

Handling Curricular Resources: An Examination of Two Teachers' Tactical Appropriation of First-Year Composition Curricula

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Often the word “implementation” is used in grant and research reports to describe how written curriculum gets put into practice (e.g., Brickman, Neill). For college and university writing programs, however, “implementation” suggests a focus on administrative mandates, rather than on workaday teacher practices and emerging understandings and struggles that occur in classrooms. This article examines these processes in alternative terms, thus providing a more useful framework for understanding how teachers in large programs interact with official curricula and navigate the task of teaching with materials and conceptual systems that are new to them. Rather than exploring compliance (which many educational policies and curriculum designs seem to promote), this article explores the creative resistance that, in my ten years of teaching in elementary, middle, secondary, and university contexts, has been present at scenes of teaching at all levels.

In what follows, I specifically consider what college writing instructors take from a “standard” curriculum, and what they make of these official, unifying texts and teaching tools as they translate them into the particularities of their own practices of teaching writing. I present a case study of two teachers taking up a new college composition curriculum and the resources it availed. The analysis is guided by the following questions: A) How do these teachers tactically appropriate curriculum? B) What conflicts are involved in such processes of appropriation? and C) What implications for standard curricula and writing program administration are suggested by these processes?

I pursue these questions through a comparative case study that documents how two teachers navigated a curricular model in the first-year composition program at a large university during its first year of implementation.

Analyzing both the curriculum and the reported experiences of individual teachers through the theoretical framework of cultural models (Gee, Holland), I trace the tactical appropriation of this curricular model by these teachers. In the analysis, I unpack the complexity of the conflicts that arose as the teachers interacted with the curriculum. Based on this exploration, I suggest a more dialogic approach to teacher training and curriculum development. Such an approach advocates treating the often conflicting (with the curriculum) cultural models of teachers as an important resource for program growth.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand teachers' tactical appropriation of curriculum, I turn to the writing of Michel de Certeau. De Certeau was interested in how workers carve out spaces of agency, freedom, and solidarity—a kind of “harmless” resistance—within bureaucratic systems that they do not have the power to change. In analyzing these processes, de Certeau focuses on the rhetorical practices of everyday life in which workers artfully resist these systems of unequal power relations, rather than becoming unthinking dupes who are “disciplined” by such systems. Specifically, de Certeau theorizes the everyday rhetorical practices of “creative resistance” by workers through his distinction between “tactics” and “strategies.”

For de Certeau, the term tactics describes the ways that individuals, through language, resist the fixation of the linguistic systems in which they find themselves. Tactics are the heterogeneous linguistic traverses by which individuals circulate freely within the language of the system. Embodied in the tactic is the notion of putting to one's own use the language of the strong and the powerful, the language of the mandate. In contrast, “strategies” represent the language of the system, “the calculation or manipulation of power relationships that becomes possible as soon as a subject with will and power (a business, an army, a city, a scientific institution [and I would add, a university writing program]) can be isolated” and can assume a borderline for conceptualizing relations with exterior totalities that are distinct from it (de Certeau 35-36).

For WPAs and curriculum designers at all levels, this distinction is useful, because it accounts for the institutional demand for standardization that teachers must work within, while also accounting for individual creativity and the change that can flow from individual teachers to the program level. Some teachers may simply “comply” with the “strategies” of a standard syllabus or curriculum, coming to identify and affiliate with the goals, language, and methods of a curricular system in which they must operate. According

to De Certeau, much of Foucault's work examines such "disciplining" processes. However, the vantage point of "tactics" opens up an investigation of the various means by which instructors resist such "strategic" systems. De Certeau provides a vision for considering how program administrators might instead cultivate teachers' ways of using curricular resources: "a *way of using* imposed systems constitutes the resistance to the [. . .] law of a state of affairs and its dogmatic legitimations. A practice of [using] the order constructed by others [. . .] creates at least a certain play in that order, a space for maneuvers of unequal forces and for utopian points of reference" (18). Program administrators may benefit from recognizing how teachers *use* a standard curriculum in de Certeau's sense: they manipulate and intonate it with particular positions and experiences, yet also face restrictions in this play, through the administrative mandates for the program. Like teachers, program administrators are likely to become exasperated by instructors who beg, "Please just tell me the precise and minimum tasks I need to do for a continued appointment offer, and I'll do it!"

Within this de Certeauian framing, I investigate the dimensions of this creative resistance, what I call "tactical appropriation" in response to a new curriculum. In de Certeau's terms, if the writing curriculum on paper and in theory—the documentation of the will of the program for those who must work within it—offers a kind of strategic mandate, then teachers' "ways of using" it can usefully be understood as tactical appropriation.

METHOD

A Case Study Approach to the Study of Tactical Appropriation

This inquiry draws upon a case study conducted in a first-year composition program. From my position within the program, outlined below, I was able to draw on "official" data that I generated, while also being informed by my everyday experiences and interactions. I sought to learn what such an approach makes available: a) a grounding of "observations and concepts" in "natural settings studied at close hand," b) a more holistic picture of "complex social network and of complexes of social action and social meanings," and c) "the dimensions of time and history" that allow for examination of "continuity and change in lifeworld patterns" (Sjoberg et al., 6-7). Furthermore, I conducted this study to serve an intrinsic (for further program reform) as well as an extrinsic function, whereby I sought more general insights about teacher training and learning processes (see Stake 439). Although this study was initially structured as a collective case study of a small group of individuals within the program, I began, over the course of the project, to focus on the experiences of two participants as a comparative case of teachers' tactical

maneuvers in appropriating curricular resources. This inductive approach follows Ragin's suggestion that researchers ought not be too sure about what research subjects are a case of, in the beginning phases of a study, lest rigid preconceptions hamper investigation (6). In what follows, I describe the context in which this case study was conducted, the participants in the study, and finally the methods of data collection and analysis.

Research Context

Midwest University (MU) is reasonably typical in the size and scope of its first-year composition requirement, which made it a compelling site for this research.¹ A research-extensive Doctoral 1 university, according to the Carnegie classification system, MU enrolled 41,219 students campus-wide at the time of this study. Of that population, 11,994 were graduate and professional students, and 28,476 undergraduates. Writing 101 (W101), the first-year composition course in the English department, was designated within the university as a Verbal Communication I (VCI) course, meaning it fulfilled the first of two requirements in the university's general education program in communication. Also met by taking courses in the communication arts, engineering, and agricultural journalism departments, this undergraduate requirement aimed to develop student competencies in writing, speaking, reading, and listening. Approximately 900 students fulfilled the VCI requirement by completing W101 each semester. The program typically offered between 45 and 50 sections of W101, taught by instructors who were graduate students and faculty assistants, many from departments outside English.

While the W101 program had for some time focused on teaching argument, the program underwent an important shift during the time of this study. While previously, teachers were commissioned to design their own syllabi, provided by the program with examples and resources to do so, the new program reforms aimed to unify and regulate the teaching of argument. One impetus in making these changes was a university-wide VCI assessment that loomed ahead, and another was a sense on the program director's part that not all teachers had a firm grasp on teaching argument. It was reasoned that a standardized syllabus for new teachers would allow a more focused method of teacher training, a process which also underwent significant changes. All new instructors were required to adopt this model syllabus during their first semester of teaching, and all participated in a colloquium to support this requirement. Because of the timing of this reform effort, the W101 program provided an ideal case for pursuing the questions of tactical appropriation in curriculum and instruction that are investigated in this essay.

Participants

After teaching W101 for two semesters, I was hired to serve as assistant director of the program during the first year of these new curriculum reforms. My administrative work involved visiting classes and providing feedback about teaching, working with an administrative team in the late spring and early summer to develop the curriculum, compiling instructor resources, co-leading a semester-long colloquium for new instructors, and organizing and leading staff meetings for returning instructors. As a graduate student collaborating with the director to develop the curriculum and collaborating with fellow graduate students in putting it into action, my position provided an “insider” vantage point for investigating how W101 instructors took up this new model.

At the beginning of the semester, volunteers were solicited to participate in the study, and I limit this analysis to two of the three teachers who volunteered and participated in order to carefully consider individual particularities, as well as multiple experiences, in interacting with the curriculum. The two teachers upon whom I focus here provide a generative comparison that illuminate the range of processes and conflicts that were involved in the tactics of curriculum appropriation. Let me provide a brief introductory sketch of these teachers.

Suzanna Roselli, a white woman in her late twenties, was a brand new teacher pursuing a master’s degree in History of Science. Having earned an MA in History at another university, this master’s work was the first step in her plan to complete a PhD in History of Science at MU. Taking courses, preparing conference papers, and working on her master’s thesis were significant themes in conversations with Suzanna. She often reported frustration that she was spending more time than twenty hours each week (the appointment level, according to the teaching contract) preparing and grading for her W101 course, which cut significantly and problematically into time for her own work.

Steve Holland had taken his PhD in Renaissance literature at MU some time ago, and gave one the impression of being an “insider” in the department. For example, he often referred to the broader institutional and historical context in which W101 was located and the university goals he saw his work, and the program, fulfilling. A youthful white man who seemed to enjoy discussions about teaching, he often told illustrative teaching tales, many of them from his four years of work as a tenure-track professor in a Southern community college, a job he left because of a career move by his wife.

Data Generation Methods

The data that were considered come from two different sources: first, curricular materials and secondly, interviews and observations of what instructors made of those materials. Throughout the semester, I collected all curricular materials, including a copy of the instructor handbook (which contained the new model syllabus), supporting handouts supplementing the syllabus, and finally source texts of the syllabus (e.g., Toulmin's *The Uses of Argument*). While these were the primary data in examining the curriculum, secondary data included my informal conversations and my involvement with the curriculum development. These materials allowed me to examine the "strategic" mandates with which these instructors interacted.

In order to understand the instructors' perspectives on this new syllabus and to find out what they did and made with these curricular "strategies," I conducted two interviews with each instructor, one during the first month of the semester, and one in the final month of the semester. While I had a set of questions that were asked of both Suzanna and Steve, the discussions developed recursively, and the orders of the questions varied. I tape-recorded and wrote field notes during each interview. I also collected copies of each instructor's particular syllabus and essay assignments, along with a sampling of assignments, lessons, and other written communication. I additionally conducted two classroom observations of each instructor and recorded these through field notes.

Together, these two bodies of data—curricular materials and the instructional responses to these materials—allowed me to contrastively consider how instructors appropriated the curriculum materials, what conflicts arose in these processes, and what implications might follow for curriculum development and teacher training procedures.

Mechanism and Procedures for Analysis

Drawing from sociocultural methods of analyzing discourse in educational and other contexts (Gee, Holland), I examined this case in light of the cultural models that could explain the motivations and practices of curriculum designers as well as individual teachers as they interacted with curriculum. Holland defines cultural models as "shared, conventional ideas about how the world works that individuals learn by talking and acting with their fellows" (86). Gee further elaborates this definition when he explains that, "a cultural model is usually a totally or partially unconscious explanatory theory or 'storyline' connected to a word—bits and pieces of which are distributed across different people in a social group" (44). This storyline, according

to Holland, involves agents who are engaged in a limited range of acts or state changes, which are motivated by a particular set of forces. This schematization parallels Burke's pentad, devised also to describe human motivation in terms of the relationships among agent, act, scene, agency, and purpose. In the analysis, I followed these definitions, assuming that cultural models are schemas for selecting, reflecting, and deflecting reality that develop in the ambiguous mediation between individuals and various cultural worlds in which they participate.

This construct of cultural models allowed me to probe these data in order not merely to identify the processes of tactical appropriation that I sought to understand, but more importantly to explore individual motivation on the part of instructors as they appropriated curricular materials for their own teaching purposes. A cultural model approach further enabled investigation of how these teachers tacitly made sense of what they were doing as they taught writing and how they navigated the conflict between a foreign cultural model for teaching writing (posed by the model syllabus) and their own previous experiences and taken-for-granted assumptions about writing and teaching. In the following section, I have focused my presentation of findings on the concept of "grounding" and the Toulmin model for several reasons. Examining one slice of the curriculum allows for a deeper comparison, and I choose this particular conceptual framework because it was crucial to the first essay assignment, it was a required teaching method, and in my view it was the element of the syllabus with which instructors most struggled. Because it was an object of particularly intense struggle, grounding offered a particularly useful focus for examining the conflicts involved as teachers appropriate a new curriculum into their teaching.

The analysis occurred in two parts. First, I examined the new curriculum, analyzing the strategic cultural model which informed this official document and its design. Second, I analyzed the tactics through which Suzanna and Steve each interacted with this strategic mandate, understanding this interaction in terms of conflicting cultural models. At both levels (both strategic and tactical), I first identified the content, activities, and themes. I next identified key words and metaphors, analytical work that I used to construct a hypothesis of the cultural models that would most persuasively explain the *why* of this tactical appropriation. Therefore, not only were the cultural models of Suzanna and Steve contrasted, but each of these were in turn compared to the cultural model underlying the curriculum for a better understanding of the appropriations that were involved.

FINDINGS

The First Unit of the Model Syllabus: A Rhetorical Curriculum Employing the Toulmin Model

The new W101 curriculum, called the “model syllabus” by teachers and administrators, took Aristotelian rhetoric as its point of departure and laid out a rhetorical system for analyzing and inventing arguments. The curriculum offered a terminology for teaching argument, a process approach to composing (multiple drafts of all papers were required), and genre conventions like summary, outline, bibliography, and essay. The syllabus required instructors to choose the course content (a debate they believed would interest their students and would effectively illustrate the intricacies of argument) and to follow a sequence of assignments designed to help students analyze and write argumentative essays.

In the first unit, students were assigned to argue from formal analysis of popular sources. In the second unit, students moved on to argue using scholarly sources and to begin developing their own research projects. In the third unit, the syllabus mandated argument using scholarly sources that students had discovered, and a critical examination of the consequences of argument. This final unit was designed to engage students in critical reflection that would lead to an understanding of the political and ethical consequences of academic language use, and an increased sense of responsibility for what their language practices in and out of the university might mean (the goal of “ethical responsibility” was a key theme in discussions with the program director). Instructors were required to develop this critical component, and the syllabus grew increasingly less directive as it progressed. Thus teachers had the greatest amount of choice and flexibility in designing and teaching the third unit, and the least in designing and teaching the first, which is the focus of the following presentation.

The Toulmin model of argument was the central terminology to be taught in the first unit of the course. This familiar model isolates the data and claims of arguments and spatially represents the relationship between the two. Supporting this logical move from data to claim are warrants and backing, also spatially represented. Backing, by Toulmin’s definition, exists in relationship to warrants, or the “general, hypothetical [field-independent] statements, which can act as bridges, and authorize the sort of step to which our particular argument commits us” (98). According to Toulmin, the backing of an argument consists of the field-dependent assurances “standing behind our warrants” (103). In this first unit of the curriculum, the term

“grounding,” was given to represent Toulmin’s idea of “backing” (due to the reportedly popular use and abuse of the phrase “*backing up your argument*”). The term was introduced in the second week, as a means for analyzing the texts introduced in that unit. Grounding was a central focus of the first essay assignment, which asked students to write a proposal (including an argumentative rationale) for investigating a piece of grounding that underlay the opposing arguments within the first unit’s debate.

This model insisted that instructors use formal textual analysis, and was less emphatic about their approaches to the developmental processes of individual writers (beyond requiring at least two drafts of papers). This is clear in the nature of the already-mentioned culminating assignment of the first unit, which depended heavily on the concept of “grounding.” In this critical textual analysis, instructors were to select then-current debates, for example that between evolutionists and creationists (Suzanna’s topic). Thus students were presumed to become alternatively readers of the debate, analysts of the debate, and critics proposing a scholarly course of action in order to develop an informed position within the debate.

The cultural model of teaching writing supporting this model syllabus is a neo-Marxist socio-critical approach to texts and writing that continues to be prevalent in composition studies, critical pedagogy, literary studies, and literacy education. As the ultimate ethical goal of the third unit suggests (i.e., investigating the consequences of writing), the model syllabus treated writing as relationally and often problematically situated in sociopolitical contexts. Unlike first-year writing curricula that begin with personal experiences of students or with discipline-specific academic debates, this model began with civic debates—highlighting the political function of reading and writing and de-emphasizing the personal and expressive aspects of writing. As it downplayed the ways that argumentative language use is shaped by individual thoughts and purposes, this curriculum focused more on how language could position and “discipline” its users in power-full and sometimes troubling social systems and practices. The Toulmin method was seen by curriculum designers as a means by which students could begin to engage in such textual deconstruction.

Instructors’ Appropriation of This Model

Suzanna: Writing as Structural. Suzanna’s interaction with Toulmin and with the concept of grounding occurred in the context of her course topic of science and religion: she began the course with readings about a then-current debate in Kansas, about teaching evolution and creation in the schools. It also occurred in the context of her own scientific professional knowledge:

as she explains, “Stephen Toulmin, to me, is someone who writes about time. And things like the *Fabric of Time*. Not about argument.” Her initial reaction to this model was skeptical:

I do think the Toulmin model is, um, a little intimidating at first, . . . I think it’s also a very self-conscious way of reading. I think it’s something we all do, and we all do it intuitively. I think to suddenly have to label the parts of the argument, like to go through and to read and to write CLAIM in the margin and then write DATA afterward, and then to write WARRANT, to me, it’s, to me, it’s exactly why when I entered the university as an English major, I quickly flipped to history. (Interview I)

Although Suzanna did not talk explicitly about “grounding” here, she expresses not only personal distaste, but also skepticism about how helpful these concepts could be for teaching students to read critically. In her view, these conceptual frameworks functioned to produce unproductive labor and complication. Nevertheless, Suzanna acknowledged, “I am grateful to have it, otherwise I would have been completely on my own.” The problems she articulated did not go away, however, and she later became even more frustrated with using the Toulmin model, and the concept of grounding particularly, to focus her teaching of W101.

In the second unit, Suzanna abandoned the timeline and logic of the curriculum (including the Toulmin concept of grounding), deciding instead to use the movie *The Matrix* to talk about issues of contemporary science and society. She explains her reasons for this choice:

This grounding thing isn’t working—my “debatable issue,” which is evolution v. creation, has its roots in 19th-century natural philosophers and theologians . . . I don’t know how best to make long passages of Darwin clear without simply relying on repetition. . . . The syllabus . . . doesn’t allow enough time for the sort of real digging-in we’d have to do for it all to make sense. They’re bored and frustrated and resistant; I’m frustrated because I have to drag them through it, and we’re all miserable. So I’ve ditched the remaining unit two reading and we’re starting over. (Email)

She reorganized her class into a series of student-led discussions about contemporary scientific debates and into individual student research projects. By the end of the course, she reported that opening up the class to a parallel series of debates, led by students, had turned her class into a workable scenario.

Suzanna's frustrations with Toulmin and with grounding make sense if understood in terms of her alignment with a cultural model that positioned writing as a structural vessel to contain and transport ideas. This is evident when Suzanna says of nineteenth-century science writing, "you have to read a lot of it before the point becomes apparent and before the argumentative techniques start to explain themselves" (email correspondence). Such a view of argumentative techniques as self-explanatory structures that function to contain ideas can also be seen in Suzanna's interpretation of the portability the curriculum offers, if students try to use these Toulmin terms in other academic contexts: "it's still the same structure. I mean you have to take the background, you have to take the idea that you think is the right one and support it and convince me" (Interview 1). Suzanna stressed how she believed her task was to equip her students with the structures of writing, for example to "deconstruct introductions and talk about what's effective and what's not." Yet she felt under prepared for this task, and she was dissatisfied with the degree to which the model syllabus helped her to do this for her students. Certainly the rhetorical concept of grounding, with its emphasis on fields where arguments occur, did not fit into her model of writing as structure.

This model suggests a reading of the syllabus that highlighted the structural dimensions of the course (as evidenced above) and an interpretation of the Toulmin model as a labeling of objective, naturally occurring forms, rather than as a generative principle to describe a system of rhetorical relationships and to thereby contextualize language in social and political processes. To put it rather simply, Suzanna treated grounding, and indeed writing, more as *noun* than verb.

Since Suzanna had no prior teaching experience (of writing or any other discipline), what she had to go on were her experiences in W101 teacher training and as a writer in the discipline of history and science. She framed her position as an outsider in relation to the Toulmin model particularly:

The Toulmin model is all fine and dandy, but it would have been infinitely more helpful to have some specific guidance on How To Build A Syllabus. I've been looking at some of the other 100 syllabi; my own is pathetic in comparison, given that it never occurred to me that perhaps it would be a good idea to discuss things like, oh, *writing*. As a historian, I don't spend my class time talking about things like Your Introductions and You, so my syllabus lacks such discussions. (Email)

This cultural model of writing as a transparent vessel conflicted with the official model of the curriculum, and led Suzanna to frustration about her lack of “insider” knowledge when it came to teaching writing. Yet she identified herself as an increasingly competent agent within her structural model of academic writing, as amply demonstrated by her decision to change the course entirely and to focus more in the third unit on the “nuts and bolts” of writing.

Suzanna’s tactical appropriation of the model syllabus led her to abandon it altogether, a high level of resistance that resulted in her not teaching in the W101 program after that semester. Some of the difficulties that she faced, which led to this mutiny, were a) her own expertise (which she perceived to be much different than students’ interests), b) her focus on her need for a “practical” writing pedagogy, rather than obfuscating theories, c) a lack of meta-awareness of her own language use, and d) little confidence in the value of close rhetorical analysis for her students. These last three points in particular represent the conflict between her own cultural model of writing and that of the syllabus.

Steve: Writing as Empowering Process. Contrasting with Suzanna’s second-unit struggle to pull first-year college students through nineteenth-century science writing in a very short period of time, Steve’s choice of a course topic reflected his oft-articulated concern not to waste students’ time by having them write about arcane literature bearing little relevance to their lives. The topic of his section was a then-unfolding nearby scandal, which involved a Midwestern shoe store being exposed by the NCAA for giving college athletes discounts. From this unit-one debate about the roles and responsibilities of college athletes and their relationship to NCAA, his class moved into a second-unit examination of the purpose and role of higher education, reading Paulo Freire, Miles Horton, and more local documents about higher education at MU. Finally in the third unit, his students worked on various projects relating to campus alcohol issues, which Steve described as a welcome shift from the initial debate.

Steve’s engagement with grounding was, in some respects, parallel to Suzanna’s. For example he explained in the first interview that he was noticing a “formulaic problem. Students are filing things into slots, rather than discovering what they have to say” [field notes]. He viewed himself as a newcomer to Toulmin-style analysis: “I don’t feel like I’m in control as much. . . I don’t necessarily feel like I have a handle yet, um, on that. . . this is new to me. Because the teaching of the formal argument analysis thing isn’t something I ever emphasized a lot” (Interview 1). In some respects, then, the Toulmin apparatus marginalized Steve from his past teaching experience.

Unlike Suzanna, however, he acknowledged that this was a logical conceptual framework for teaching the students at MU, while it wouldn't have been for teaching students at the community college where he formerly taught. Because of this experience, Steve appeared willing enough to give this new model a try, and he made sense of it through his understanding of what other professors across the university might expect students to do:

This is going to respond to concerns that our students don't know how to read. A professor from another area says, our students don't know how to read. Well, they've got a pretty good sense now of how to approach a text. Um, how to put a text into conversation with another text. How to read critically. Essentially, that's what I see as this argument analysis. And what that's doing [the Toulmin model] is giving students a vocabulary to read critically and some framework for reading critically. (Interview 2)

Even though new and unfamiliar, Steve placed this approach to teaching argument within what he already knew about the expectations of an undergraduate university education.

Furthermore, he connected the mechanics of the Toulmin model with what he already did and prioritized as a writing teacher. He used the example of paragraphs:

I've used that [the Toulmin model] to get into a discussion about paragraphs. Because that's the one thing I'm just, I've always been, my hobby horse. Write good paragraphs. Because, if you're writing good paragraphs, the other things will come together. And, but using that idea of claim, evidence, warrant, in terms of, Look, this is what your paragraph is doing anyway. You're making a claim, you're giving evidence, you're explaining the relationships between them. Um, which is, that's not what this is supposed to be doing, but I've found it useful, because they have that vocabulary, to use those concepts. (Interview 2)

This way of appropriating the curriculum into what he already knew and did as a writing teacher is a crucial difference between Steve and Suzanna. Suzanna simply did not have the experience teaching writing to develop such subtle strategies of resisting and artfully re-shaping the meaning of the curriculum for her own purposes. When Steve said, "that's not what this [the Toulmin model] is supposed to be doing, but I've found it useful," he displayed a tactical "way of using" that effectively translated the written curricular model into his own teaching values and methods.

According to Steve's pragmatic cultural model, teaching writing was an instrumental process that empowers individuals who do it. Writing, according to Steve's model, was a verb rather than a noun. He was obviously indebted to process theories of composition, and in fact he acknowledged, "whatever theory I have about teaching has been [from] reading Peter Elbow and John Bean." For example, he repeatedly discussed how students need to write a lot—"the more the merrier"—in order to develop the habits of writers. Both times I visited his class, Steve began with ten-minute freewriting sessions. Moreover, he required that students keep a journal with reflective entries about each class period.

An important element of Steve's empowering process model was the economic reward that writing could bring. For example, he shared an explanation (about proposal-writing) that he provided for his students:

If you're trying to take an independent study in . . . biology, you're not just going to have supplies given to you. You're going to have to write to . . . somebody on campus. And say . . . I want \$80 so I can buy dead frogs. And you're going to have to explain what you're going to do and why and why you're going to be successful in order to get that. They'll probably give it to you, but, this is the kind of thing that people in academic settings do. (Interview 1)

Perhaps explained, at least in part, by his background in accounting (his pre-graduate school career), Steve understood writing in instrumentalist economic terms: he frequently referred to students "investing" and "buying in" to what they are learning in the writing class, and more importantly to their own writing. Steve indexed writing according to its use value: students should not be wasting their time writing in his class; rather they should be capitalizing on time for personal gain. Writing often would lead to writing well, according to Steve, and these efforts would "pay off" for students in the near future. Where Suzanna was developing a cultural model of teaching writing "on the fly" as a brand-new teacher of writing, Steve's understanding was well-formulated and tried-in-practice.

DISCUSSION

Clearly enough, the tactics through which Steve appropriated the syllabus and the cultural model of writing to which he aligned himself eased his uptake of the curricular model considerably more than did Suzanna's appropriations and cultural model. He tactically interacted with the newness of the curricular model so as to capitalize on his expertise within the system of

another model, building on prior knowledge-in-action gained from working as an accountant, teaching business writing at a community college, reading Peter Elbow, being an English PhD with an institutional understanding of MU, and so on. As can be seen with the example of paragraphs, he identifies himself as an agent who can tactically manipulate the directives of the syllabus for his own purposes and solve problems accordingly. This hybridity between syllabus and experience created a sort of tactical interactional space between the model syllabus and Steve's prior experience and understandings. This space could develop precisely because Steve did not use Toulmin analysis to do "what the model was supposed to be doing"; instead he positioned grounding, and formal analysis, within his own teaching intentions and practices. Suzanna, on the other hand, grew frustrated and overwhelmed because she did not have a store of prior experience with which to "play."

This comparative analysis illuminates some different levels of conflict that may occur as instructors appropriate curriculum to develop their own courses: at times (as with Steve), this conflict can be fruitful, while at other times (as with Suzanna) less so. While there did not appear to be conflict on the surface for Steve, as was more obvious with Suzanna, the analysis of the cultural model that informed his teaching tactics suggests otherwise. Steve successfully embedded parts of the official curriculum, without fully adopting the socio-critical cultural model of teaching writing. His instrumentalist view of "writing as an individual process to get ahead" did not accord with the more sociopolitical and critical model of writing underlying the curriculum. Thus Steve managed to pull off the *what* and the *how* of the syllabus in his process of appropriation; yet the *why*—firmly grounded in his prior cultural model—remained at odds with the curriculum. This tactical embedding reveals a very subtle—and I would even suggest, desirable—kind of resistance to the curricular model.

Suzanna's resistance was more overt, and she frankly and openly critiqued the model syllabus and all the problems it had created for her as a beginning teacher. As she struggled to grasp the *what* and the *how* of the syllabus, the *why*—her structural understanding of teaching writing—did not empower her to be someone who could maneuver and work with the available means for teaching W101 that were offered in the model syllabus. While Steve also did not passively accept the strategic vision for W101, his resistance was much more subtle and fruitful for his teaching and for program growth. He incorporated the new terminology into his pre-existing teaching framework and awaited persuasion about the underlying cultural model. These two levels of conflict between the strategic curriculum and the tactics of teachers suggest an important direction for the study of writing curriculum and pedagogy.

Russell K. Durst has begun to study the role of conflict in first-year composition programs, though he locates conflicts between students and teachers, rather than between teachers and administrative mandates, as discussed here. Durst notes that, like Steve, most of the students in the program he studied take an instrumental view of writing as economically empowering. Writing, to them, is a technology that will make their lives easier. In holding this model, Durst explains, these students tap into a deep vein of American individualism that is not likely to be excised by a semester of freshman composition—despite the rhetoric of critical pedagogy (such as that presumed in the model syllabus). Yet the composition instructors that Durst studied hold a social view of writing (such as that of the W101 program) and want to stress the complexity of critical literacy, available through such practices as self-reflection, multi-perspectival thinking, explicit consideration of ideology, and social and political equity (2). There is a conflict, then, between the pragmatic motivations of students and the critical and theoretical motivations of composition instructors.

At MU, my findings suggest, such conflicts are also evident between program curriculum (and the administration that designs, revises, and trains instructors to use it) and the instructors who teach in the program.² I have framed this conflict in de Certeauian terms, as the difference between the strategies of bureaucratic power, and the tactics of individuals within such systems. This terminology, as well as the findings of this case study considered in these terms, may prove useful for further study of the struggles that occur between teachers and administrators/official program curriculum in first-year composition programs.

Implications for Teacher Training and Curriculum Development

In closing, I would like to sketch out how this study of two teachers tactically resisting a new curriculum can offer instructive suggestions for training teachers and developing curriculum.

Teacher Training. In light of the analysis, I advocate a teacher training program that carries the critical project described by Durst into teacher training practices. Durst proposes a composition pedagogy built on “reflective instrumentalism,” an approach that “takes advantage of the motivation students bring to their areas of specialization, provides students with useful knowledge, and engages students in critical scrutiny of schooling and society” (179). To account for the inevitable conflict of cultural models when introducing new curricular materials, teacher training needs to try to be as explicit as possible about the “why” behind the curriculum. In training teachers, program administrators might first identify and describe the cul-

tural model on which the curriculum is based. They might further invite teachers to identify their own cultural models of writing, perhaps through writing exercises or small group discussions. Finally, administrators might create forums and mechanisms for instructors to put their own cultural models of writing into conversation with the curricular model. This is to suggest that teacher training become something different than rote “training,” more dialogic and more about the interaction between the cultural models of curriculum and the teachers who bring that curriculum to life in classrooms. While of course teachers will always need to learn the day-to-day “nuts and bolts” of teaching writing, this study suggests the need for deeper conversations as well. Indeed such an approach would involve teachers in the kind of critical scrutiny that this W101 curriculum asked students to do.

Self-critique at any level is difficult, and dialogic methods on the part of administration are needed to bring about an atmosphere where such critique might flourish. The W101 program has since the time of this research built a “reflective” component into staff development, requiring instructors to engage in critical reflection about their practice that occurs in the form of some dialogue with other instructors. Some of these reflective practices in W101 have been team teaching, demonstrating or describing teaching practices for other instructors at staff meetings, creating annotated lesson plans, and reporting on professional articles at staff meetings. All these are intended to create a climate of generative dialogue; however, they will only address the complexities identified in this study insofar as they can begin to address the varying cultural models—the underlying assumptions about literacy—that instructors bring to their teaching and to compare those models with the curricular model.

This study implies that teacher training might alternatively be considered in more rhetorical terms, as the effort to persuade instructors to engage with the curriculum and even to recognize the value of tactical resistance, when instructors remain unconvinced. If we begin to think of teacher training as a set of rhetorical, critical, and dialogic practices that assumes teachers are agents and attempts to persuade them to adapt the strategic cultural model of teaching and writing, then we must also begin to grapple with the question of instructors who resist doing so, for whatever reasons. While program administrators can create a mandate to bully such instructors—“you must teach this, or else...”—that mandate won’t necessarily reach to the underlying cultural models of writing. Perhaps this problem can be at least partially addressed in the practices of recruiting and hiring teachers. But this is a small step, and this problem needs more thorough consideration.

Curriculum Development. Just as instructors can benefit from a more explicit dialogue with the cultural model of curriculum, so the curriculum can be improved through dialogic conversation with teaching tactics.

This analysis suggests the need to consider how to provide a strategic vision for the program while also being sensitive to the ways that tactics of teachers might also inform further curriculum reform efforts. One question raised involves curriculum design. It is not clear that the teachers benefited from a syllabus structure that asked new instructors to design the *telos* (the critical culmination of the course, in the third unit), while having the *techne* (i.e., the Toulmin model) more directly mandated in the beginning of the course. Suzanna abandoned the logic of the syllabus in the third unit, while Steve fell back on what he already knew about teaching research writing. While it only makes sense to insist that instructors think through the critical and reflective “move” of such a syllabus for themselves, it can also be an overwhelming task for instructors who feel like newcomers—rather than experts—within the cultural model proposed in the curriculum. If such a socio-critical cultural model is mandated, then the structure of curriculum needs to offer consistent levels of support throughout the semester. If teachers (such as Suzanna and Steve both) do not grasp the cultural model of the curriculum, the critical vision of the third unit is likely to go unrealized without firmer curricular guidance in the third unit. This is to say that a model syllabus needs to be consistently clear in the “strategies” it is offering to teachers.

On the other hand, the curriculum can be enriched through dialogue with teaching tactics. As this research has been analyzed and discussed with the program director, curricular reform has moved in the direction of including more process-model “nuts and bolts” pedagogical strategies into the syllabus. Thus the curriculum has changed as a result of the tactical resistance of teachers. It may well be the case that Suzanna’s more overt criticism and frustration was more forceful in bringing about such changes, even if it resulted in the termination of her appointment in the W101 program. Though I do not believe that teacher development and training should ever replace the work of administrators in setting out and persuading others of their vision for a program, it does seem plausible that a curriculum that remains sensitive to the conflicting cultural models and the emerging tactics of instructors will be a healthy curriculum.

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NOTES

¹ All names of individuals, institutions, and places are pseudonyms.

² Indeed, if Durst's findings at the University of Cincinnati are any indication, it may well be the case that Steve's cultural model of academic writing will actually be much more persuasive to MU students than will the curricular model.

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