with other students. In particular, when tutoring Appalachian writers, consultants may need to rethink positive politeness norms and how they couch critical feedback. Mimicking the genre of instructor feedback that Summer Smith describes in "Genre of the End Comment," many consultants often provide praise statements in order to "set up" a critique or recommendation. Most students familiar with this convention will understand that the consultant or teacher provides praise in order to help the student "save face" before providing the suggestion or criticism that the consultant or teacher really wants the writer to address. In studying this issue with ELL students, Bell and Youmans write that ELLs become confused or unsure how to interpret praise setting up a criticism, and rather than "recognizing the L1 consultant's rhetorical stance through text-based praise, the L2 student takes the praise at face value and becomes confused" (40). The politeness norms employed by consultants, in other words, is a product of U.S. academic culture that many consultants and directors may take for granted and that many students unfamiliar with such conventions will find confusing and misleading. Some Appalachian students may be more familiar with U.S. academic conventions than the students Bell and Youmans investigated in their study. However, for many first generation college students in Appalachia, they will likely have comparable misunderstandings about academic norms such as positive praise.

To address this issue, writing center consultants can employ strategies that are more directive and transparent. Rather than use the "congratulate then criticize" approach, consultants can generate rapport by spending more time on the positives in an Appalachian writer's paper. As long as the feedback is genuine and grounded in specifics from the text, consultants can generate rapport by explaining specifically why and how an aspect of student writing is successful. It may seem perfectly normal to quickly mention to a student, "I like the story you began your essay with" before setting up a critique such as, "But, I'm concerned because I'm not sure what your argument is until page three." However, a student unfamiliar with such conventions may think that the good introduction might trump the need to clarify the argument early in the paper. In other words, to some students unfamiliar with politeness norms in higher education, the essay is more or less on the right track. However, explaining *why* the introduction successfully eases the reader into the paper's topic can make the success of the paper clearer to the writer. When the consultant has to point out aspects of an essay that need to be addressed, they should make that transition clear and provide specific feedback that articulates the issue and why it should be addressed. For example, a consultant might note, "So I've talked with you about your introduction and why it does a great job of getting your reader interested in the topic. I also want you to know the lack of a thesis or clear central idea early in the paper is an issue that confused me and that you'll need to address when you revise." Writers unaccustomed to academic response conventions, like many Appalachian writers, will benefit from a clearer separation between praise and criticism. Providing more directive responses runs counter to calls for nondirective feedback advocated by Jeff Brooks and other scholars, but as we mention earlier, some Appalachian students unfamiliar with academic writing conventions may have no other avenue to obtain such knowledge.

Conclusion

Appalachian students, many of whom may not have a background that would inform them of academic writing and feedback conventions, will need consultants to make the implicit explicit. Writing center consultants performing this kind of work operate in ways similar to the "cultural informants" that Judith Powers describes in her work with ELL writers; according to Powers, her colleagues "found themselves increasingly in the role of informant rather than collaborator" (98) when working with such writers. Writing center consultants do become informants with respect to language, as Sharon Myers argues, but they also become informants with respect to a variety of other issues that ELL writers confront. ELL writers will certainly be different than Appalachian writers for a number of reasons, but many Appalachian writers will, like ELL writers, be confused, frustrated, and unfamiliar with many aspects of communicating in colleges and universities. Directive feedback and a frank discussion of academic response conventions with Appalachian students can make the writing center less of a place where attention is drawn to what Appalachian writers lack and more of place "where directive tutoring provides a sheltered and protected time and space for practice that leads to the accumulation of important repertoires, the expression of new social identities, and the articulation of domain-appropriate rhetoric" (Shamoon and Burns 145). If writing center consultants and directors can develop an understanding of Appalachian language differences, integrate appropriate uses of directive feedback, and help Appalachian writers understand response norms, writing centers can succeed in helping Appalachians develop their ability to write and succeed in college.

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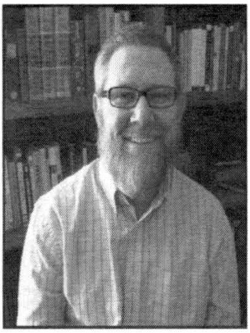

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