

Writing Program Administration

Journal of the
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The previous list is meant to be suggestive, not exhaustive, but contributions must be appropriate to the interests and concerns of those who administer writing programs. The editors welcome empirical research (quantitative as well as qualitative), historical research, and theoretical, essayistic, or reflective pieces.

The length of submissions should be approximately 2,000 to 5,000 words, although the journal occasionally will publish shorter or longer pieces when the subject matter warrants. Articles should be suitably documented using the current MLA Style Manual. For citations of Internet resources, use the *Columbia Guide to Online Style*.**

Please submit only *electronic* manuscripts as WORD or rich text (.rtf) attachments, with the author identified only on a separate cover letter. Submissions are anonymously reviewed by the Editorial Board. The editors aspire to respond within two months after the receipt of the submission.

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Letter from the Managing Editors: Remembering Louis Rosenblatt

Because of her influence on all of us as writing teachers, we want to dedicate this issue's letter to our friend and colleague Louise Rosenblatt:

Louise Rosenblatt (1904-2005) touched many of our lives. For those of us who have taught courses in literature, literature methods, or writing, her publications have offered invaluable tools for engaging students with texts. For instance, her 1938 book, *Literature as Exploration*, was decades ahead of its time in laying a solid foundation for reader-response criticism.

When *The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work* appeared in 1978, it invigorated literary study by demonstrating how the text and the reader “transact” to bring the poem into being:

“The poem” comes into being in the live circuit set up between the reader and “the text.” As with the elements of the electric circuit, each component of the reading process functions by virtue of the presence of the others. A specific reader and a specific text at a specific time and place: change any of these, and there occurs a different circuit, and different event—a different event. (14)

Louise Rosenblatt's most recent book, *Making Meaning with Texts: Selected Essays*, was published several weeks before her death in February 2005. These essays, written from the 1930s to the 1990s, show the remarkable range of her work not only in literary study but also in composition. For her, reading and writing were simply different kinds of transactions with texts.

Besides being an influential scholar, Louise Rosenblatt, in both professional and civic arenas, tirelessly advocated for people who struggled to achieve political and economic security. Never mincing words, Louise boldly challenged all of us to treat our colleagues and our fellow citizens with dignity and respect. She was the quintessential role model for those who strive to contribute to our profession and to our world. We are sad that she is gone, but we are comforted by the legacy that she has left for all of us.

Greg Glau, Barry Maid, and Duane Roen
Arizona State University

Learning to Ride the Waves: Making Decisions about Placement Testing

Susanmarie Harrington

Writing assessment is, as any reader of these pages knows, a complicated and contextual process that involves assumptions about teachers, students, curricula, and literacy. As interest in writing assessment has exploded in the past decade, the scholarly community has developed rich guidelines for approaching assessment. Foundational work—such as Edward White’s *Teaching and Assessing Writing*, Brian Huot’s “Toward a New Theory of Writing Assessment” and his *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning*, Bob Broad’s *What We Really Value*, and more general assessment scholarship such as Grant Wiggins’ *Educative Assessment*, just to name some recent work—has outlined principles for high-quality performance assessment. The development of portfolios and increased attention to the role of reflection in the writing process, have spurred the development of any number of innovative classroom and program assessment practices. It is easy to think that it is a good time to be in the business of writing assessment. Theory and practice are developing at a fast clip amid robust debates over how best to approach this work; at the same time, the principles underlying the debates are sound. Scholars in a field built on the assumption that literacy is complex, that assessment should respond to the myriad situations in which writers will need to use their abilities, and that assessment should foster good performances by teachers and students can be proud of their contributions to assessment reform in writing classrooms and programs reform.

In this era of interesting assessment scholarship, placement testing occupies a vexed position. In some respects, it is one of the most vital areas of assessment. The development of Directed Self-Placement (the term first articulated in Daniel J. Royer and Roger Gilles’ 1998 “Directed Self-Placement: An Attitude of Orientation,”) has heightened interest in placement testing and articulated a thorough critique of older forms of placement test-

ing. However, these critiques often suggest that DSP, while not problem-free itself, solves the problems of, and thus should replace, other placement mechanisms (see Edward M. White's preface to *Directed Self-Placement: Principles and Practices* [Royer and Gilles] for one example: although not an uncritical endorsement of DSP, White concludes: "[n]ow we may be able to dispense altogether with the huge expense in time and money of placement testing, while maintaining the benefits of placement" [vii]). Thus other forms of placement testing receive little recent attention.

Even before the growth of DSP, placement testing occupied a curious place in our ongoing scholarly conversations. Many publications describe placement approaches (for example, George Ronald Abraham's account of the institution of a holistically scored writing sample at Hinds Junior College; a CompPile search on placement generates hundreds of hits, many on little-cited pieces such as Hendricks' 1940 report "Exemption from Required Composition"), but as time passes these descriptive pieces tend not to be cited often, if at all, in later discussions. Although it is generally acknowledged that a range of placement procedures is in current use, a short and simple history of writing assessment is generally accepted as presenting progress: direct writing samples were an improvement on indirect measures of writing, portfolios were an improvement on impromptu holistically scored samples; directed self-placement is an improvement on other procedures. Kathleen Blake Yancey points out that it is better to conceptualize the movement as waves, ebbing and flowing, rather than as distinct stages, offering "trends that constitute a general forward movement, at least chronologically," although there are "those [waves] that move forward, [and] those that don't" ("Looking Back" 483).

Placement has received the most serious attention in rough histories of assessment in terms of critique. There is a fine tradition of critical analysis of the limits of various placement techniques. Take, for example, Thomas Hilgers' remarks on placement for basic writers, in which he argues: "[b]ad assessment is what gets most students labeled as 'basic writers.' Bad assessment drives the curriculum and the evaluation of most basic writing courses; and bad assessment keeps educators from devising paths of learning that will increase the likelihood of success for all student writers" (69).

Hilgers' main target is the array of indirect measures that are used for placement at many institutions: Nelson–Denny or other reading test scores, SAT or ACT scores, or anything other than an actual writing sample from a student. He makes a cogent argument that encapsulates critiques frequently leveled at indirect assessments. Hilgers notes that timed, impromptu exams, a common placement mechanism, do not conform to the guidelines promulgated by the Conference on College Composition and Communication

(CCCC) and the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE). These guidelines, formulated by the CCCC Committee on Assessment, note in part that “Any individual’s writing ‘ability’ is a sum of a variety of skills employed in a diversity of contexts, and individual ability fluctuates unevenly among these varieties. Consequently, one piece of writing [. . .] can never serve as an indicator of overall literacy, particularly for high-stakes decisions” (432). Hilgers challenges us to interrogate the assessments used for all students, but particularly those for basic writers, suggesting that assessment reform is one way to achieve significant improvements in curricular experiences for all our students, not just basic writers. If placement methods are developed that recognizing that writers should be evaluated on their ability to display a range of skills in a range of contexts, and recognizing that all writers display their abilities differently on different occasions, then teachers and students alike would benefit from assessment. Good assessment has good consequences; bad assessment has bad consequences.

This statement is a common theme in the scholarship of writing assessment and likely accepted as common sense by readers of these pages. Yet our collective reluctance to address the ways in which placement testing, in all its forms, has local consequences, is unfortunate. Placement testing, which is practiced at a majority of colleges and universities (Huot, “Survey” 56) has significant consequences for students and is their first encounter with college writing instruction. Thus, it deserves our considered attention, examination, and debate. Other areas of assessment (the role of reflection, the purpose of grades, just to take a couple) have developed lines of scholarship in which issues are debated; placement scholarship tends to present a series of preferred models (indirect scoring, impromptu samples, portfolios, DSP) or “how we do it” reports. Placement decisions, among the most local of all assessment decisions, must necessarily be balanced against local constraints including budgetary allocations, turnaround requirements, and student backgrounds. The fact that the existing literature on assessment focuses much more on classroom assessment than placement assessment makes it all the more difficult for administrators to handle these local constraints in theoretically grounded ways.

In this essay, I examine some of the particular challenges that face administrators overseeing placement programs. My task here is not to defend or criticize particular placement methods, but rather to explore the ways power and politics play out in our placement decisions. Ultimately, I argue that placement deserves our considered and sustained attention. Although it is true, as Edward White cautions, that “good placement is not cheap” (“Importance,” 83), administrators can and should develop a well-theorized placement testing program, attentive to the needs of all students, even in the

face of budgetary and time constraints. Although directed self-placement is a wonderful process (one which my campus has recently adopted it), it is not the only responsible option open to campuses. If we focus less on the method of assessment and more on how the placement assessment functions in the academic lives of our students, we will engage key questions about the interpretive decisions placement ultimately rests on. Placement testing is most students' first contact with the theory and practice of first-year writing programs, and we would do well to make that first contact as inviting and theoretically sound as possible. To do so, we need to think less about placement as mechanism and more about placement as an opportunity to communicate. Placement is perhaps the first part of our programs that communicates to students.

PLACEMENT IN CONTEXT: ONE PROGRAM'S STORY

Since placement is a local decision, I want to open with the story of the history of placement in my own program at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). I do so to illustrate the ways in which the placement system's values communicated (or failed to) with students. IUPUI is a large, comprehensive urban state university serving a wide range of students. However, this demographic is changing because of several factors: a growing community college system across the state, rising admissions standards, and the decreasing age of entering undergraduates. Given these changes, our course offerings have also changed. At one point, we offered two levels of basic writing, but as the pool of entering students placing into the lower level slowly shrank, we eliminated the latter course. Two years ago, we eliminated basic writing and established a stretch program modeled after the Arizona State University program (see Glau for more information).

The earliest placement systems at IUPUI were classroom-based. Since students were not expected to come to campus for placement tests before registration, they could register for any writing class they wished, and a placement test in the first week of class (dis)confirmed the students' placement. This system was created to ensure that every student got individualized attention at an important moment in the college writing experience and that writing teachers made the decisions about where students should start. It communicated to students that we needed to know them to make good placements. At the same time, it was unwieldy, to say the least: teachers spent the first week of the semester reading initial writing prompts and moving students into the proper level of writing course. The hallways were awash with students and teachers moving around, settling class sizes; teachers were sometimes forced to switch class preparations if it turned out that more or fewer sections of a given course needed to be offered. The chaos

proved to be that system's undoing, and it was eventually replaced by a timed writing sample and grammar exam. At some point in the 1980s, around the time the writing process and portfolios were came the curriculum, the grammar exam was dropped. Faculty felt the grammar test poorly introduced the process-based curriculum of the courses. However, they prized the holistic scoring sessions in which each timed sample was scored by two or three readers, using a 1-to-6 rubric (6 being the high score). Those who participated in the scoring sessions regularly valued the chance to talk about writing without grading, and all faculty felt that the request for a writing sample showed students that we cared about their work.

This holistic scoring method continued until 1994, the year after I was hired as director of placement. Over time, the scoring rubric had been revised with participation from all placement readers—almost all part-time faculty—in response to curricular changes. But influenced by my experience at the University of Michigan's English Composition Board pilot portfolio project, Broad's scholarship on communal writing assessment ("Portfolio Scoring" and "Reciprocal Authorities"), as well as placement changes at the University of Pittsburgh and Washington State University, IUPUI faculty began to question the wisdom of placement systems that required strict adherence to a rubric, even one they had devised. We wanted a system that prized teacher expertise more, a system in which we didn't need to push away everything we knew about students from our classroom expertise. So we switched to an expert rater system, which was in use from 1995 through 2004 (see Harrington for more information).

An expert rater system emphasizes the value of teacher expertise, and it puts placement decisions in the hands of experienced course teachers (the details of theory and practice are discussed more fully below). William Smith's account of his work at Pittsburgh helped us design our approach. We asked placement raters to make their central question while reading, "Does this placement test look like the kind of work successful students do in my course at the start of the semester?" In many ways, the move to an expert-reader system hearkens back to the original IUPUI placement system, one in which the teachers' roles were central. Our expert rater system asked, fundamentally, "What course does this student need?" Teacher experience provides an equitable base from which to assess placement tests in a centralized program that provides ongoing faculty development, frequent opportunities for teachers to interact with each other, and regular review of curriculum and assessment practices. In our previous holistic system, readers' decisions revolved around which descriptor on the holistic scale best described the text in question; if questions of course placement came up, as was frequently the case, readers were supposed to push them aside, and often confessed to

guilty feelings over the difficulty of this task. In the expert reader system, readers note the appropriate placement. At first, two people read every test, but study showed that if the first reader felt the student was appropriately placed in Comp I, the second reader was overwhelmingly likely to agree. We dropped the second read in this situation. This system allowed us to devote more energy and time to the reading of tests on the borders of the course boundaries. (see Harrington for a full description of the data).

Our placement system thus brought its assumptions in line with our teacherly knowledge. We knew that in our classes students arrayed themselves on a performance continuum, and the expert-reader system similarly relied on an assumption of performance continuum in which clear exemplars of a category (for example, “Comp I students”) were easy to recognize, and where the edges of the continuum were harder to discern (see Richard Haswell’s “Rubrics, Prototypes, and Exemplars: Categorization Theory and Systems of Writing Placement” for a thorough discussion of categorization theory and its relation to placement and assessment). Writing courses never exactly matched each students’ abilities and competencies; some students develop more quickly in some areas than others, so a student may well fall between the boundaries of two courses. Our placement system tried to take into account the fact that students’ texts display a variety and range of abilities, and to allow readers-as-teachers to balance this variety and range of abilities in making a decision about the placement. We also assumed that for teachers to know which students belonged in their classes, they needed regular conversation with colleagues. Our program’s portfolio reading system ensures regular conversation among teachers about students’ abilities, assignments, and standards, and placement test readers are experienced teachers.

This expert-scoring system worked well until a radical change in the faculty occurred: the Board of Trustees raised tuition and replaced part-time faculty with full-time lecturers (nontenure track faculty who teach a 4-4 load). The number of experienced part-time faculty declined, and a number of longtime placement test readers became full-time faculty members. Interest in reading placement tests declined, and it became more difficult to recruit new readers each year. In addition, campus changes increasingly put pressure on academic departments to move placement testing to electronic environments so that students did not need to visit campus for testing before orientation and registration. Over the three-year period leading up to this change in the faculty, models of academic support on campus evolved. The campus generally moved away from remediation-based approaches, preferring instead to offer academic support to all students. A math assistance center opened, offering math tutoring for all students, and a variety of mentoring and supplemental instruction programs offered additional instruc-

tion or structured review sections for any student who wished to come. As the campus environment shifted, the writing placement test became one of the few programs offering additional academic support (through basic writing) to students identified in advance; most of the other support programs worked with students who self-identified or whose teachers identified them after several weeks of performance in class. A move toward guided self-placement, where students could elect the level of support they wanted in a writing course, brought us more in line with the campus's general approach to fostering first-year student success. We linked our communications about writing with other communications about general expectations at IUPUI; our outreach to area students and area high schools works closely with admissions and orientation. The writing program is now one of the first programs students encounter, and they see an invitation from us to be partners in a successful college writing experience.

As I write this, students are experiencing a two-day pilot of our guided self-placement system. We have created a three-stage process for new students. First, we ask them to reflect on their experiences and attitudes about writing, providing structured questions on a Web site they must access before orientation. Second, we provide them with brief course descriptions and sample work from each of the three first-semester writing courses (our stretch program, Composition I, and honors Composition I). Finally, we ask them to tell us which course they prefer to start in and to tell us a little about their decision-making process (full information is available at <http://english.uc.iupui.edu>). The program will go into full operation for students entering in January 2005, and we have planned an extensive validation study so that we can use students' experiences and course performance to help subsequent students make the best decisions possible. (While an extensive discussion of validation is the subject for another article, suffice it to say that the validation study will examine the correlations among course performance, previous academic performance, and self-assessment in terms of skills and attitudes about writing. It will be carried out in conjunction with our campus testing center and office for institutional research.)

LEARNING FROM EXPERIENCE

I tell our story at such length to emphasize the ways in which the historical evolution of the English placement test is closely tied to faculty and institutional values and circumstances. While it is easy to look at placement testing as a technology—a method of placing students or allowing them to place themselves—such a view is reductive. It overlooks the contexts for placement, and it treats assessment as a mechanism rather than as a way of expressing a conclusion about students and their needs, as a way of inter-

preparing available information about students so that decisions can be made about courses. Huot critiques Yancey's wave metaphor as explaining only "the sample of what students produce," demonstrating a "lack of interest in the way the work is analyzed" ((Re)Articulating 155). In my own campus' history, impromptu exams dominate the placement testing, when we look at the student writing sample as the focus. But if we look at the reading situation, we see quite clearly that the original system and the expert rater system share some important traits: both modes of placement prized teacher expertise and close connections to classroom performance, although the expert rater system better embodied those values. The move to guided self-placement was driven in large part by faculty change and by campus environment changes. To focus only on the role of a writing sample overlooks this key decision-making factor and misses some of the important elements that make our assessment situation valuable. Placement and registration are part of the orientation process, and writing classes are a central part of the first-year student schedule.

Although presentations of assessment methods usually (and understandably) privilege assessment technology, it is important to focus on the relation between method, interpretation, and context. Toward that end, I will briefly sketch available options for placement, looking at the ways in which each method of sampling or otherwise analyzing students' performance and reading or scoring those performances focuses attention on communication and interpretation.

Impromptu Exam Variations. The impromptu exam is an established form of placement testing, and despite the many criticisms leveled at it in the past decades, it continues to be popular. White's "Apologia for the Timed Impromptu" articulates the best case for such an exam, noting the clear limitations of impromptu testing "in definition of writing, in message to students, in reliability and validity, in effect upon teaching," the impromptu does not convey the richness of the intellectual moves involved in writing (44). Yet White notes that an essay exam may, in certain contexts, be "the best we can do in an imperfect world" (43). There is, of course, a running argument among scholars about whether it is more important to make pragmatic compromises or to hold out for utopian solutions (Alan Purves, in his response to White, argues for holding out for portfolios ("Apologia Not Accepted"), and the essays in Belanoff and Dickson and Black et al. offer extended arguments in favor of portfolio implementation schemes).

I would like to turn utopian assessment impulses in another direction to draw attention to some innovations in impromptu testing. Not all impromptu placement tests need involve solely a sit-down-and-write-from-experience format. As White notes in his "Apologia," impromptu exams

certainly can foster a reductive view of writing, communicating to students that important writing need not involve drafting, reflection, research, and preparation. Yet there are ways to improve on the genre. For example, impromptu exams need not be limited to a single question and answer, nor does an impromptu setting rule out any reflection. At the end of an impromptu essay, students can be asked to reflect on the work that they have done. At the end of my program's impromptu placement test, we asked students: "Look back over your essay, and tell us what you think of it. Explain what changes you might make if you had more time to work on your essay." We added this question for several reasons. First, it seemed at least a start toward encouraging reflection, communication, and evaluation in the impromptu, by explicitly inviting students to comment on it. Second, it made the form of the impromptu much closer to the beginnings of the first assignment in our first-year composition class. Every draft turned in by every student is accompanied by what we call a writer's statement (others use the term reflective piece), so the test—although the students don't know it yet—becomes consistent with classroom practice. And third, it gave us a piece of information that became useful once we had moved to an expert-scoring system. If we are placing the writer (rather than the text), we wanted some small way to get information about the writer in addition to the text. We also wanted to signal to students that their perspectives on their writing matter on our campus.

Even more extensive and creative remodeling of an impromptu test can be found on other campuses. The University of Hawaii requires students to take a three-hour writing assessment that involves responding to readings provided during the test (a shortened version of a formerly five-hour, two-question process). As materials provided online by the University of Hawaii at Manoa's Writing Project describe, a three-hour morning session allows students extensive time for reading, drafting and revising in response to a question such as, "Read the following article and decide whether you agree or disagree with [author of provided article]. Then write an essay in which you describe and defend your position. (Your defense may include references to events in history; examples from literature, film, and television; your own experiences; and quotations from the article)". Online placement tests have become another environment for extended writing samples. iMOAT is a suite of Web environments for writing assessment that universities and colleges to customize an assessment to include different elements and different scoring approaches. Developed first at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and built out of collaborations between MIT, the University of Cincinnati, Depaul, CalTech, and Louisiana State University, iMOAT "allows

students to take assessments or complete assignments anywhere in the world. Moreover, is a flexible tool that facilitates best practices in writing assessment,” according to principal investigator Leslie Perelman.

All these placement processes involve writers working alone, a key difference between a writing classroom and the placement experience. But this disjunction was addressed by a program developed at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, which for a time incorporated two-hour writing classes for students taking the placement test during orientation. English teachers ran a class session and then had students write impromptu exams (Robertson); the exams were evaluated by two readers, one of whom was the teacher in the two-hour class. The miniclasses allowed students to brainstorm ideas and compare notes with peers before completing their exams, and they demonstrated a clear connection between classroom assessment and placement testing. Students were introduced to college-classroom culture even before classes began.

The Stony Brook placement process now uses an online testing system (see Program . . . for full details), which serves to introduce students to another dimension of campus culture before classes begin: online course delivery systems and supplements. The online process offers students academic reading to use in a short expository essay; it suggests a broad time frame for writing and revising before submission, and it assumes that a single essay can be a representative sample. Writing faculty read the online submissions and provide scores to students before orientation, enabling quick registration. This model requires less time during the orientation process, which may be one reason it replaced the classroom-based model. Whether that was an issue in Stony Brook’s decision or not, it is a factor affecting decisions on other campuses. The use of faculty time and the scheduling of student-faculty contact during the placement, admissions, and advising processes are variables that affect the ways a program can make decisions about placement—or ask students to make decisions themselves.

Portfolios for Placement. Portfolios, regarded by Alan Purves as the best model of writing assessment because they allow evaluation in context (550), have been used for placement purposes since the early 1990s. Miami University of Ohio was the first campus to use portfolios for placement purposes, and by late 1993, the University of Michigan had a program established (it was replaced in 1999 by directed self-placement). At both institutions, classroom uses of portfolios preceded the placement uses. The faculty moved toward portfolios for entering students as a way to include in the assessment process a variety of writing samples designed to show the students’ strengths over time and in different dimensions of writing. Portfolios allow students to submit several works in different genres to demonstrate their overall abili-

ties (see Belanoff and Dickson (1991) for an early treatment of this theme, which continues through more recent work such as the collection edited by Black, Daiker, Sommers, and Stygall (1994)). At Michigan and Miami, faculty spoke of placement portfolios as an assessment tool that allows for student choice, variety of work, and reflection.

Reflection is the very essence of a portfolio. As Yancey notes, reflection affords students a chance to explain what they've learned, demonstrates for readers the kinds of choices students make, allows students to learn through quiet reflection, and provides readers a look at the process that drives students' work ("Dialogue" 86). While there are other elements to a portfolio (formal essays, at the very least, and perhaps drafts of student work or informal writing assignments), all those elements intersect in the reflective statement,¹ in which the writer accounts for the "portfolianness" of the portfolio. Without the reflection, the pieces in the portfolio are a creation of the reader, who will make whatever connections she will. With the reflection, the portfolio is the creation of the writer, who constructs, selects, and interprets the portfolio for a reader (who then necessarily constructs, selects, and interprets while reading). Portfolio reading is dialogic, a dialogue begun by the portfolio writer in the reflection. Fundamentally, this dialogic assessment enacts all that the CCCC Position Statement calls for.

In some respects, portfolios represent the best that writing assessment has to offer. They are rich, multitextured, and dialogic; various genres are represented; the writer's process is represented; and context is provided throughout. It is a device that can communicate much about writing to new students. Note, however, that the mode of assessment itself does not guarantee all the theoretical benefits are present for each student. Portfolio assessments for placement can easily replicate the class biases of assessments based on impromptu writing because students from socially advantaged groups are more likely to have come from school systems which promote writing likely to be valued in college. Portfolio-based assessment assumes that students have a body of work that can be culled for the several submissions that allow for a rich evaluation. This state of affairs is not always in place, particularly in universities with large numbers of basic writers or non-traditional students. It is no coincidence that portfolio-based placement was pioneered at institutions with selective admissions, such as Miami University and the University of Michigan (for more information about portfolio-based systems, see Daiker, Sommers, and Stygall; Jessup, Cooper, and Harrington; and Willard-Traub et al.). It is easier to bring the riches of the classroom into placement testing when the student body generally brings with it educational riches.

College placement portfolios can affect high school classroom instruction in ways that can benefit a range of students. By inviting high school teachers to participate in scoring portfolios, the University of Arizona's Portfolio Placement Program (PPP) makes the task of communicating with area teachers a fundamental part of its program. The Arizona portfolio (as the Michigan portfolio once did) requires students to submit at least one piece of writing from outside of an English course. Thus, the Arizona portfolios system has influenced the proliferation of writing across the curriculum in area high schools (Borrowman 15). In addition, the PPP will examine portfolios compiled by high school juniors, offering feedback about their work, and the time frame for the portfolio compilation ensures dialogue between the writer, high school teachers, and college teachers. Daiker, Sommers, and Stygall similarly argue that the Miami portfolio benefits high school teachers.

Adding reflection to a placement process allows faculty who are making placement decisions to know more about students. Reflection usually takes place in a portfolio statement, since the various pieces of student work, accompanied by assignments and reflections, make it relatively easy to assess the complicated set of interlocking factors that seem to lead to success in a writing class. Because those factors that lead to success in a writing class are so little understood, the portfolio provides readers copious material that allows them to interpret the portfolio in a given curricular and institutional context. Hence the appeal of portfolios for placement testing in some institutions.

Faculty who have used reflective elements in their placement systems frequently describe students' reflective pieces as the most interesting and sometimes most important element of the placement system. In Miami's process, the portfolio letter describes the process used in writing the portfolio, important pieces in the portfolio, the place of writing in the writer's life, the writer's development, skills, or any combination of those as factors influencing placement. Kathleen Blake Yancey highlights some observations from Miami faculty regarding the portfolio letters that open every Miami portfolio:

I found the reflective letter to often be the most interesting part of the packet, not only because of what it revealed of the individual but because of what it showed about the writer's attitude toward their own work. What a fascinating range of boastfulness, self-effacement, wit, rambling." Another commented, "The reflective letter fascinates me. It appear to be the place where the student establishes his/her authority as a writer; posi-

tions the reader and the writer.” A third rather echoes the second: “I liked those reflective letters and narratives which situated the writer and his or her writings.” (“Dialogue” 98)

A key point about portfolios is that the reflective component affords more power to the writer to shape the reading process. Reflective letters allow the writer to comment on the work, sharing evaluations or information with unknown readers. Thus the portfolio writer stands in a different relationship to the reader than does the impromptu writer, who traditionally has no opportunity to speak directly to the reader about the writing or rhetorical situation. Portfolios can communicate to students that their reflection is valued by the institution, and that can profoundly change the position of entering writers.

EXPERT RATER SYSTEMS

A changing of position and power plays out in another realm of assessment: the scoring method. Any assessment consists of writing sample(s) and the method of scoring or interpretation. Huot outlines certain shifts in assessment theory that have resulted in new scoring models that diverge from psychometric or holistic scoring methods, until recently the dominant mode of scoring for direct placement tests. These changes move the authority of the assessment away from a rubric and into the hands of teachers, changing the position of writing teachers in the assessment system. A holistic-scoring scale, which provides a rubric that describes various levels of achievement usually corresponding to a four- or six-point scale (see White, *Teaching and Assessing Writing* 298–303, for examples), depends on that scale for authority and consistency. But more contextual scoring models have expanded program administrators’ assessment options. These systems, called expert-scoring systems, ask teachers to decide a student’s placement (as described in the story of IUPUI above).

Expert-scoring systems are based on work done by William Smith (then at the University of Pittsburgh) as well as Richard Haswell and Susan Wyche-Smith (then at Washington State University)². In the Pittsburgh system, teachers make direct decisions about placement, asking themselves only whether the student writer represented by the placement test belongs in the course they have most recently taught (Smith). Each test is read by at least two readers until its writer has been accepted by two readers into one of the available courses, such as basic writing or first-year composition. In the Washington State system, the concept of prototypical placement guides the two-tier system. In the first round of placement, raters ask themselves only whether the student writer represented by the placement test belongs in first-year composition. If the answer is yes, then placement is finished. If the

answer is no, or not sure, then the test is read by a second tier of more expert readers, who may decide to place the student into basic writing, or honors, or first-year composition (Haswell and Wyche–Smith; Harrington).

While these systems differ, both prize teacher expertise, and both respond to some difficulties that regularly arise in traditional holistic-scoring systems. Holistic scorers answer the question “What point on the scale most closely matches a description of this essay?” Expert scorers answer the question, “What course does this writer need to take?” But because holistic scorers (especially in a placement situation) are usually teachers who will be teaching the courses into which students will be placed, they want to use their teaching expertise to help them make decisions. However, such expertise is a distraction in a holistic session. Holistic scoring sessions are plagued by the intrusion of teacher expertise. Discussions frequently veer down tangents marked with remarks such as “This reminds me of a student in my class who. . .,” and the assessment leader must cut off those tangents with a reminder to “stick to the rubric.” A scoring rubric is the centerpiece of a holistic-scoring experience, and it is imperative that holistic readers return to the rubric again and again in the scoring process to ensure consistency (see White, *Teaching* 208–21, for a more detailed discussion). But the primacy of a scoring rubric conflicts at times with teaching expertise, and the holistic system does not permit teaching expertise to play a central role in the discussion of the student’s writing and possible placement. Expert-scoring systems capitalize on this experience, and they communicate to students that teacher expertise matters.

GUIDED SELF-PLACEMENT

Guided, or directed, self-placement is one of the most interesting areas of placement scholarship at the moment. Until now, a discussion of placement has assumed that some sort of assessment is necessary—whether a mechanism review of existing data, such as an SAT score, or some method of scoring of a writing sample or portfolio. But some programs use other mechanisms for guiding students into writing courses, and directed self-placement does so without an artifact of student writing. The term directed self-placement is generally associated with the system developed at Grand Valley State University and described in a CCC article by Daniel J. Royer and Roger Gilles. However, somewhat earlier Colgate University used a similar system; it has since been discontinued and never rose to the prominence that the GVSU system has. Just as the move toward portfolios and the inclusion of reflective elements in a placement assessment place relatively more authority in students’ hands than a traditional holistic assessment does, these uses of self-assessment place virtually all responsibility for placement in

students' hands. In the early 1990s at Colgate University, entering students were asked to identify not how well they wrote but "how well prepared for college writing [they] believed themselves - a sort of self-image self-tracking" (Howard 50). When this system was refined in its first several years, it was complicated by the addition of a sample writing assignment and sample readings in introductory general education courses that were required of all first- and second-year students. By providing greater information to incoming students, the university could help students make a decision based on information about college expectations and not simply on past self-image. Such assessment invites students "to put their past and prospective literacy experiences in interaction and to imagine the relative difficulty or ease with which they will negotiate the intervening terrain" (Howard 53). Howard labels this a "dialogic" rather than "hierarchical" judgment; the invocation of dialogue demonstrates the ways the student is situated within the system. The student's perceptions are valued and heard, even while the university provides information about its perceptions and values for the student to consider.

Similarly, the directed self-placement developed at Grand Valley asks students to imagine their collegiate futures and make their best decision about how to proceed. English department faculty meet with incoming students in large groups at orientation sessions. A brief presentation (and brochure) provides students with information that permits them to make the important decision about which writing course they would like to register for (and presumably most need), a preparatory course or first-year composition.³ The faculty presentation explains, "The university has no interest in making you start with either course - that's why you are deciding. What we do have an interest in is your success as a student" (Royer and Gilles, "Directed" 56). The move to DSP was initiated by two factors: institutional data analysis showed no correlation between placement results and success in coursework, and the faculty understood that many factors influence student success, most of which the institution can only guess at in advance. Royer and Gilles note, "The fact is, we just don't know much about you as writers" ("Directed" 1), but the students do know themselves and are invited to share that knowledge with their new institution. Students can consider themselves well prepared for first-year composition, according to the English department's guidelines, if they have done significant reading and writing in high school, if they can summarize and analyze what they read, if they have written in a variety of genres, and if they have a good self-image as a writer and reader. Guidelines for high school GPA and ACT scores are also presented (preparatory students have ACT English scores below 70, and had only average high school GPAs). In this system,

students have the power to decide which course they will take - even if they fall outside the guidelines presented in the departmental brochure, they can elect to take a course if they feel prepared for it. The checklists presented to students are not intended as clear prescriptions, but as aids to reflection and self-assessment already developed and generalized from students in prior years. Royer and Gilles locate this procedure in the pragmatic tradition of William James or John Dewey. As they put it, directed self-placement

has a pleasing feel about it with influence stretching in every direction: from a simple brochure at the hub, its vectors point to students, local high schools, teachers, and administrators. Its simplicity recommends it over the unreliability to test scores. Its honesty calls out to students and lures them in the right direction. Its focus is on the future and each students' self-determined advance. ("Directed" 61)

Both the Colgate system and the Grand Valley State system present students with real and important choices about their education. As described by Howard, the Colgate system provides more specific information about the courses (going so far as to include sample reading and writing assignments); the Grand Valley State brochure focuses on the course in more general terms and on characteristics of the student. Interestingly, Royer and Gilles' survey of students who elected to take the preparatory writing course showed that poor self-image was a compelling reason for that choice—but as Royer and Gilles' note, these students "saw themselves as poor reader and writers. In the past, we had done the seeing for them" ("Directed" 62). In these guided self-placement systems, students have the power to see themselves and their courses, and to make their own decisions. Directed self-placement has become increasingly popular. The essays in *Directed Self-Placement: Principles and Practices* (Royer and Gilles) offer critiques and alternate implementation models at large and small campuses.

A directed self-placement model refuses to make placement decisions for students. Royer and Gilles (1998) argue that most placement testing programs (even the rhetorically-based ones for which Huot argues) "share an assumption that simply doesn't sit well with [them] - that whatever decision made is to be made by teachers, not students" (63). So one option is, clearly, to reject the teacher decision-making model. Self-placement programs are slowly spreading, and more research into their successes, limitations, and effects will help other campuses evaluate this model. In "The Importance of Placement and Basic Studies," White cautions that students who choose to bypass developmental instruction are not always making good choices. He presents data from New Jersey and California that suggest students who do

not take developmental writing are at risk - although the students in those studies were not being provided with the advising advocated by a directed self-placement model.

MOVING AHEAD

Writing assessment has always been a difficult endeavor. As White notes, "Assessment of writing can be a blessing or a curse, a friend or a foe, an important support for our work as teachers or a major impediment to what we need to do for our students. Like nuclear power, say, or capitalism, it offers enormous possibilities for good or ill, and, furthermore, it often shows both its benign and destructive faces at the same time" (Teaching and Assessing, 3).

The current climate is that basic writing programs are under attack, and universities and legislatures are trying increasingly to hold departments accountable for the work writing program administrators do; assessment thus becomes increasingly important, and its Janus-nature will become increasingly apparent to writing teachers. Assessments imposed from outside seem onerous; assessments in conflict with dearly-held teaching principles are unwelcome. As long as debates continue about the existence of the first-year composition requirement (see Connors) or the utility of basic writing courses (see Bartholomae; Greenberg "A Response"; Shor; and Soliday), many writing teachers probably will remain ambivalent about the assessment methods used to support those programs.

While the debates will doubtless continue for the foreseeable future, good assessment is necessary for them to proceed or become settled. Echoing a theme frequently sounded in White's publications, Borrowman notes that if we abdicate our responsibility to consider issues of reliability and validity in large-scale assessments, "someone else—someone who does not view writing as a process that produces products—will take over the job of assessing student writing. The stakes are too high for our students and for our profession for us to let someone else decide how writing will be assessed" (16). If we are to maintain basic writing programs, we need to have good placement practices that create systems resulting in good decisions, ones that promote student success, the development of writing ability, and self-esteem. If we are to nudge basic writers into the mainstream and to create new curricula for first-year composition courses that have a wider variety of student capabilities, placement testing may be unnecessary, but other forms of program assessment will be. Good assessment programs will support good teaching and research efforts, and the best way for us to respond to our students' needs is to know what those needs are.

Validity is one of the most vexed concepts in writing assessment, and it is a concept not particularly well understood among those in English (see Huot, *Re(Articulating)*, 45-51, for an excellent summary). It is important, to be sure, that we know that a test measures what it claims to measure, in this case, students' readiness for success in particular college writing courses. But this is a limited perspective on validity, and as both Huot and Peggy O'Neill note, scholars in educational psychology have made great advances in understanding validity. O'Neill summarizes: "validation arguments are rhetorical constructs that draw from all the available means of support. Validation studies include issues of reliability, construct definitions, consequences and other empirical and sociopolitical evidence" (50).

In other words, validity studies should consider elements of context and the use of results - how is the information collected used, used to what end and to what benefit for which groups? Part of the validity of a placement examination, I argue, lies in what it communicates to students and teachers about writing. As we contemplate assessment as a tool, we should consider what our choice of tool, in our context, will communicate to students about the nature of college writing. Even if elements of the local context push an assessment method (such as a standardized test score or impromptu) that has evident limitations, there are creative ways to consider how to shape the message the placement system sends to students. Considering assessment as dialogue will help us capitalize on the contextual aspects of an assessment system to help students adjust to college. Issues of context and validity should intersect the decisions about assessment methods from the start. Systematic assessments of students' needs, abilities, and preferences at the start of their college careers will enable us to develop curricula and support systems that will serve students and faculty well.

NOTES

¹The reflective component of a portfolio goes by many names, depending on teacher and program preference. Writer's letter, writer's statement, portfolio cover sheet, letter or memo of transmittal, and portfolio reflection are all terms used for such writing.

²Smith, Haswell, and Wyche-Smith have left Pittsburgh and Washington State, respectively. The Pittsburgh system has changed somewhat because the writing curriculum it leads into has changed, but the Washington State system is still in use at that institution.

³The information provided to students can be accessed on the Grand Valley State English department's Web site: see <http://www.gvsu.edu/english/selfplacement.htm>.

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Not Just Showing Up to Class: New TAs, Critical Composition Pedagogy, and Multiliteracies

Barb Blakely Duffelmeyer

[. . .] critical literacy approaches to composition emphasize self-reflection, multi-perspectival thinking, explicit consideration of ideological issues, rigorous development of ideas, and questioning of established ways of thinking.

- Russell Durst

I guess my “agenda” is that I want them to see themselves not only as students, not as spectators; I want them to see themselves as citizens in a democracy, because I really believe in that. But until we realize that we are, we just simply showing up to class.

- Chad, a first-year teaching assistant

New TAs, who teach most first-year composition (hereafter FYC) in major universities, gamely take on a variety of new experiences during their first semesters in the classroom (Bettencourt; Duffelmeyer “Learning to Learn,” “New Perspectives”; Farris; Marback). These TAs, despite their often-unacknowledged or overlooked teaching role in the university, can and do participate in achieving institutional and programmatic goals by further “renegotiating the definition of first- and second-year composition courses from ‘service courses’ in the academy to sites of intellectual activity and forums for sharing world views” (Neeley 26). Their experiences combine the challenges of being a university instructor for the first time with teaching assignments that today include technological, oral, written, and visual literacies integrated into FYC curricula, acknowledging the powerful and sophisticated nature of the texts our students interpret and generate in their academic and civic lives.

An instance of this renegotiation of writing program curricula is underway at my own institution, a process that has taken place over five years, involving many English department faculty and graduate students as well

as committed members of other colleges and departments who support the “vision of communication education appropriate to a changing world of communication practice” (“Iowa State University Communication Vision, Mission, and Means”). A motivating belief of this move is that our students benefit from a pedagogy of explicit engagement with oral, written, visual, and electronic literacies in the twenty-first century. These moves at our institution and at others pursuing similar curricular changes are clearly responses to changes in our notions of literacy and the realization that educators need to provide more than print-based skills.¹ Douglas Kellner and others describe educators’ pedagogical space as expanding to encompass “a variety of new types of multiple literacies to empower students and to make education relevant to the demands of the present and the future” (197). In courses like FYC, the present and the future denote an expanded and exciting notion of critical engagement with multiliteracies (for example, Faigley; Handa; Hill; Kress; New London Group; Selber), because, as Sean D. Williams asserts, we now engage a broader definition of literacy in the twenty-first century:

[Literacy now] means possessing the skills necessary to effectively construct and comfortably navigate multiplicity, to manipulate and critique information, representations, knowledge, and arguments in multiple media from a wide range of sources, and to use multiple expressive technologies including those offered by print, visual, and digital tools. (22)

Gunther Kress refers directly to these important changes—from strictly print-based to multiple literacies—when he asserts that literacy cannot be separated from a “vast array of social, technological, and economic factors,” and he identifies two major changes we must grapple with pedagogically: “the broad move from the now-centuries-long dominance of writing to the new dominance of the image and [. . .] the move from the dominance of the medium of the book to the dominance of the medium of the screen” (1). Not surprisingly to those who have long counseled the “importance of paying attention” to these new forms of literacies in our FYC classes (Selfe 414; Duffelmeyer “Critical Work in FYC”; Hawisher and Selfe; LeCourt; Takayoshi) and in our TA preparation seminars (Duffelmeyer “Learning to Learn”), critical composition pedagogy emerges even more prominently as a valuable means to engage the questions that these changes bring front and center: “questions of a profounder kind, about human potentials, wishes, desires—questions which go beyond immediate issues of utility for social or economic needs” (Kress 8). As a means to address these more profound questions and also deal with the transformed communication environment, current critical composition pedagogy scholars, such as Russell Durst, Ann

George, and Amy Lee, present critical composition pedagogy less as something radical or rarefied than as a pedagogical approach aimed at “helping students develop ways of thinking about the world and their place in it, and their understanding of the role of language as an integral part of this process” (Durst 94). Lee describes critical composition pedagogy in similarly pragmatic terms, referring to a classroom that helps students acknowledge

[. . .] their concepts of self, other, world as constructions, as one concept along a range of choices. The aim then is [. . .] the development of a critical process. This process, in turn, aims to enable the demystification of texts and contexts, allowing students to enter into the process of constructing meaning, rather than to believe it is done for/to them or that they might inscribe meaning unproblematically or naturally. (153)

Indeed, our own organization of Writing Program Administrators has stated among its outcomes a series that pertains specifically to what is identified as “Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing,” asserting that

By the end of first-year composition, students should use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating; understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources; integrate their own ideas with those of others; understand the relationships among language, knowledge, and power. (<http://www.english.ilstu.edu/hesse/outcomes.html>; emphasis added)

In light of our WPA colleagues’ belief in the importance of critical work and, further, because of our increasingly complex communication environment, Durst pointedly and not surprisingly asks, “What composition teacher today could argue against a pedagogy of understanding, reflection, dialogue, and transformation, the critical literacy equivalents to motherhood, apple pie, and the flag [. . .]?” (173).

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT: “MEDIA CATECHISM - PERPETUAL PEDAGOGY”

Critical composition pedagogy’s concerns with understanding the ways identities and ideas are constructed by texts around us and its attendant emphasis on multi-perspectival thinking are central in the twenty-first century communication environment that occasions curricular changes such as the one Iowa State University is undergoing. Our TAs and their students work in an environment made at once more vital and more complicated by the proliferation of types of texts that they encounter daily. Understanding

how the very notion of text has changed in ways that affect our teaching means acknowledging that *text* no longer refers strictly to print, but to a rich variety of “audio, visual, and electronically mediated forms of knowledge that have prompted a radical shift in the [. . .] ways in which knowledge is produced, received, and consumed” (Giroux, “Is There a Place” 51); and grasping this shift in knowledge production, reception, and consumption calls for critical composition pedagogy. Giroux calls this transformation nothing less than a “sea change” (45) in thinking about multiple literacies rather than one literacy that privileges only print. Referred to as “multiple literacies” (Kellner 196) or “multiliteracies” (New London Group 63–64), this changing textual environment demands our attention, according to composition scholars (Duffelmeyer and Ellertson; Hill; Kellner; Selfe, Williams)—an explicit theoretical and pedagogical focus on the “increasing *multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning-making*, where the textual is also related to the visual, the audio, the spatial . . .” (New London Group 64; emphasis added).

A useful way to think about multiliteracies—one that points to the centrality that critical composition pedagogy should assume in our current communication environment—is found in the literature of media ecology. Scholars in that area describe a tight weaving of relationships among our systems (“environments”) of literacy, language, and communication. A media ecosystem is defined by Robert K. Logan “in analogy with a traditional biological ecosystem as a system consisting of human beings and the media and technology through which they interact and communicate with each other” (19). Mary Hocks emphasizes that, in this communication environment, “students need to learn the ‘distanced’ process of how to critique the saturated visual and technological landscape that surrounds them as something structured and written in a set of deliberate rhetorical moves” (645). Specifically, then, we need to help FYC students in our writing programs understand and enter the process by which knowledge is produced and consumed in the twenty-first century - a process that is so intense, pervasive, and influential that McLaren and Hammer call it “media catechism—perpetual pedagogy” (106).

Because of this new process by which knowledge is produced and consumed, for new TAs who, with their students, are engaging multiple literacies in their FYC classrooms, we need a broader understanding of pedagogy, one that flexes beyond what Giroux calls simply “the mastery of techniques and methodologies,” to an understanding of “pedagogy as a configuration of textual, verbal, and visual practices that seek to engage the processes through which people understand themselves [. . .] *expanding the possibilities for democratic life*” (Giroux, “Is There a Place” 52, emphasis added).

Such an expanded and vital definition of pedagogy necessarily invokes critical composition pedagogy's possibilities in a multiliteracies environment, and importantly, reminds us to regard critical composition pedagogy as a process that an instructor develops, not as a finished condition that can then be imparted to one's students, helping ultimately, I believe, to develop TAs who feel more successful, confident, and independent.

NEW TAs AND CRITICAL COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY

Although I have found, over the course of ten years of teaching and mentoring new TAs in our large FYC program, that they are strongly attracted to critical composition pedagogy, evidence (both anecdotal and scholarly) shows that, for many reasons, these newest instructors tend to lean too heavily on more familiar but less progressive, current-traditional notions of teaching writing (Bishop, 1990; Duffelmeyer "Learning to Learn"; Klem and Moran 1992). Some of their pedagogical conservatism no doubt results from the lack of authority and confidence they feel as new instructors, but it is also surely attributable to conflicting accounts in the literature of others' experiences with critical pedagogy. Some of these accounts can be described as unalloyed success stories that present a "complete and contained vision of commitments and goals," without providing concrete ways to realize that vision (Lee 5). Durst's compelling *Collision Course*, on the other hand, recounts the primarily negative experiences of one TA and her class, stemming from what Durst sees as an underlying mismatch between the career interests of the students and the civic and cultural interests of the instructor. Durst ultimately rejects the false dichotomy between what he refers to as "instrumentalism and understanding" (177) that can present an obstacle—what Ann George calls "bamboozlement" (92)—to those who believe in helping students develop the analytic skills and predilections to look at the world in a more complex way. Even experienced teachers have angst about whether their pedagogy is either oppressive in imposing a particular political agenda on students or, conversely, not "radical" enough by failing to result in real-world changes effected by their students after a single semester of FYC. Thus, George poignantly calls for ways of thinking about critical composition pedagogy that release us from unrealistic "radicalness requirements," adding that "there's a place in critical pedagogy for the not-yet-radical among us, although it's a place that remains unimagined in the scholarship" (104).

I suggest that, because of the exciting opportunities attendant on the changing notions of text and literacy and the fresh and valuable role TAs play in composition teaching and in curriculum development, as described above, TAs and their WPAs and mentors are uniquely positioned to "imag-

ine” this place in the scholarship by providing what Lee calls the “real stories of our teaching” (8). It is vitally important to explore the perceptions and experiences of new composition TAs as they think through and incorporate critical composition pedagogy in their classes with the guidance of a mentor and the support of a peer community of TA colleagues. Using qualitative research methods, I conducted such a study with five TAs (each teaching two sections of FYC), exploring with them specifics of their engagement with critical composition pedagogy as new instructors of FYC at a major midwestern university.² In contrast to studies that document *student* reactions to critical pedagogy in primarily *print*-based composition classes, this study focuses on the experiences of new composition TAs and their work in integrating *multiliteracies* with critical composition pedagogy. After a brief overview of the reasons these five new TAs felt critical composition pedagogy is important to their teaching of FYC in an increasingly multiliteracies curriculum, I describe the decisions the TAs made as they confronted central issues in their pedagogy (assignments, instructor persona, student reactions). Because this study has implications for ways WPAs and mentors can support TAs in these efforts, I conclude with suggestions for TA development programs.

UNCOVERING REAL STORIES OF NEW TAs AND THEIR EXPERIENCE WITH CRITICAL MULTILITERACIES COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY

I recently taught an advanced composition pedagogy seminar in which we deliberately focused our reading, discussions, and assignments on concrete ways to realize the sort of pedagogy George suggests, that is, a realistic and sustainable “imagination” and enactment of critical composition pedagogy as suggested by the critical compositionists highlighted earlier (Durst, George, Lee), namely, the exploration of cultural influences on identity and development of skills to demystify texts. I invited five TAs from this seminar—two women and three men—all of whom were still considered novice TAs; four were in their second semester of teaching FYC in our program (Amanda, Brenda, Chad, and Greg), and one was in his second year (Gene). All five were teaching two sections of FYC, totaling 52 students per instructor. I selected these five to participate in the study with me because each could bring valuable insights to our combined, unfolding understanding of the experience of enacting critical composition pedagogy among novice TAs. For instance, although all first-year TAs are provided a general syllabus to use for FYC and each is allowed to customize it, these five TAs had shown the inclination to be experimental in their teaching, finding ways to balance their natural anxiety about doing something new with their strong desire to teach in ways that were meaningful and exciting to them and to

their students. These inclinations and interests were discerned by more than one factor, including my knowledge of the TAs from their first semester of work in our program (I team-teach the required proseminar they took in their first semester and had been a mentor to two of the five). Written and oral comments they made early in the seminar about their beliefs about composition instruction also helped identify them as prospective participants in this study.

Data collection included acquiring these TAs' educational autobiographies, teaching materials and accompanying rationales and presentations completed for the seminar, as well as conducting individual interviews with all five participants, in which they discussed their specific experiences with critical composition pedagogy in their own classes, providing access to "the real stories" of their teaching. The interviews were held late in the seminar semester, concurrent with or immediately following the TAs putting at least one concrete critical composition pedagogy assignment into practice in their own sections of FYC. 3 Analysis of these several kinds of data revealed important points of intersection in four areas of obvious interest to new TAs enacting critical composition pedagogy in a multiliteracies FYC curriculum. The analysis is of equal interest to WPAs and mentors, for it points to emphases we need to consider as we support their theorizing and enacting of this pedagogy in their FYC classrooms: 1) developing assignments and activities that meet the goals of critical composition pedagogy and remain appropriate for the general objectives of FYC; 2) facilitating students' skills of close reading and analysis and transferring those to development of students' own texts (written, oral, visual, electronic); 3) projecting an appropriate instructor persona; and, closely connected to the persona, 4) handling student apathy or student resistance.

CRITICAL COMPOSITION PEDAGOGY AND THE NEW TA: "I'M INVOLVED IN SOMETHING PROFOUNDLY PRACTICAL AND PROFOUNDLY IMPORTANT."

Each of the five TAs mentioned three overlapping areas of concern and objectives for their students, concerns that fueled their desire to pursue a pedagogy that would engage positively one or more of these areas. The three areas are obviously connected, but a separate description is necessary, for each TA had something specific to say about one or more of these three common concerns and objectives, and each area contributed to each TA's passion about critical composition pedagogy in a multiliteracies FYC curriculum. All five TAs in this study perceived what, to them, was their students' lack of basic civic information, a deficiency that contributed to students' lack of interest in civic discourse and removed their will to participate in these discourses even at a micro-level. Closely connected to this lack of

specific interest, the five TAs also mentioned a more general apathy in their students (described as an “I don’t care” attitude). Finally, the TAs were all concerned about their students’ stated feelings of powerlessness, alienation, and a lack of agency.

In discussing ways they might address these common areas of concern within the FYC curriculum, 4 the five new TAs in this study indicated they had been particularly affected by certain authors they read as part of the work of the seminar. For instance, as Brenda put it, they were “blown away” by Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which George describes as the “ur text of critical composition pedagogy” (93); none had read it before this seminar. The TAs described being strongly affected, as new university instructors and with fresh memories of their own recent experiences as high school and undergraduate students, by Freire’s description and rejection of the banking model of education. As a result of that and other seminar readings,⁵ all five participants reported a determination (I call it a passion) to create classrooms for their students that did not encourage such passivity and did not cast the students as “spectators” (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 75), but which instead involved their students in active creation of knowledge while instructors served as facilitators.

Lack of Interest in Civic Discourse. Valuing of civic discourse was common among all the new TAs in this study; indeed it was the concern or objective most frequently mentioned for two reasons: civic discourse has overarching connections to the communication ecology environment, and it is particularly this use of language that connects our students to their larger world and to their potentials, as the statements of critical compositionists like Durst, George, and Lee assert. Thus, all five TAs were concerned about their students’ ability to see themselves as active citizens in a participatory democracy. Gene, for instance, a former undergraduate journalism major with a strong interest in the social sciences, expressed his strong interest

[. . .] particularly in government and history classes. As a result of this I have a keen interest in politics and the democratic process. This latter led me into a career in journalism and *has now resulted in a career change to teaching*. The respect for the [democratic] process and for free speech and participatory government has caused me to identify strongly with the concepts and ideas expressed by Berlin in regard to literacy and its importance in a democratic society. (Gene; emphasis added)

Chad had a similar interest in American history and government as an undergraduate English and history major; he saw these interests as fueling his passion to “[. . .] give [his students] information from America’s past

while keeping relevant and current. By viewing historical works my students can *begin to see themselves in a process* while keeping their feet firmly on the ground”:

[. . .] I guess my “agenda” is that I want them to see themselves as not only students, not as spectators; I want them to see themselves as citizens in a democracy, because I really believe in that. But until we realize that we are, we just simply showing up to class. (Chad)

Similarly, Brenda expressed her belief that a course like FYC is a natural place to address her students’ lack of interest in civic discourse and that critical composition pedagogy is an eminently practical, as opposed to an assumed and necessarily “radical” way to begin to cultivate both a new, more mature interest and the skills necessary for students to begin to accomplish Lee’s “demystification” of texts (153) - as Durst says, to “develop ways of thinking about the world and their place in it (94). Brenda says, “I’ve arrived at teaching and learning about writing—about communicating ideas—a place where I feel like I’m involved in something that is both profoundly practical and profoundly important in the individual lives of students as well as society.” Both the notion of multiliteracy’s role in students’ understanding of the world and the TAs’ desire that students see themselves as more than spectators in the twenty-first century’s communication environment are at the heart of TAs’ concerns and objectives for their students.

Apathy. Early in her FYC teaching, Amanda expressed surprise and concern that her students seemed neither able to describe nor to be interested in basic differences in the major political parties in our country. Neither were they informed about nor particularly interested in what she saw as important current events, even those with the potential to affect students directly, such as a reinstatement of the draft. Amanda experienced this as a generalized apathy in her students - as did all of the TAs in this study - a baffling and frustrating general attitude TAs described as simply “I don’t care.” Amanda noted that “they had these beliefs, but they didn’t seem to know what they meant [. . .] like they had sort of inherited them.” Although Durst suggests that such an attitude is a function of student careerism, all five TAs in this study perceived it as stemming primarily from lack of information, lack of analytical practice, and from what students described as their feelings of “powerlessness.” Chad also commented on the “I-don’t-care” attitude of his students: “I could see that they were [. . .] quite complacent. [A]t first they were like zombies in my class—like math class! They were like, “Agh. I don’t care.”

Powerlessness. Intertwined with the TAs' perceptions of student apathy and the notion of "inheriting" beliefs but not understanding them or applying them meaningfully to their own lives is Lee's urging that our pedagogy help students "enter into the process of constructing meaning, rather than to believe it is done for [and] to them [. . .]" (153). Chad connected such passivity to Giroux's idea of a "fugitive culture"—a characterization of FYC students that Giroux describes as feeling little or no connection to the values and issues that a modern democratic society and system of government wrestle with, but instead "hav[ing] been shuffled into an in-between somewhere" (Chad), where they seem alienated, apathetic, and uninformed about issues that affect them. Because of their own experiences and resulting beliefs, supported by reading in theory, the TAs thus wanted to "support a pedagogy which draws from our students' experiences rather than isolates them and makes them feel out of place" (Chad).

An especially important implication of this student powerlessness in terms of multiliteracies was described by Greg, who, with his undergraduate degree in literature and film, brought to his FYC teaching a passion for the goal of "showing [students] the work, effort, and *intentionality* behind a text. I wanted to increase their understanding of 'Where does this stuff come from?' I don't want them to feel like, 'Oh, this professionally edited, slick, prepared material [. . .] is beyond my comprehension.'" Greg further describes his intent for his students as "simply to make them comfortable being critical with it [a text]. I think [. . .] *the more you see that process broken down, you are more comfortable looking through it or behind it.*" Much like Brenda's observation about critical composition pedagogy's being "profoundly practical and profoundly important" at the same time, Greg's summary of his underlying philosophy of learning and its connection to critical composition pedagogy is consonant with that of all the other new TAs:

The great shock is in learning that ultimately we have to decide, that is, to think for ourselves in life. Our parents, our church, our government, our friends cannot do it. The media cannot think for us. And along with this is the realization that our sources are flawed. (Greg)

EXPLORING STUDENT IDENTITY AND DEMYSTIFICATION OF TEXTS THROUGH ASSIGNMENTS, CRITICAL READING, INSTRUCTOR PERSONA, AND STUDENT REACTIONS

Assignments: Historical Documents. The course of which the TAs taught ten sections during this study is described in the current Iowa State University Department of English *Instructor's Manual* for our program as "[. . .] focus[ing] on the most intense forms of rhetoric—argument and persua-

sion [. . .] Students analyze arguments, they respond to arguments, and they construct their own arguments” (4). Students write summaries, rhetorical analyses, arguments, and documented research papers with an increasing emphasis on integrating oral, visual, and electronic literacies with the written. Working within these curricular parameters and also encouraging their FYC students to become more keenly interested in the cultural texts that surround them and affect their lives—a goal that also addresses the TAs’ concern about students’ alienation from and lack of interest in the cultural discourse that critical compositionists say shapes our identities and sense of our potentials—these five TAs had different ideas of how best to enact their pedagogy. Three (Amanda, Chad, and Greg) worked together, pooling their ideas and their teaching materials to turn history as a critical lens on the present because “[b]y opening students to ideas put forth in our country’s founding documents, they can begin to *see themselves as part of something*” (Chad; emphasis added). Brenda and Gene had other ideas, equally well theorized and carried out, to accomplish the same critical pedagogical objective: prompting students to look at how their subjectivities have been formed.

Using the Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, and Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* as starting points, Amanda, Chad, and Greg devised strategies to make these expressions of foundational American values meaningful to students, to demystify them in the way critical compositionists urge, encouraging their FYC students to become more aware of the process of their development of identity, worldview, and agency. Said Chad:

I am interested in politics [and history] and those sorts of writings. And I wanted to introduce them to the class [because] I could see that they were becoming quite complacent. Because at first they were like zombies in my class—like math class! They were like, “Agh. I don’t care.” So I showed them the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, because it is something that is theirs, it is part of our culture. It [is] hard to be complacent with it [. . .]. We started out by looking at the Declaration of Independence, looking at it line by line. And they came to enjoy it because it is calling on *them*, as citizens [. . .]. I was trying to dissuade them from this idea of “I can’t write. I have nothing to say.” (Chad)

Concerned about their students’ lack of knowledge about and interest in the cultural texts that surround them and implicitly form their subjectivities, Amanda, Chad, and Greg identified five terms that would serve as pivot points for the activities and assignments that would accompany their students’ analysis of the Bill of Rights, the Declaration of Independence, and Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*: these central terms were *justice*, *freedom*,

truth, democracy, and conformity. After analyzing and writing about what these documents say about these concepts, students then examined more recent events in different kinds of texts, representing different perspectives on these events than students were likely to have encountered. By choosing events that were “recent” (that is, within the lifetimes of the students) but not immediate, the TAs anticipated students would be somewhat interested in them, have some knowledge about them, but perhaps not be as invested in one viewpoint about them as about very current events; the TAs also, however, chose an essay by Arundhati Roy, “The Algebra of Infinite Justice,” about the then-pending war in Iraq, for a more recent event. A video about the events at Waco and an interview by Gore Vidal with Timothy McVeigh presented students with the opportunity to move from their critical reading of the historical documents and their inferences about the key terms in those materials to thinking about the terms in light of these very different contemporary texts. These activities led to summaries, rhetorical analyses, and research papers in which students explored an idea (rather than providing the routine pro-con arguments), applying their enlarged understanding of these terms, so central to our civic and cultural discourse, to a question or issue of interest to them.

Assignments: Visual Texts. Brenda and Greg used visual texts (either by creating them, analyzing them, or both) as pedagogical space, seeing this approach as especially necessary to helping students understand how the texts that surround them reflect and reinforce cultural messages about who they are, what we value, and what is possible. Toward this end, Brenda asked her sections of FYC to “consider how senders of a message, particularly advertisers, capitalize on cultural knowledge and create and re-create cultural knowledge through the use of visual communication in popular culture” (Brenda). Brenda showed her classes media ecologist Douglas Rushkoff’s PBS-TV *Frontline* documentary *The Merchants of Cool*, a thought-provoking, even alarming, look at ways marketers target teens to create business profits—heightening their desire for certain clothes, music, and lifestyles - desires which then are made to seem natural even while what they consider “cool” constantly changes. After the video, Brenda asked students to revisit an essay they had written earlier in the semester: an analysis of their own image. The image-analysis assignment originally asked students in effect to look in the mirror and consider “What am I trying to say with how I look (dress and present myself visually)?” Although in their earlier responses, Brenda’s students had for the most part insisted that their “look” was a purely individual, unconstrained choice, and certainly not the result of any media or advertising influence, after viewing *The Merchants of Cool*, many of her students were surprised and even indignant at the extent to

which they were quite personally made vulnerable to marketing manipulation. Brenda noted that particularly the women “talked in terms of being *angry* about it,” and many of the resulting revisions of the essays, Brenda felt, demonstrated Lee’s goal of encouraging students to begin to “acknowledge [. . .] their concepts of self, other, world as constructions, that is, as one concept among a range of choices” (153).

Taking critical engagement with the visual a step further, Greg’s students actually created visual arguments, but rather than asking them to “sell” a consumerist product or service, he asked them to create an ad promoting an idea (often one connected to a social justice issue). Part of his classes’ preparation for this was to study Goya’s painting *The Third of May, 1808* as a historical example of a visual argument. In response to this assignment, Greg’s students created and presented to the class some very compelling and insightful ads for peace, Title IX, “safer” sex, and environmentalism; they also wrote reflective essays about their composing processes (visual, oral, and electronic) and their thinking as they constructed their own visual arguments. When I asked him if a project of this nature seemed daunting to students because of the multiliteracies involved (oral, visual, electronic, and written), Greg said, that on the contrary, they seemed to be engaged in it because they could connect with it:

This is something very exciting to me: *It has to come from them*. It has to be what they’re interested in, and if they’re interested in it, the technology is not an issue, the research is not an issue, the homework is not an issue, the effort is not an issue—because it’s theirs and they have ownership. And if it’s not, then you might as well just play the game. (Greg)

Rather than just “playing the game,” FYC students in the five TAs’ classes clearly were reading actively and analyzing the texts that shape their lives; they began to make inroads into some of the apathy and powerlessness the TAs had been concerned about, and doing so in ways arising from the passions and strengths of each individual TA.

Critical Reading. As the above section indicates, all of the assignments these TAs created depended integrally on critical reading of texts in various media (print, video, electronic, and single visual images). Pedagogically, the TAs were guided by Jane Gallop’s notion of “ethical” close reading:

Reading what one expects to find means finding what one already knows. Learning, on the other hand, means coming to know something one did not know before. Projecting is the opposite of learning. As long as we project onto a text, we cannot learn from it, we can only find what we already know.

Close reading is thus a technique to make us learn, to make us see what we don't already know, rather than transforming the new into the old. (Gallop 11)

This concept of the purpose and process of reading complements critical composition pedagogy perfectly because it slows students down and encourages them to make the familiar strange by asking them to consider carefully what is actually present on the page, screen, and in visual forms, not what they assume is there and what they assume it means. Therefore, following Gallop's notion of reading-as-learning rather than reading-as-confirmation-of-existing-beliefs, Amanda's, Greg's, and Chad's students came to a more sophisticated understanding of the key terms (justice, truth, democracy, etc.) by engaging with the content of the historical documents in ways that did not permit reading-as-projection. For instance, her students' work with the Declaration of Independence, was successful, Amanda believed, because it encouraged her students to think about documents and core American values they thought they already knew all about:

We went line by line. I asked them, "What is this document *saying*? Does it allow for rebels? What is it saying about conformity? About truth? What is it saying about freedom?" They were really shocked at what it said, because [these documents] say, basically, that Americans have the right to overthrow the government. One student said, "Isn't that what they call treason?" I said, "In today's society, yes, it would be." So it worked. (Amanda)

Through Gallop's process of "seeing what we don't already know," Chad's students came to a similar realization about the suggestions that these selected historical documents make about our values:

It [the Declaration of Independence] shows [. . .] that we were founded on radicalism; we didn't like being told what to do. So I asked them, "How do our society or our elders feel today about radicals and people who question the government?" And they said, "They don't like it." I said, "Well, what would Jefferson have said about that?" I had them read a little bit of Tom Paine's *Common Sense* because I wanted them to see a "good" radical; I didn't want them to think that a radical is just someone like Timothy McVeigh. Paine was someone who challenged the government and his ideas helped get the Declaration of Independence written. (Chad)

Gene also addressed the objective of helping his students develop the habit of looking beneath the surface of cultural texts and messages, so that they wouldn't accept a monolithic version of events (one official version of reality) as their only interpretation of the world. Gene says that, for instance, "the news is often presented to the American people as if it is gospel. And with my journalism background, I want them to understand that. I want them to know they have to be a little more skeptical, and that one source of information is usually not enough." Gene jokingly recounted to me a conversation with one of his students who had happily told him her "research" was going quite well because all the sources she had found agreed with her already-decided-upon point of view on the topic. He told her that she ought to be worried about that much agreement, that her view of the issue was not being challenged at all, and to dig deeper.

Having an undergraduate education in journalism and mass communication, Gene stated, "has also helped engender an appreciation for the application of popular culture and visual communication techniques and analysis to literacy studies." For instance, Gene noted that "students today are becoming more visually oriented." With his concern - heightened by his journalism background - about students assuming what they find in media sources and on the Internet as Truth, Gene spent a significant amount of time in classes helping his students realize the need for analysis. He then taught them to develop strategies of careful analysis of information, especially visual information, found on the Internet. Dissatisfied with the formulaic lists of criteria for judging the reliability and credibility of Web sites, Gene pushed his students to a deeper critical engagement with the sources they chose for research projects, reflecting his abiding goal of encouraging his students to "look beneath the surface [because] while those checklists are good, I also pointed out [. . .] that a site may on the surface meet all those criteria and still not be any good."

Using a Web site that espoused the supposed accuracy and value of Hitler's views, Gene's students explored how, in all regards, from page layout to visual presentation of the author and his "credentials" to the use of a scholarly-looking presentation of "facts," the site looks authoritative and trustworthy. All the visual cues were in place for the uncritical reader to absorb this particular text without questioning its reliability and validity, unless a reader was *already* predisposed to question it (Gallop's "finding what we already know"). Gene's students realized that they had to dig beneath the authoritative visual appearance of the site to analyze the text and context. For instance, Gene's students discovered that the author's credentials were not at all relevant to the subject and that his claims, when read carefully, were clearly outlandish: "I pointed out that the Hitler Web site makes a very big

deal of presenting the information non-judgmentally[. . .] it is given an overlay of credibility” (Gene). Gene’s students clearly had to engage in ethical, close reading to move beyond their expectations triggered by certain visual cues, and he indicated that their resulting research papers made better use in general of sources of all kinds, because students had begun to develop the idea of reading to learn, not projecting—and more important, had begun to apply it to their own projects.

Helping FYC students to engage in critical reading of both print and visual documents worked for the TAs as one way to realize Lee’s objective of assisting students to see that meaning is constructed. Certainly, as Foreman and Shumway suggest, we look at a visual text as an “assemblage organized [. . .] into a coherent perceptual whole” which will “be grasped quickly as a total gestalt and its aspect as assemblage will be effaced” (252). Thus, as Brenda asserted, carefully identifying all the elements of any text is absolutely essential to arriving at more than the culturally privileged “assemblage” of meaning:

By ask[ing] students to slow down the process [. . .] even if it might seem easy and “obvious” to just jump right into meaning, if we slow ourselves down and rather than say “What does it mean?” *then we have an opportunity to notice absolutely every little thing that’s there* before we get excited about what it might mean. (Brenda)

Clearly, this skill as enacted by the new TAs is important for students who learn in a world of multiliteracies and media inundation, because of what Greg (echoing Barry’s *Visual Intelligence*) called our characteristic “mode of defense against [such] bombardment. I see this as a way of sort of backtracking through that defense.” Reading-to-learn increases the potential for students to open up meaning, rather than prematurely to close it down, to analyze what would otherwise be hegemonically effaced. Even as novice instructors, these TAs developed their own ways to bring this skill into the FYC classroom in ways meaningful to them and their students.

INSTRUCTOR PERSONA AND STUDENT REACTIONS

The last two areas of TA concern and objectives are most productively discussed together because concerns about instructor persona and student reaction to critical composition pedagogy, at least as these TAs talked about them, are really two sides of the same pedagogical coin. In considering these two issues, the five TAs of this study clearly felt most acutely Lee’s description of critical composition pedagogy as a “complicated and uncertain process” (8). However, it is also precisely at this point of greatest complication and uncertainty for novice instructors that I believe they also most effec-

tively and thoughtfully advanced their responses to George's call to create that "unimagined place" in the scholarship for those who believe we can effect change in our students' ways of thinking without creating an unrealistic (and perhaps self-defeating) "radicalness requirement" (104).

As an important step in encouraging students to develop the critical process described by Lee and other critical compositionists, the five TAs were united in wanting to bring to their students' attention some ideas and materials that some classmates might consider controversial. This objective can be seen even in the necessarily limited samples of their assignments and activities provided here. However, a common, concurrent concern among the TAs was that their students would think they were being "indoctrinated" toward a particular view on political issues, that is, that the TAs had another, subversive agenda they were implying students should adopt. This raised attendant concerns among the TAs that these students would openly challenge or resist their instruction in ways that as new instructors they would not be able to handle effectively; for example, these new instructors tended to worry about large, whole-class discussions that could degenerate into fruitless arguments of shouted opinions. The TAs thus tended to avoid large-group discussions, favoring using smaller groups that would focus on textual analysis rather than on questions of "right and wrong." More serious to these TAs, however, was the concern that student reaction to perceived manipulation would result in entrenchment of existing, impermeable student worldviews, thus defeating the goals of critical composition pedagogy altogether.

These new TAs found the best approach to their concerns about negative student reactions to critical composition pedagogy was to adopt as a standard practice the pedagogical habit of being transparent about what they were doing and why; they also decided to share with students that instructors and "authorities" often have changing, conflicting, or ambiguous views about some issues. For instance, Greg said, "I try to present the idea to them that my own views do change, and they change all the time. And I also told them, 'I want you to know that you influence me, and I think that's a good thing.'" Citing Freire, Chad stated that he wants his students to "view education as a process and not a destination," and all five of these instructors, for these reasons, stated that they felt most comfortable taking a fairly non-authoritarian role in their classrooms. While this willingness to share authority might seem intuitively to be difficult for a new instructor, these TAs' experiences support the contention that this is an element of critical composition pedagogy that inexperienced TAs should be encouraged to integrate into their teaching—giving up, in other words, the very intimidating notion of needing to be the absolute authority. For instance, Amanda described this characteristic in her pedagogy when she said,

I want to learn something. I told my students that this is their opportunity [research papers based on five key terms] to learn something and then teach me. I don't know everything there is to know about all these topics. I am not an expert on all these topics. So, #1, I don't like to read boring papers. And #2, I am a pretty flexible teacher. I remember - for a teacher education class and then for a cooperating teacher - having to map out everything I was going to do in terms of minutes each activity would take. And I wanted to just scrap this because I don't think it ever works. My students always take me someplace else. (Amanda)

When I said that I thought this attitude and experience would be tremendously reassuring to new TAs who are "worried about standing up there and not having 'an answer,'" Amanda agreed: "My students have told me explicitly that they respect me more because I admit that I don't know everything."

Chad also described this element of his pedagogy when he characterized the classroom as a community to which the teacher and the students all contribute:

And I really believe in that. The only authority I ever take is leader or resource. I'm interested in this stuff and I feel that I'm still learning. It's not that I feel inadequate in the classroom, but there are some teachers who seem to know everything. So I feel like by doing this [critical composition pedagogy], I'm not *teaching* them necessarily, but, it sounds sort of idealistic, but [. . .] if I go in the classroom and *share* with them, it goes a lot better than if I "*teach*" them. If I had said, "I'm going to *teach* you today about the Declaration of Independence," that would have been a horrible class. But when I say, "Look at this!" *they realize they have really never seen it before*. If I did it like "banking," that would be awful and then they would hate the Declaration of Independence. But if *they see* that it's written for them—the wording *shows* it is written for us—it explains what our country is founded upon and what is expected of us. (Chad; emphasis his)

Conceiving of their roles as guides and resources—and articulating their willingness to learn (indeed, as new instructors, they *are* learning!)—was extremely important to these TAs' comfort levels with their new role as TAs and with their critical composition pedagogy. These new TAs felt that reframing their roles helped avert some of the possible negative student reactions they worried about. For instance, as mentioned above, after the

analysis of the Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, and *Common Sense*, Chad, Amanda, and Greg moved to more recent historical events that strongly influenced our country's consciousness but about which their students either knew very little or had only a generic, hegemonic understanding. These new TAs chose three contemporary texts to complement their work with Paine, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights; in doing so, they hoped to challenge students to deepen their understanding of events in recent American history that had been largely unproblematized in the public view. As Gallop says, TAs want students to "see what [they] don't already know, rather than transforming the new into the old" (11). These texts were Gore Vidal's 2002 essay, "The Meaning of Timothy McVeigh"; a 1997 video, *Waco: The Rules of Engagement*; and Arundhati Roy's 2001 essay "The Algebra of Infinite Justice," about the then-pending war in Iraq. These three TAs said their purposes in using these texts were several. Not only does each contemporary text comprise an argument and support it in different ways, they all present less promulgated and more nuanced views than their students would likely have been exposed to before. In addition, the Waco video "showed them [students] the historical event in documentary form—film form—and not just reading, to let them see that you can form arguments in other than written texts" (Chad).

To understand the nature of these texts, the TAs' rationale for including them, and their concern about student reactions, TAs' thoughts about the Waco video and Vidal's essay are helpful:

[Students] had a fairly low awareness of Waco. They'd heard about it and they had a few ideas, but they hadn't really *seen* it. And the video was electrifying. I had to fast forward a lot, but if I had not used that [fast-forward feature] and then dismissed the class, I think they would have stayed as long as it took! This video is a documentary about, really, a civil war, in terms of our own models, and it's very shocking and very disturbing. It takes *all* the romance out of war, and it takes *all* the "us" and "them" out of war because then it's back to Pogo: "we have met the enemy and it is us." (Greg)

Chad felt his students were similarly intrigued by Vidal's essay but could not fully incorporate it into their previously monolithic, unquestioning view of the event:

They were interested in "The Meaning of Timothy McVeigh." Some of them said they don't know why Vidal would waste paper on Timothy McVeigh. And I was quick to say that I didn't think McVeigh should be a hero, but this is a well-written argument and a position they would not have been exposed

to before. We had some interesting class discussions. [. . .] they didn't like the *essay* because of what McVeigh had done. And I said, "Well, let's look at it for what the *essay says*. I understand that he did this horrible thing. But let's look beyond that." And I don't think they can sometimes. I don't know how you get them to sometimes. Their thinking is, "He did this monstrous act; government's good," and that's all they see. (Chad)

One possible response to Chad's concern - that students can't gain critical distance from what they disagree with and may then react only with resistance - was demonstrated by Brenda, who, in her work with students on analysis of visual arguments, adopted a strategy of directly asking and reminding students about their process:

"Now, *what is my goal* by having you look at these ads? Am I trying to get you to *demonize* these people?" My point in asking that is to remind them that I am not trying to get them to [completely change their worldview], but to say, "Hey, there's a *lot* going on here. Let's look at *all* of it: this part is honest, but this part is deceptive." So that, I hope, answers a lot of their questions about why I am doing this. (Brenda)

IMPLICATIONS

For our new TAs to succeed in our writing programs, we must move away from the paradigm and the language of TA *training*, favoring TA *development* instead, a shift that has also been called for in preparing new teachers to use computer technology (Duffelmeyer "Learning to Learn"). Contrasting the training and development paradigms clearly highlights the need for the shift, given the demand for multiliteracy and critical pedagogy emphases. Rather than advocating a one-time process of gaining a discrete and readily transferable set of skills and techniques—a view of TA preparation often held by new TAs but which may actually undermine the development of characteristics the profession values—teaching professionals and WPAs need to remind themselves and show new TAs that "teaching is an ongoing process of experimentation, critical and collaborative reflection and inquiry, and revision" (Lee 134, Duffelmeyer "Learning to Learn"). Etienne Wenger provides one of the best frameworks for thinking about the TA development process in his notion of communities of practice, asserting that

people in organizations contribute to organizations by participating inventively in practices that can never be fully captured by institutionalized processes [. . . and we want to] minimize prescription, suspecting that too much of it discourages the very inventiveness that makes practices effective. (10)

Thus, the literature of critical literacy for our undergraduate students neatly gives us a useful way to think of critical composition pedagogy for ourselves and our new TAs as well: just as critical thinking of the kind described by Giroux, Freire, Lee, and others, is a process to be used by FYC students, so too is the pedagogy to develop that thinking a process to be used by instructors. Internalizing the concept of critical pedagogy-as-process as a productive approach to their classrooms is particularly important for new TAs who are understandably anxious about their teaching. New TAs need to be reassured about their experiences and outcomes, not discouraged by the pressure to produce unrealistically transformative results—to understand, in other words, that creative, effective, *sustainable* teaching is a matter of experimentation within the boundaries set by curricular objectives, as well as reflection about and revision of those practices. Many scholars have said the outcome of critical composition pedagogy is not intended realistically, or perhaps even ideally, to radicalize students. Rather, an attainable goal for new TAs and one that comports well with the rhetorical, civic, and cultural missions of many first-year writing programs is to provide many opportunities for FY students to become more aware of ways their identities have been formed by unexamined cultural texts, without pushing an agenda of radicalizing their politics (Durst; George; Lewis and Palmer; Thomas).

In various ways, these new TAs' forays into critical composition pedagogy reflected and reinforced the expanding pedagogical space in which we, our new TAs, and our students actively work. Describing this space, these TAs' experiences in it, and the theory that supports their work is an initial response to George's call for imagining this place in our scholarship. As WPAs and mentors, we can assist in our TAs' process by providing examples of critical composition pedagogy in a multiliteracies curriculum in our TA seminars, by asking TAs to acquaint themselves with some of the theoretical material referred to in this article, by providing opportunities in each seminar for TAs to observe each other and the more experienced TAs, and by encouraging them to work together to create course-appropriate assignments around common interests, as Amanda, Chad, and Greg did in their teaching.

Finally, while we, as experienced instructors, may take for granted the ability to give up some authority, to experiment with different kinds of texts, and to offer material that will surprise students and challenge their world-

views, it is important in writing programs in the twenty-first century to remember that our new TAs may want their pedagogy to be a finished product—a perfectly timed and orchestrated “performance” (such as that which Amanda discarded) from their first day in the classroom. Thus, reflecting on the nature of their classrooms with peers and mentors—as the TAs in this study did—in ways that value the complexities and uncertainty of the “real stories of our teaching” (Lee 8) and which invoke Freire’s injunction to “search and re-search” (Pedagogy of Freedom 35) is an exciting pathway to sustainable, critical, multiple literacies in our writing programs today.

NOTES

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1. At our university, we are pursuing the additional programmatic change of extending what had been exclusively a first-year, two-semester sequence of composition classes into two, foundational communication courses extending over the first and second years; it will be followed by individual departments and colleges, in consultation with our faculty and graduate students, developing more communication-intensive courses at the junior and senior levels. In this way, we are working to provide students with a more continual and progressive communication-education experience that is linked meaningfully with their major and spanning their four years.

2. In fall 2002 (this study took place in the spring of 2003), Iowa State University enrolled about 23,000 undergraduate and 4,500 graduate students; of new admissions in 2002, nearly 88 percent were identified as white while African-American and Asian/Pacific Islander accounted for 2.6 percent each of all new admissions (Iowa State University Office of Institutional Research).

3. The TAs and I are well aware that one doesn’t “dabble” in critical composition pedagogy, using it for only one assignment here or there. However, precisely because of their novice standing and recent introduction to this progressive pedagogy, their design and implementation of these types of assignments could not necessarily infuse the entire semester. Indeed, the point of this study is to help new TAs enact critical composition pedagogy even though it may appear to more experienced instructors to be incomplete and tentative. All of the TAs, whose efforts are being followed this year (after their participation in this seminar and study), are now pursuing critical composition pedagogy from start to finish in their FYC classes. Said Amanda, who was teaching at a community college in the semester following this study,

Once I saw what worked and didn’t work, I was able to refine my approach to it and how I both teach and implement it into assignments. I’m doing very similar

assignments and readings in my [community college] class. I feel this approach to composition makes much better critical thinkers and ultimately thoughtful writers. (Amanda)

4. English 104 and 105 comprise the current First-Year Composition two-course sequence at Iowa State University. English 104 is described in the Instructor's Manual for English 104-105 as a course that "introduces students to the fundamentals of academic writing" through a sequence of assignments calling for "observing, inferring, concluding, analyzing, summarizing, synthesizing, and evaluating" (3). English 105 focuses on argument and persuasion and is aimed at "preparing students to participate in the academic life of the university." To this end "[s]tudents analyze arguments, they respond to arguments, and they construct their own arguments" in part through improving their "critical reading skills" (4).

5. The five new TAs also mentioned as highly influential of their developing understanding of critical composition pedagogy Berlin's *Rhetorics, Poetics, and Cultures: Refiguring College English Studies*; Lazere's "Teaching the Conflicts about Wealth and Poverty" and "Teaching the Political Conflicts"; and Smith's "Against 'Illegality': Toward a Pedagogy of Civic Understanding." These three authors write about FYC as preparation for and practice in civic discourse, offering not only rationales but specific strategies for engaging FYC students in the enterprise of becoming informed participant-citizens in a democracy. The new TAs also found Charles Hill's "Reading the Visual in College Writing Classes" influential and supportive in their critical composition ventures; he writes compellingly of the importance of incorporating production and analysis of visual texts into FYC, explicitly acknowledging the changing nature of literacy for citizens of a twenty-first century democracy.

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Plagiarism and Collaboration: Suggestions for “Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA Statement on Best Practices”

Amy Martin

Plagiarism is a perennial concern of professors across the curriculum who assign any amount of writing in their classes.¹ However, as Henry Wilson notes in a chapter of Lise Buranen and Alice Roy’s *Perspectives on Plagiarism and Intellectual Property in a Postmodern World*, institutional statements on plagiarism are often vague or nonexistent, leaving students and faculty confused about what behaviors constitute plagiarism (211–18). In the same volume, Edward White chastises institutions that do not recognize the complexity of plagiarism:

I get weary of self-righteous professors and administrators fulminating against immoral student plagiarists, when the institutions they represent and whose policies they shape have not taken the trouble to provide the information and guidance students need to avoid plagiarism. Indeed, we should all expect that much plagiarism will naturally occur unless we help students understand what all the fuss is about; many students simply are clueless about the issue and many faculty think the issue is simpler than it is. (207)

White goes on to note that as most colleges have a freshman composition requirement, a ready-made venue exists for instructing students about plagiarism. Yet he also states that such instruction must be reinforced by instructors of courses across the curriculum, or else students will fail to understand plagiarism or take it seriously as a universal academic offense.

In initiating discussions about plagiarism and plagiarism policies with their own faculty and with administrators and faculty across the curriculum, WPAs have an important document to support them—The Council of Writing Program Administrators’ “Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: The WPA

Statement on Best Practices.” The WPA statement defines plagiarism: “In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source” (1). The statement notes that most plagiarism discussions do not account for the fact that students may misuse or incorrectly cite sources in the course of their research-based writing. By extension, students who fail to cite or document sources correctly and who nevertheless make some attempt to acknowledge their sources have not plagiarized because their actions are not a deliberate attempt to mislead (2). In addition to outlining the responsibilities of students, faculty, and administrators regarding plagiarism, the statement offers suggestions for classroom practices that make plagiarism difficult, including discussing the conventions of different genres and disciplines with students with regards to writing and citation use (6).

Although WPAs and writing faculty have the WPA statement to support them, initiating discussions of plagiarism on college campuses can be difficult when faculty and administration are not unanimously invested in the value of writing across the curriculum and may hold definitions of and attitudes toward plagiarism that are as disparate as their academic disciplines, particularly when the issue is seen in terms of the value of collaboration in research and writing. In this essay, I will show the various definitions of collaboration that exist across disciplines at one college that had no plagiarism policy.² I will also discuss the implications of these definitions for WPAs who may be relying on the WPA plagiarism statement to guide them and their institutions as they attempt to define plagiarism across the curriculum.

THE STUDY AND THE PARTICIPANTS

To determine their definitions of plagiarism, I gave faculty at a small Catholic college (“SCC”) a survey adapted from one designed by Phillip Marzluf, formerly of the University of Oklahoma. The survey asked instructors to rank nine hypothetical writing scenarios along an ethical continuum from “completely unethical” to “not plagiarism,” categories which were then abstracted during analysis into the three categories of “unethical,” “ethical,” and “not plagiarism.”³ Faculty members received the surveys through campus mail, and I instructed them in an accompanying letter to return the surveys to me by a specified date. To protect subjects’ anonymity, the survey instrument requested that instructors identify themselves only by their academic disciplines. For the purposes of analysis, I categorized faculty responses by disciplinary affiliation and placed them into one of three cat-

egories: humanities, social sciences or sciences.⁴ By the end of the semester-long period of data collection, twenty-eight of sixty-eight full-time professors had responded to the survey.

WRITER-TEXT COLLABORATION

Four scenarios in the survey feature students working with text within and outside the traditional research paradigm of incorporating sources into their work. For example, in scenario 1, Kathy develops her own text using her friend's text on a similar subject as a source. However, we do not know within the context of the scenario whether or not Kathy acknowledged her friend's paper as a research source. The SCC faculty as a whole clearly made a distinction between Kathy interacting with her friend's text versus Kathy interacting with her friend through conversation while writing her English 115 paper; a majority of faculty across all disciplines rated Kathy's interaction with her friend's text as unethical, with 100 percent of social science faculty rating this scenario as such. Similarly, a strong majority of faculty across all disciplines rated scenario 5, in which Cody neglects to cite the author of the analysis of *The Tempest* on which he bases his analysis of *King Lear*, as unethical; scenarios 1, 5 and 9 (in the last of these, a student purchases a paper from the Internet) were the only scenarios that all professors rated as "unethical."

Cody and Kathy are not collaborating with other people but are using the texts other people have produced—a sort of collaboration once removed. With the invention of the printing press (and the mass market ability to publish writings that followed) putting a premium on the originality of ideas, the unacknowledged use of another's ideas—both within and outside the academy—became a punishable crime.⁵ Therefore, in academia, when students fail to acknowledge the ideas of others, they can suffer what Rebecca Howard terms the "academic death penalty," expulsion from school ("Plagiarisms, Authorships, and the Academic Death Penalty" 789). In the case of faculty, the unacknowledged use of another's ideas can result in another type of academic death penalty—denial of tenure and subsequent loss of employment.⁶ Given the severe academic penalties involved in participating in behavior similar to that of Kathy and Cody, the SCC faculty's strong response to their scenarios is not surprising.

However, given the emphasis that academia puts on originality, faculty responses to scenario 2 appear somewhat anomalous. In this scenario, Michael closely paraphrases and cites, albeit inappropriately, a passage from *The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia*. That is, according to Howard, Michael patchwrites (*Standing* xviii). While there has been considerable resistance to patchwriting in both popular culture and academia, SCC faculty appear

to be more receptive to the concept.⁷ For example, all science faculty viewed Michael's behavior as either ethical or "not plagiarism," and 63 percent of humanities and 80 percent of social science faculties accepted Michael's patchwriting.

The research of Miguel Roig suggests that although patchwriting has been maligned in academia, Michael may be writing according to models set forth by faculty. Roig, writing from the field of psychology, posits that professors "from certain disciplines, such as English, have stricter criteria for paraphrasing than professors from the hard sciences, such as chemistry and biology, and these [more relaxed] writing practices are somehow conveyed to students" (310).⁸ Roig conducted two studies to gauge professors' paraphrasing criteria: one study asked professors to compare original paragraphs to paraphrases, and the second study asked professors to paraphrase paragraphs themselves. Roig discovered that not only did professors' criteria for plagiarism vary within disciplines, but their ability to paraphrase was discipline-dependent, too. He notes that professors whose fields are different from that of the source text that they were asked to paraphrase may have felt forced to patchwrite (to use Howard's term) "to stay as close as possible to the original language to avoid conveying inaccurate information" (319). At the end of his article, Roig issues a call to action of sorts, noting that professors and administrators should turn their attention to the fact that "substantial differences" exist in the definition of plagiarism across and within disciplines (321). In light of Roig's study, the acceptance by SCC faculty—with the exception the English department—seems less an anomaly and more a product of the confusion that even professors seem to face when confronted with the questions of what constitutes appropriate paraphrasing and what constitutes plagiarism.⁹

Further evidence of faculty acceptance of patchwriting is also evident in their mostly positive responses to scenario 8, involving Lynn's imitation of *Catcher in the Rye*. Howard categorizes patchwriting as a form of *mimesis*, "a process of evaluating a source text, selecting passages pertinent to the patchwriter's purposes, and transporting those passages to the patchwriter's new context" (*Standing* xviii). In scenario 8, Lynn uses words and short phrases from *Catcher in the Rye* as she attempts to imitate the tone of the book in an essay for her composition course. The last line of the scenario suggests that Lynn is quite aware that while she wants to interact with and imitate the text, she also needs to be "careful" to avoid plagiarism. The tension that Lynn apparently feels about avoiding plagiarism in this circumstance reflects the shifting attitudes toward *mimesis* throughout history. While *mimesis* has little place in the contemporary academy that valorizes the individual and originality, Howard reminds us that *mimesis* has at times held sway in Western culture, most notably during the Middle Ages (*Standing* 64–66). The medieval concept of

mimesis is what Howard seeks to recover in her separation of patchwriting from plagiarism and is what best explains the interaction between Lynn and the text of *Catcher in the Rye*:

A common contemporary response to patchwriting focuses on appropriation—the patchwriter’s appropriation of the source. From this perspective, patchwriting is theft, a criminal act. But medieval textual theory reminds us that patchwriting’s merger of self is bi-directional: The patchwriter is acknowledging his writing persona as entailed rather than autonomous, and he is acknowledging the authority of the source text. (66)

In other words, Lynn’s patchwriting shows her indebtedness to the source text that helps her establish the persona she wants to get across to her English instructor, behavior that not only English instructors but their colleagues across the curriculum at SCC found acceptable.

While faculty had little problem with Lynn and Michael’s patchwriting, only humanities faculty viewed scenario 4 as either “ethical” or “not plagiarism”; in it, Sandra cites direct quotations but not facts “such as names, dates, statistics, and geographical facts” (Appendix) in a paper on the Vietnam War. While no specific information is given about the discipline for which Sandra writes her paper (although, given the subject matter, one could assume she is writing for a social science or humanities course), this scenario turns on a question that composition teachers often hear from students learning how to cite sources: “What counts as a fact?” As Margaret Price notes in her article “Beyond ‘Gotcha!’: Situating Plagiarism in Policy and Pedagogy,” the definitions of such concepts normally associated with plagiarism—terms such as “fact,” “common knowledge,” “collaboration,” and “ownership”—shift across time, discourse communities, and cultural contexts. To borrow an example from Price’s article to illustrate, most of us accept as fact the mathematical equation $2 + 2 = 4$; however, faculty whose primary discipline is mathematics would know that $2 + 2 = 4$ only if one is dealing with a Base-10 mathematical system. In other words, “facts are facts because they behave relatively stably within a given context, not because they possess inherent stability” (92). When faculty respond to Sandra’s citation practices, they do so through the lens of their respective disciplines’ perspectives about notions of fact and common knowledge, although that lens can be somewhat murky. For example, the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* states that writers have plagiarized if they have “presented facts without saying where [they] found them” (75); elements that do not have to be cited are familiar proverbs, well-known quotations, and “common knowledge,” yet “you must indicate the source of any information or material that you took from someone else” (73). *The Publication Manual*

of the American Psychological Association offers its associated disciplines no more guidance regarding facts and common knowledge than does the MLA, noting that exact quotes and paraphrases should be cited and that a writer should not “present the work of another as if it were his or her own work. This can extend to ideas as well as written words” (293–294). Given that the publication manuals have such general statements on what constitutes fact and common knowledge, and given the shifting nature of facts and common knowledge across time, community, and context, a consensus on whether Sandra is plagiarizing would be hard to come by, indeed.

COLLABORATION OR PLAGIARISM?

Collaboration by writers, whether in the workplace or academia, is certainly not a new concept. Yet as several composition scholars, among them Andrea Lunsford, Lisa Ede, and Karen Burke LeFevre, have pointed out, collaboration in composition studies has often meant collaboration as peer responses to a text a student has produced in isolation (Ede and Lunsford 7; LeFevre 13–22). Even in the sciences, where teams of researchers working and writing together on projects are more the rule than the exception, tension exists between individual and corporate ownership of a research project and the writing that reports that research.¹⁰

The tension between collaboration and individual ownership in writing is evident in the responses of the SCC faculty to the three scenarios (3, 6, and 7) that deal with a student interacting with another with regard to his or her writing. While a majority of faculty across disciplines agreed that Lysay behaved unethically in receiving editing help from her mother, a former English teacher (scenario 6), Frank’s behavior during his peer response session (scenario 7) and John’s behavior in turning to his girlfriend to help him with a conclusion to his English 115 paper (scenario 3) produced varied responses across disciplines.¹¹ While science faculty viewed John’s behavior as clearly unethical, humanities and social science faculty were less convinced of John’s transgression. And while science faculty also viewed Frank’s behavior as unethical, humanities faculty viewed his behavior as ethical; social science faculty rode the fence (Appendix).

While the SCC science faculty may value collaboration in their own professional writings, they regard any form of collaboration in their students’ writings with suspicion. On the other hand, survey respondents from the humanities are more receptive to the idea of collaboration in writing—except in Lysay’s case. A possible explanation for the humanities faculty’s response to these three scenarios lies in the particulars of the survey respondents. Of the humanities faculty who responded to the survey, nearly half were members of the English department, all of whom have taught the required

freshman composition courses at one time or another. If the scenario that features Frank also featured a description of what may take place during a peer response session in the typical composition classroom, the English professors would be more likely to rate Frank's behavior as ethical and rate the two "out-of-class" scenarios as unethical or state mixed responses to Frank's decisions. One English professor made comments on the survey that may explain why she thought her colleagues would view Frank's behavior as ethical but Lynsay's behavior as unethical:

My biggest problem with Lynsay's behavior isn't so much that she goes to her mother for peer response, but that her mother is an English teacher. That seems to give her an unfair advantage over other students. And it's a shame because what she's doing, seeking out feedback to her work, is what we seem to want to encourage in writing classes.

In other words, this teacher is happy that Lynsay is seeking feedback on her writing beyond the confines of the classroom. However, Lynsay has access to someone with more expertise in proofreading than her fellow students, which pushes her behavior into the realm of the unethical for this particular teacher.

Lynsay, however, not only has access to someone with additional expertise, but that someone, if one looks at the language of the scenario closely, is also appropriating her text. Lynsay and her mother are not engaging in "peer response," as suggested by the comments of the teacher quoted above. Her mother "reworks" her papers, leaving ideas alone but inserting words and altering punctuation. In other words, she is acting as Lynsay's *editor* rather than her *responder*, giving Lynsay assistance beyond what her fellow students could expect from fellow classmates and even from writing tutors, should they take the same assignment to SCC's Academic Resource Center.¹² Likewise, when John's girlfriend summarizes his paper and he writes that summary verbatim as his conclusion, she may have given him more assistance (or perhaps John has *taken* more assistance, since we do not know if she is present when John writes out her words) than John would have received had he gone for a tutoring session. We do not know enough about John's girlfriend (Is she an English major? Has she taken many writing courses?) to know how "expert" her summary of John's paper is compared to the editing done by Lynsay's mother.

ONE POLICY FITS ALL?

While all faculty agreed that a student purchasing a paper from the Internet (scenario 9) is plagiarism, the other hypothetical scenarios dealing with collaboration in its various permutations proved more problematic in terms of defining what behaviors constitute plagiarism. So how does an institution formulate its plagiarism policy?

While the WPA plagiarism statement explicitly addresses responsibilities of students, faculty, and staff with regard to the use of sources in writing, the statement offers individual departments and their institutions little guidance on how to address collaboration. While the statement consistently notes that academic writing conventions vary between and within disciplines—and so definitions of plagiarism will vary between and within disciplines—the statement does not explicitly address definitions of acceptable person-to-person collaboration other than noting that faculty should include “support for researched writing (such as the analysis of models, individual/group conferences, or *peer review*) into course designs” (3, emphasis added). In the “Best Practices” section, under “Explain Plagiarism and Develop Clear Policies,” the WPA statement does include the following passage about collaborating with the *written* work of others: “Remind students that the goal of research is to engage, through writing, in a purposeful, scholarly discussion of issues that are sometimes passed over in daily life. Understanding, augmenting, engaging in dialogue with, and challenging the work of others are part of becoming an effective citizen in a complex society” (4). Overall, however, the WPA statement offers little guidance to WPAs or to their colleagues across disciplines concerning acceptable collaboration within academic fields. Revising the WPA statement to define every allowable and unallowable instance of collaboration would be impractical (that is, saying “Editing from your retired English teacher mother is not allowed; however, using words and ideas obtained during a peer response session in your composition class is acceptable.”); however, including more specific language about what constitutes allowable collaboration would assist WPAs in setting the boundaries for plagiarism at their institutions and assist colleagues across disciplines in viewing writing as a social process. In Henry Wilson’s 1999 study of college plagiarism policies, 63 percent of schools surveyed had plagiarism policies that did not address issues of collaboration (213). While these institutions have policies that go beyond simple admonitions not to plagiarize, that their policies do not define what constitutes acceptable collaboration may be just as harmful as having no plagiarism policy at all. Wilson notes:

When students engage in such composition strategies as peer editing and tutoring—which are increasingly presented as essential collaborative writing strategies—blanket prohibition against “using the words or thoughts of others” can plant unwarranted suspicion in the minds of both teachers and students that something untoward may be occurring in their writing activities, even if these activities consist of the entirely ethical application of collaborative writing techniques. (215)

At the relatively few schools in Wilson’s study that have plagiarism policies addressing both plagiarism and collaboration, the lengthy and detailed policies “tend to work from a specific theoretical viewpoint, one that explicitly acknowledges that writing is inevitably a socially based process” (216). Many of these policies do not use the term “collaboration” but instead refer to writing center tutoring or peer response as acts that are encouraged and that do not constitute plagiarism.

I would argue that the WPA statement, which at seven pages is already lengthy, should be further lengthened to guide WPAs, our students, and our colleagues across disciplines about the boundaries of acceptable person-to-person collaboration—no easy feat, considering the responses regarding acceptable collaboration that emerged from my study of faculty across the curriculum in one small college. However, regardless of whether an institution has a WAC program, the differences in the interpretations of acceptable collaboration in writing point to a need for those of us in composition to continue or perhaps initiate discussions of plagiarism and collaboration with instructors in other fields. Although Lise Buranen writes about interpretations of plagiarism across cultures, her call to action applies to issues related to plagiarism and collaboration with our colleagues from different academic “cultures”:

[W]e must recognize, acknowledge, and continue our research and inquiry into the complexities and nuances of what we call plagiarism, while at the same time taking care not to send overly simplistic or conflicting messages to students, no matter who they are. We need to keep investigating, for instance, where we believe collaboration in the classroom ends and “plagiarism” begins, even if—or especially if—there are no easy answers to that question. (72)

To further Buranen’s point, we need to investigate what constitutes acceptable collaboration outside the classroom setting as well and to invite our colleagues across the curriculum to engage in these investigations with us.

Just as writing teachers—particularly those who teach freshman composition—frequently shoulder most of the burden of teaching college students about plagiarism, WPAs frequently shoulder the burden of advising an entire faculty about classroom practices that can avoid plagiarism. WPAs should be supported in this endeavor by a document that recognizes the complexities of appropriately incorporating sources into writing *and* recognizes the various conventions for collaboration that exist across disciplines and outside traditional classroom settings.

NOTES

¹ An earlier version of this article was presented as a paper at the Conference on College Composition and Communication in New York City on March 21, 2003. I would like to thank the students and faculty at SCC who generously donated their time to this project and Phillip Marzluf for his permission to use and alter his original survey.

² The institution under study has an academic integrity policy that forbids plagiarism (in addition to other dishonest practices, such as presenting false data and giving and receiving information on tests). The policy, however, does not define for students and faculty what acts constitute plagiarism. Required composition courses at this institution use Diana Hacker's *A Writer's Reference* as a standard text. Hacker defines plagiarism as "(1) failing to cite quotations and borrowed ideas, (2) failing to enclose borrowed language in quotation marks, and (3) failing to put summaries and paraphrases in your own words" (331). While all sections of composition courses use *A Writer's Reference*, no data exist to show whether students in these courses are specifically assigned to read Hacker's definition of plagiarism.

³ Survey respondents were advised to mark as "not plagiarism" scenarios which they felt no one under any circumstances would interpret as plagiarism. Respondents were directed to mark as "completely ethical" scenarios which they personally viewed as ethical but could foresee a situation in which another person might interpret the situation as plagiarism—in other words, the respondent felt that his/her personal ethical view of the scenario could be different from that of someone else interpreting the same situation.

⁴ SCC defines humanities disciplines as the following: English, fine arts, history, modern foreign languages, philosophy, and religious studies. Biology, chemistry, health and human services, mathematics and computer science, and nursing constitute the sciences, while business, communications, psychology, sociology, and teacher education are considered social science disciplines at SCC. The humanities had the most survey participants (11) while the sciences had the fewest (7).

⁵ For a more detailed discussion of the invention of the printing press and its impact on intellectual property, see Elizabeth Eisenstein and Mark Rose.

⁶ Thomas Mallon's *Stolen Words* devotes a chapter to a discussion of the "undoing" (151) of a Texas Tech University history professor because of plagiarism.

⁷ Howard detailed the criticisms in popular media and academia to her publications on patchwriting in a conference presentation entitled "Public Intellectual, or Public Object? Mass Media Representations of Plagiarism Scholarship."

⁸ Note that the SCC humanities faculty, composed primarily of English professors, had the highest number of "unethical" responses in this portion of the study, supporting Roig's hypothesis.

⁹ Ironically, in paraphrasing Howard's discussion of patchwriting, Roig misrepresents her position. Throughout "The New Abolitionism Comes to Plagiarism," which Roig cites as a reference, Howard argues that although patchwriting is "customarily regarded as a subset of the category of plagiarism" (89), it should be regarded instead as indicative of students' attempts to enter an academic discourse community, rather than as a transgressive act.

¹⁰ See, for example, the discussion of the human genome project research in Andrea Lunsford and Susan West, "Intellectual Property and Composition Studies."

¹¹ English 115 (ENGL 115) is SCC's required composition course.

¹² For a concise discussion of asking questions during tutoring sessions and the difference between tutoring and editing, see Paula Gillespie and Neal Learner.

APPENDIX

Assessments of Plagiarism Scenarios

1. Kathy is having difficulty finding a suitable writing topic for her final ENGL 115 paper. After discussing her problems with a friend, she finds out that her friend had to write a similar paper the previous semester. Using a draft of her friend's paper, Kathy rewrites it to make it sound more like herself. Also, she completely changes her friend's introduction and, in the body of the paper, includes some additional information.

	<i>Unethical</i>	<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Not Plagiarism</i>	<i>No Response</i>
Humanities	91%	---	---	9%
Sciences	72%	29%	---	---
Social Sciences	100%	---	---	---

 Note: The percentages given in these tables do not always equal 100% for a variety of reasons.

2. In *The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia*, Michael looks up some information on occupational disease for a paper and finds the

following summary: Occupational disease, illness resulting from the conditions or environment of employment. Some time usually elapses between exposure to the cause and development of the symptoms of an occupational disease. Among the causes of such diseases are toxic chemicals, such as benzene and dioxin. In a paper for his business communications class, Michael includes the following: Occupational disease is an illness resulting from job-related conditions. Usually, there is an elapse of time between exposure to the cause and development of the symptoms of this disease. Toxic chemicals, such as benzene and dioxin are common causes (*The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia*).

	<i>Unethical</i>	<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Not Plagiarism</i>	<i>No Response</i>
Humanities	36%	18%	45%	---
Sciences	---	43%	57%	---
Social Sciences	20%	30%	50%	---

3. John hates writing conclusions. Thus, instead of summarizing the paper himself, he reads his sociology paper aloud to his girlfriend and then asks her to briefly sum up the paper. He writes down exactly what she says and, after making a couple of grammatical changes, he includes this at the end of his paper.

	<i>Unethical</i>	<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Not Plagiarism</i>	<i>No Response</i>
Humanities	54%	36%	9%	---
Sciences	71%	29%	---	---
Social Sciences	50%	40%	10%	---

4. Sandra, a student writing about the Vietnam War, has collected over ten separate newspaper accounts depicting an important battle in preparation for a lengthy research paper. As she writes her description about this battle, she makes sure to include proper citations whenever she uses direct quotations from the newspaper articles. However, she doesn't cite the sources of facts such as names, dates, statistics, and geographical places.

	<i>Unethical</i>	<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Not Plagiarism</i>	<i>No Response</i>
Humanities	18%	36%	36%	9%
Sciences	43%	57%	---	---
Social Sciences	60%	20%	10%	10%

5. The assignment in Cody's English class asks to write a three-page interpretation of a Shakespeare play. Glancing through a book about Shakespeare, *Elizabethan Playwrights*, Cody finds an analysis of *The Tempest* that he likes. Cody then extends the analysis to write his

paper on Shakespeare’s *King Lear*. Although he cites the Shakespeare anthology he is using, he doesn’t indicate his use of *Elizabethan Playwrights*.

	<i>Unethical</i>	<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Not Plagiarism</i>	<i>No Response</i>
Humanities	90%	9%	---	---
Sciences	85%	14%	---	---
Social Sciences	80%	10%	---	10%

6. In her opinion, Lynsay feels that she has a lot to say but at the same time feels she can never find the right words to express her thoughts. All her sentences are always the same length and start in the same way. Her mother, fortunately, is a retired high school English teacher. She reworks Lynsay’s papers until they sound more professional and academic. “She only touches the grammar, and stuff like words and punctuation,” Lynsay says. “The ideas are mine. That’s the important part.”

		<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Not Plagiarism</i>	<i>No Response</i>
Humanities	82%	18%	---	---
Sciences	57%	28%	---	---
Social Sciences	80%	20%	---	---

7. In Frank’s ENGL 115 class, multiple drafting and soliciting responses to and editing of those drafts are requirements of the class; students work in groups during class time to respond to and edit each other’s papers. Frank’s usual partners, Erica and Gail, are recognized as the best students in the class; therefore, Frank feels that rewriting the final drafts of his papers and including the exact words and sentence structures that they suggest would be in his best interest. Incorporating their exact words and sentences structures is especially easy, since the instructor tells students to write, in a different color ink, directly on their group members’ rough drafts.

		<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Not Plagiarism</i>	<i>No Response</i>
Humanities	36%	45%	9%	9%
Sciences	72%	29%	---	---
Social Sciences	50%	30%	20%	---

8. Lynn’s favorite book in high school was *The Catcher in the Rye*. She liked the smart-alecky tone of the book and how the main character’s thoughts were depicted with mild swears and informal phrases. The first sentence of this book, for example, reads, “If you really want to hear all about it, the first thing you’ll probably want to know is where I

was born...and all of that David Copperfield kind of crap.” In her first paper for ENGL 115, a description of a real experience from her past, Lynn tried to imitate the tone of *The Catcher in the Rye*. Yet, though she wanted to make herself sound like the main character from that book, she was careful to only directly use single words or short, two-to-three word phrases.

	<i>Unethical</i>	<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Not Plagiarism</i>	<i>No Response</i>
Humanities	18%	36%	45%	---
Sciences	---	86%	14%	---
Social Sciences	40%	20%	40%	---

9. Ashley, a chemistry major, finds out that her final history paper is due on the following day. Since there is no time left to do research and plan her topic—and since she still has to study for her final chemistry exam—she can think of only one solution to her problem; she jumps on the Internet, finds the www.collegepapers.com site, and pays \$42.50 to download what is advertised as “the perfect paper.”

	<i>Unethical</i>	<i>Ethical</i>	<i>Not Plagiarism</i>	<i>No Response</i>
Humanities	100%	---	---	---
Sciences	100%	---	---	---
Social Sciences	100%	---	---	---

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Coming of Age as a WPA: From Personal to Personnel

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The storytelling that Stephen North has termed *lore* has become a viable mode of knowledge production for writing program administrators, whose scholarship frequently explores WPA work in light of personal experiences. As Diana George explains, storytelling “is necessary if we are to pass on more than theory and pedagogical or administrative tactics to those who come after us” (xii). Not surprisingly, autobiographical narratives have paid particular attention to the challenges faced by inexperienced WPAs (Goodburn and Leverenz; Leverenz; Mirtz et al.; Pemberton; Rhodes). Considered alongside research and position statements depicting program administration as a tenure liability (Barr-Ebest; Hult et al.; Micciche), such stories point to the very personal consequences awaiting new faculty who take on administrative responsibilities. Even as many of these writers probe the interpersonal relationships surrounding their work, it was easy for me, a new WPA and recent PhD reading their scholarship narratives without benefit of concrete work experience, to interpret them as stories of individual achievement, adversity, or both.

I certainly do not wish to hold these writers responsible for my own shortcomings as a reader; I do, however, believe that new and prospective WPAs—of whom there will be plenty, given market realities¹—need to begin their positions prepared to address the complex *interpersonal* relationships they will encounter, particularly with teachers in the programs they direct. Because administrators’ relationships with writing teachers represent a part of program identity that is inextricable from WPAs’ individual experiences, challenges, and successes, I would like to see the subject of faculty relations treated more explicitly in WPA scholarship, particularly if the interpersonal demands of administrative work are as opaque to others as they were to me.

To that end, this article proposes theories of management as a route toward cultivating a programmatic ethos that organizes faculty relationships. I begin by applying Thomas Peters's theories of corporate excellence to writing program administration, even though his business orientation may appear to contradict both the university's characteristic concern for individual accomplishment and composition studies' critiques of corporatization. I then relate selected encounters from my first year as a WPA, assessing these interpersonal exchanges through the lens of Peters's management theory. When WPA stories encompass the personal and the interpersonal, I argue, they pose a valuable site for reflection and professional development. While this awareness is useful to all WPAs, I conclude by suggesting that examining WPA work—and the published and private narratives through which we construct that work—in terms of personnel relations can be particularly valuable to recent PhDs-cum-WPAs, who, while navigating administrative work in the context of an unfamiliar environment populated by new colleagues, may unwittingly fail to pursue the relationship-building that is essential to program development.

LESSONS FROM MANAGEMENT

In light of higher education's decreasing job security and increasing reliance on flexible labor, looking to management theory for ethical guidance in WPA work may seem a curious, if not a spurious, choice. Indeed, the values systems into which composition PhDs have been socialized have a complicated and nuanced relationship to management. On the one hand, management and its association with teamwork and shared production seem antithetical to university reward systems, which typically demand individual achievement in the measurable form of single-authored publication. While composition as a field has long championed collaborative writing, university promotion and tenure guidelines have been slow to validate this work.² Perhaps more significantly, the term *management* may feel like a slur or an accusation, associated with the lingering specter of James Sledd's "boss compositionist" (275) and an ideology of capitalist individualism that recent materialist (Bousquet, "Composition"; Horner) and feminist (Schell) critiques of composition indict for sustaining inequitable working conditions.

Despite the apprehension surrounding discussions of management, individualism, and labor in rhetoric and composition, I want to suggest that management theory's emphasis on interpersonal relationships can help to create fresh concepts for WPA practice.³ I make this recommendation uneasily. Given Marc Bousquet's suggestion that "the managerial subjectivity predominates in composition studies" ("Composition" 494), I question whether I should be apologizing for invoking the potentially responsive, practical,

and creative implications of management theory. I am not encouraging WPAs to relinquish their criticisms of management and corporatization; on the contrary, I believe incorporating critique into our applications of management theory allows us to modify such theories according to our field's values and enhances our capacity for ethical leadership.⁴ With that goal in mind, I want to examine managerial trends over the last twenty years as presented in the work of Thomas Peters, whose attention to organizational culture resonates with the challenges WPAs face as they pursue program and faculty development. Because writing programs bear more resemblance to the fairly static institutional structures of the 1980s than to today's rapidly fluctuating corporate arrangements, I turn to Peters's early work with coauthors Robert Waterman and Nancy Austin as a means of considering WPA leadership.⁵

Writing in 1982, Peters and Waterman suggest that inattention to workers' knowledge has been a characteristic problem with management theory, which has been dominated by an abstract, "rationalist model" that "seeks detached analytical justification for all decisions" (29). Thought to ensure corporate productivity in both manufacturing and service industries, the rationalist style of management typically involves formal structures that exclude workers or merely pay lip service to their opinions. Managers, in turn, see themselves as responsible for making decisions and giving directions.

Peters's philosophy of leadership, articulated first with Waterman, then with Austin (1985), represents a shift away from the rationalist model. To that end, he and his coauthors offer practical strategies designed to assist managers in overcoming the institutional barriers that constrain their work. To cultivate authentic yet informal exchange, Peters and Waterman urge leaders to adopt Hewlett Packard's philosophy of "management by walking about" or MBWA (122). At one time a radical approach, Hewlett Packard's method requires managers to leave their offices, stroll the shop floors and lunchrooms, participate in casual conversations, and, above all, *listen* to what others have to say. MBWA's intent is not to control or monitor. It strives to create a climate of informal and spontaneous communication, comprised of the "irrational, intuitive, and informal" energies of managers and employees alike (Peters and Waterman 11). The 3M corporation has a similar approach:

At 3M there are endless meetings, though few are scheduled. Most are characterized by people casually gathering together—from different disciplines—to talk about problems. The campus-like setting at St. Paul helps, as does the shirtsleeves atmosphere, the no-nonsense Midwestern engineering backgrounds,

the inbred nature of the organization that ensures that people get to know one another over time. It adds up to the right people being in touch with one another very regularly. (Peters and Waterman 218)

As Peters and Waterman explain, the informal MBWA modeled by HP and 3M leads to transparent communication through which co-workers speak openly in the interest of problem solving: “The main reason people need not hide is that they talk all the time. A meeting is not a rare, formal—and thus political—event” (219). Although I’m uncomfortable with the notion that communication can be neutral or apolitical, particularly in environments marked by stark power differentials, Peters and Waterman make an apt point: if communication occurs consistently and informally, colleagues are more likely to exchange ideas without fear of reprisal.

For informal communication networks to thrive, managers must value employees’ expertise and emphasize “listening, trust and respect for the dignity *and* the creative potential of each person in the organization” (Peters and Austin 5). Put into practice, this philosophy of leadership manifests itself in town meeting styles of governance, in which leaders regularly ask for employees’ suggestions and reliably implement them. Peters and Austin insist that leaders “be meticulous in having meetings in other’s offices/spaces rather than [their own]” (32) so as to reinforce their support for others. A less formal way to convey a commitment to listening involves periodic social gatherings or “beer busts” (Peters and Austin 29). Peters also stresses the configuration of workspace in facilitating authentic exchange. He and Austin relate an anecdote about an executive who physically removed the door from his office, only to be outdone by a colleague who placed his desk in the reception area outside of his office (31). In these instances, Peters and his coauthors stress the need to eliminate overt and subtle signs of an us-them relationship. Peters and Austin consequently recommend that leaders regularly assess their “contempt/respect IQ” (208), a suggestion that showcases the extent to which even an unarticulated or unconscious attitude can shape workplace relations.

A skeptical reading of these practices might resemble Bousquet’s assessment of “Toyotism” or “soft management” practices, involving “partial worker autonomy and participatory management techniques with the aim of maximizing worker loyalty to the company with whom he or she feels a primary identity of interest, rather than [to the] other workers” (“Discipline” 920). Insofar as MBWA may elicit self-surveillance should employees assume they are being watched by those bearing institutional power, Foucault’s panopticon also comes to mind. While Peters and his coauthors do equate employee loyalty with the enhanced performance implicit in Bous-

quet's and Foucault's critiques, Peters, Waterman, and Austin take pains to dissociate themselves from strategies of management designed to garner an advantage over employees, even while they recognize MBWA's potential for this kind of abuse. Invoking the principle of integrity, Peters insists that his recommendations should foster the relationship-building typically omitted from discussions of management, rather than serve as "*tools* anyone can use to gain immediate advantage" (Peters and Austin 34).

Nothing in Peters's theory of management is particularly radical; Peters, describing his previous body of work, refers to it as "the technology of the obvious" (Peters and Austin 8), and experienced WPAs likely employ similar techniques on a regular basis. As much as Peters's suggestions resonate with WPA responsibilities, however, adjusting his advice into best practices for novice administrators poses substantive challenges, not least of which is WPAs' inability to offer the profit-sharing incentives through which corporate managers motivate employees. Even more frustrating is the extent to which writing programs staffed by contingent faculty and directed by a tenure-track WPA are founded upon the us-them hierarchy that Peters cautions against. As composition has defined itself as a scholarly discipline and PhD-certified researchers have taken positions as program administrators, new WPAs commonly find themselves supervising contingent teachers who have considerably more years of experience yet are "effectively disenfranchised as knowledge-makers" (North 23). Hiring practices, as WPAs have long acknowledged, further exacerbate these tensions. Like the chief operating officer who insists, much to Peters's and Austin's dismay, "You don't have to be all that bright to run a store" (203–04), upper administrators convey a similar philosophy, suggesting that "anyone can teach first-year composition" when they permit writing courses to be staffed at the last minute. Such inequality goes well beyond assumptions about contingent faculty members' intellectual credibility, as a comparison of WPAs and contingent workers' salaries, benefits, relative job security, office space, and other resources makes clear.

Though many WPAs recognize and accept their inability to effect comprehensive institutional change, even small-scale cultural change—developing informal communication networks, for example—can seem beyond our reach, especially if we are new to administrative work. Full-time and contingent faculty are more likely to have disparate professional goals than the managers and employees Peters discusses. Academic scheduling precludes shared time and space because faculty teach in different classrooms, at different times, on different days. Many writing instructors teach at second and even third institutions. Their offices—if they exist—are often inhospitable. When WPAs and individual faculty can meet in person, larger program-

wide communication networks seem nearly impossible to create, much less sustain, as are the informal social gatherings that Peters considers essential to excellence. While e-mail mitigates this challenge, it cannot substitute for face-to-face interactions.

In addition to—perhaps as a result of—these pressing logistical problems, mutual distrust and suspicion can be characteristic of WPA-faculty exchange. WPAs frequently hold contradictory roles as mentor and evaluator, advocate and boss. These inconsistencies manifest themselves in various ways. Writing faculty, for example, may hesitate to express their concerns or offer candid feedback to WPAs who could influence their future teaching appointments. In some cases, such as in rural areas with stiff competition for adjuncts, WPAs might act disingenuously, withholding constructive criticism or falsely flattering adjuncts as a functional strategy to staff classes. Institutional realities have a distinctly emotional character as well. Often younger and less experienced than the writing faculty with whom they work, program administrators may elicit complicated responses, possibly envy, from contingent faculty facing thwarted careers in a job market with a depressing labor surplus. WPAs, meanwhile, might harbor prejudices against teaching strategies that are inconsistent with the most recent theories, feeling powerless to change these methods yet resentful toward faculty who champion them.

As much as I would like to claim that management theory enabled me to negotiate labor inequity, cultivate an atmosphere of reciprocal trust, and promote excellence in teaching, I, like many others, will no doubt struggle with these challenges indefinitely. If Peters's work did not provide clear solutions, however, it did help me to reflect upon the mistakes I made as a new WPA, making me aware of what I might have done differently. In particular, Peters's theories of management helped me to view my interactions with contingent faculty in terms of ethical interpersonal relations rather than through the narrow parameters of my own subjectivity. Therefore, I now turn to my first year as a WPA, to examine my experiences through the lens of management theory. Through this critique, I aim to raise awareness of WPAs' need for practical guidance when negotiating relationships with contingent faculty. I hope that my discussion will pose strategies through which new and experienced WPAs might ameliorate the working relationships in their own writing programs.

MY LIFE AS A SECRET SHOPPER

After earning my PhD in summer 2001, I began an assistant professorship at Penn State Berks–Lehigh Valley College, a two-campus institution within the Penn State University system. I assumed the role of composition

coordinator one year later, in fall 2002. While Penn State University's Composition Program, housed at University Park, determines course descriptions, placement, and program policy for all locations, individual instructors may choose from among a list of approved texts and assignments, which they may supplement, and in some cases substitute, with other materials.⁶ My position consequently involves working with the ten to fifteen adjuncts, six full-time lecturers, and three to five tenure-line faculty who teach writing at Penn State Berks–Lehigh Valley in any given semester. The writing program typically offers fifty sections of first-year composition each fall, a third of which are developmental courses that carry no graduation credit. In addition to coordinating staffing, recruiting and interviewing prospective faculty, planning professional development events and monthly staff meetings, and overseeing the first-year writing award, my primary responsibility has been to provide mentoring and formative feedback to part-time writing instructors. These include current and retired high-school teachers, graduate students at a neighboring institution, former journalists, freelance writers, and parents raising young children.

Despite its hierarchical flavor, this emphasis on mentoring part-time instructors makes a certain amount of sense when examined in light of the college's institutional dynamics. All full-time English faculty are members of the Division of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS), our college's alternative to departments. As such, full-time faculty who teach writing report to the HASS division head, who evaluates them annually. Because part-time faculty members do not participate in any formal review process, I was asked, upon becoming composition coordinator, to "work with them on their teaching." That is a request that assumes their teaching needed work (an assumption I did not question at the time). As I understood them, my responsibilities involved visiting classes once a semester for continuing adjuncts and twice a semester for new teachers; visits were always announced, after which I would draft an informal feedback letter to the instructor. These letters were to be formative, and none were shared with the division head, who is ultimately responsible for offering and renewing part-time teaching assignments. I routinely invited faculty to meet with me for pre- or postvisit conversations, ideally both. Given our mutual scheduling constraints, however, most of these exchanges took place briefly or electronically.

By this time, I had read the cautionary tales of untenured professors taking on administrative work. I knew the workload would be daunting, if comparatively modest measured against that of larger schools, despite released time that adjusted my teaching load from three-and-three to two-and-two. Yet, like many other recent PhDs, I was willing to take on the role of WPA when I was a second-year tenure candidate. Conversations with col-

leagues lead me to believe that many new PhDs see WPA work as an opportunity to develop a scholarly identity beyond the narrow purview of the traditional research model. Many of us are drawn to program administration because of its invigorating mix of teaching, research, and administrative service, a synthesis consistent with Ernest Boyer's now familiar assertion that service, when "tied directly to one's special field of knowledge," produces new knowledge and should be viewed as scholarship (22). Interestingly, this new generation of WPAs, the same constituency the Portland Resolution discourages from becoming WPAs until they are tenured (Hult et al.), may participate in the "intellectual work of writing administration" early in their professional lives and may eventually contribute to a revision of the ways in which departments recognize and reward that work (Council of Writing Program Administrators).

I don't want to minimize the risks that program administration can pose for assistant professors' tenure and promotion or to dismiss the reality that untenured WPAs committed to improving the institution's writing curriculum may lack the authority to bring about change. Laura Micciche's and Kim Van Alkemade's discussions go far in explaining why junior faculty are so often assigned WPA responsibilities and why the practice continues despite widespread objection among compositionists. As Van Alkemade explains, such practices serve the interests of university administrators seeking "specialists" to improve writing instruction while simultaneously allowing tenured English faculty, who are not expected to answer to junior colleagues, to maintain their established methods of teaching writing (qtd. in Mirtz et al. 92). Similarly, Micciche points out that

[t]he typical assistant professor in such a position has little power, yet he or she is expected to be a quasi-departmental business manager and to offer some degree of guidance about writing instruction—though not *too* much—to experienced faculty and other teachers in English and across the disciplines. (434)

And so, suitably forewarned about the challenges I would likely face, the story of my life as a WPA began. As the following scenes—imagined as a whimsical film montage to disguise identifying characteristics—indicate, my experiences were not particularly distinctive:

Pan students, most wearing baseball caps and sweatshirts, talking noisily. Enter twenty-something female WPA, wearing tailored slacks and button-down blouse. Capped and sweatshirted male turns to her and asks, "Are you new? Do you want to look at my syllabus? The class kinda blows but he's supposed to be easy."

Cut to department hallway. Female writing teacher in late fifties talks with senior male administrator of roughly the same age. “I do not have to take orders from that kid!” she spouts. “I have been teaching at this college since before she was born! What can she possibly know about teaching that I don’t?”

Pan another classroom, students arranged in peer-review groups of four. Zoom in on our protagonist sitting with group of two men and two women. “So are you, like, a student teacher?” asks one of the men. “Are you here to, like, learn how to teach?”

Cut to close shot of graying instructor. “Class, today we’ll be observed by Dr. Rose,” he announces, gesturing in WPA’s direction as the students follow his gaze. His mouth curling in a snicker, he announces, “Yep, this is the big boss. She’s here to make sure I’m doing my job.” Students twitter their amusement. (Rose)

As these scenes suggest, I felt that my gender and relative youth prompted writing instructors to perceive me as a mock administrator with questionable authority. My physical appearance as a woman generally closer in age to students than to colleagues seemed to drive writing instructors’ assessments of my competence. I believed that my colleagues’ interpretation of my appearance negated my training in rhetoric and composition and seven years of experience teaching college-level writing, rendering me a “kid” to someone teaching writing since before I was born and “the big boss” to someone clearly amused by the prospect. Students’ impressions seemed to follow suit because they typically saw me as a peer or prospective teacher-in-training.

Powerless to change my age, gender, or the responses these elicited, I attempted to make youth work to my advantage. Playing on instructors’ assumptions about me - that I probably didn’t know much and could therefore be dismissed - I began to construct myself as student-like, fashioning myself as a “secret shopper.” As the following excerpt from a 2003 conference paper illustrates, my response to my professional context was blighted by a certain insularity:

I’ve started to play with the espionage-like character of my job. I fancy myself the ideal “secret shopper,” an emissary of the larger corporation able to blend into the crowd by posing as a customer, or, in my case, as an undercover student assessing how well the university is delivering its product. I sometimes imagine donning a new disguise each time I visit a class, the restaurant critic of peer review. Hair tucked up in a baseball cap, face

barely visible, and I'd become another anonymous face in an 8:00 a.m. class. Last Halloween's Elvira wig and some pancake make-up could transform me into an undergraduate Goth. I began to have fun, fantasies of spy games and covert operations giving me a rush. Then I remembered that this appearance, an embodied contradiction of people's assumptions about authority and knowledge, is already sufficient for the task. (Rose)

Unfortunately, this tale reveals a naïveté about administrative work that I want to assess through the lens of Peters's management theory. As is painfully apparent, I failed to regard my work in terms of the authentic interpersonal relationships Peters deems necessary for organizational success. In light of Peters and Waterman's insistence that inattention to workers' knowledge is a characteristic problem with managerial philosophy (29), a similar inattention to teachers' expertise could be considered a core problem with my early administrative approach. I always announced my visits, typically asking teachers to choose which class I should attend, to moderate these observations' supervisory flavor. But imagining my visits as an opportunity to play dress-up or indulge in spy fantasies prevented me from interacting with teachers as peers. While I encountered resistance from writing faculty, I amplified the situation by exploiting the us-and-them dynamic that Peters asks principled managers to reduce or eliminate. By trying to blend in with the students, visually and factitiously, I created a palpable distance from the writing teachers, a separation that manifested itself in other aspects of my early administrative work: in language resonating with surveillance (i.e., "secret shopper"); in a meticulous schedule of observations that gave off an aura of formality, even if teachers themselves chose the dates of my visits; in allowing a few comments to color my relationships with a considerably larger group. Had I performed a "contempt/respect IQ," as Peters and Austin recommend (208), I may have realized that even if I truly viewed my visits as formative rather than evaluative, my actions gave teachers ample cause to distrust my motives. By ignoring our shared investment in teaching writing, I was unable to enact "listening, trust and respect for the dignity *and* the creative potential of each person in the organization" (Peters and Austin 5), much less foster a programmatic culture.

Although I learned about the writing program during my stint as a secret shopper, my information-gathering was no more than secret shopping. Because students thought of me as a peer, not as an authority figure, they readily shared opinions and impromptu course evaluations, as indicated above. I also could join students' peer review groups fairly easily. From this vantage point, I was positioned to read students' work, often drafts that gave me a sense of the instructors' feedback. These small group sessions permit-

ted me to glimpse how particular faculty members were describing the writing process, to determine whether I considered those comments appropriate, and to investigate students' responses - all information otherwise difficult to obtain. However, there was little context for discussing these visits with writing teachers other than to suggest that I questioned students as if I were conducting a consumer-satisfaction survey or that I read instructors' comments over students' shoulders. Hence, there was no mechanism for engaging teachers in authentic conversations involving mutual exchange. I may have felt moderately informed, but I could not put that "intelligence," in the sense of fictively-constructed spy work, to productive use. Consequently, my visits created, then reinforced, my distance from writing faculty, demonstrating a lack of regard for teachers' knowledge and reifying the us-them dynamic.

Had I been aware of Peters's or others' theories of management, I would have been better situated to build relationships with part-time faculty. Informal observations, for example, could have approximated MBWA, which may be passé in business currently but holds tremendous potential for writing administration. Had I cast these visits and follow-up conversations as an opportunity to validate and appreciate the good work that teachers were doing, to listen to their concerns, and to exchange ideas, I may not have felt a need to adopt the guise of surveillance. By incorporating casual interactions into these visits by arriving early and chatting with instructors, inviting faculty to have lunch or coffee, or arranging to walk to class together, my early administration years would have had more positive outcomes. My positive interactions with experienced faculty, many of whom have held part-time positions for years, in some cases decades, might then have been the norm rather than the exception. In spite of (or perhaps because of) positioning myself as student-like, some generous veteran faculty members treated me as an apprentice, through which I learned about the history of the writing program and the college, heard a range of perspectives concerning the school's undergraduates, collected teaching tips and similar suggestions. While these teachers perhaps understood that self-doubt prompted my role-playing, I infer now that, had I understood the integrity Peters attributes to MBWA, I would have adopted a collaborative approach from the start. My secret shopper method, with its minimal interaction, looked like spying and wrought more distrust than MBWA's high contact behaviors would have.

Fortunately, even without benefit of Peters's ideas, my administrative philosophy has now moved beyond secret shopping. I've stopped worrying so much about how I am perceived, visually and intellectually. As I begin my third year as a WPA, I hope I have developed working relationships with program colleagues that are more authentic, and I have taken steps toward building mutual trust and respect. While such abstractions can be over-

simplifying, I continually struggle to negotiate my program administration efforts, especially to foster a shared culture among a writing faculty that has a range of training and goals and consequently experiences the institutional dispersal of power in disparate ways. In addition to allowing my own diagnosis of a flawed administrative philosophy, management theory has prompted me to consider future steps for cultivating exchange among writing faculty as the program matures. One involves lobbying for a specifically-designated composition office, my own version of removing my office door (Peters and Austin 31); it opened on a temporary basis in fall 2004 and will hopefully become permanent. I'm admittedly apprehensive; rather than having one office-mate in a standard-sized two-person office, I would have twelve. We would participate in MBWA on a minute-to-minute basis, hopefully to a positive end. The vestiges of the us-them hierarchy would nevertheless remain visible through the allocation of desk space: one desk for me, which writing faculty is welcomed to use, and one desk for all twelve of them (an improvement over previous faculty-to-desk ratios for adjuncts at our college). This shared space is intended to serve as a venue for informal conversation among instructors, contributing to a richer sense of community through which informal communication networks can develop. Ideally, as a formerly personal space becomes a shared space for all writing personnel, inclusive of part-time faculty and WPA, this office will represent a broader programmatic and administrative shift rooted in a philosophy of management as collaborative interaction.

CONCLUSIONS

As helpful as Peters's theories have been in reflecting upon my administrative work thus far and considering its future directions, I discovered his work only when a reviewer for an earlier version of this article recommended that I explore business methodology as an alternative to secret shopping. Despite a tendency among some theorists to resist anything that resembles corporate methodology, management theory poses a rich and to-date undertheorized area for future research in program administration. Granted, many of the principles Peters discusses will be familiar to experienced administrators; nevertheless, lessons from management need to be presented to a broader audience of new and prospective WPAs, who may not grasp the extent to which interpersonal exchanges shape any program's culture.

In addition to helping WPAs foster writing programs that are attentive to teachers' knowledge, experience, and contributions, management theory reminds us that when we tell WPA stories, we are relating both the stories of individuals and those of programs, teachers, and students. As writing program administrators, especially as new faculty navigating the tenure-track,

we often feel powerless to enact major structural or organizational change. Management theory, however, invites us to listen to our stories—whether in our scholarship or those shared over happy hour conversation—through perspectives inclusive of colleagues’ experiences. And, while reflecting upon our WPA narratives and weighing the values implicit in them may appear a subtle change, this practice, when adopted as a regular feature of administration, has the potential to promote ethical exchange and enhance workplace relations.

NOTES

¹ A September 2004 search of the Modern Language Association’s “Job Information List” found that, of the 147 rhetoric and composition positions advertised at the assistant professor rank, 28 positions specified responsibilities in WPA work and 2 others required participation in WAC programs. Taken together, these figures suggest that roughly 30% of the advertised positions in the field include administrative responsibilities. These ads, however, may mask departmental plans to place new colleagues in WPA roles, as indicated by broad statements calling for candidates with “good potential as a colleague for taking part in the life and work of the department” or prospective hires who possess “willingness eventually to take on some administrative responsibilities in the rhetoric program.”

² Goodburn and Leverenz’s experience as graduate student WPAs speaks to these simultaneous yet competing strains of academic culture. Dissatisfied with academia’s preoccupation with individual achievement, they participated in a collaborative revision of their university’s writing program, only to find that they were unable to escape the constraints of a system that expects and rewards individual accomplishment.

³ Marcia Dickson references this ameliorative potential of managerial theory, noting the similarity between feminist administrative structures and successful business practices (152).

⁴ Richard Miller makes a similar point about the salutary potential of managerial training when he proposes that PhD candidates in rhetoric and composition pursue an interdisciplinary program of study designed to prepare them for the administrative work they will be required to do upon entering the workforce. Such training, he hopes, will “arm ourselves and our students with the skills necessary to participate meaningfully in the construction of a university for the next millennium” (105).

⁵ Though Peters’s more recent work offers the same core philosophy of employee relations (see *Circle; Thriving*), the rapid changes wrought by

globalization prompt him to focus on large-scale issues of production and competition rather than on internal personnel issues.

⁶ See the Composition Program Web site for more information.

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From “What Is” to “What Is Possible”: Theorizing Curricular Document Revision as In(ter)vention and Reform

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The Spring 2003 special issue of *WPA: Writing Program Administration* dedicated to the joint topics of change and the first-year writing curriculum makes clear that WPAs do—and must continue to—carefully design and reflect about practices of curricular reform. As Christine Farris points out in “Changing the First-Year Curriculum,” many WPAs approach curricular revision as a fruitful “opportunity for collaborative reflection and strengthening of claims for the value of writing” rather than as an onerous task (7). E. Shelley Reid, for instance, values curricular reform for its “enabling” process rather than for its oft-conflicting products (12). Such an approach to curricular reform can break resistance to change on local and multilocal levels (12), liberate discussions about change from predetermined means or outcomes (13), and put WPAs and other program leaders at a greater advantage by modeling a sustainable, collaborative practice for newer instructors (14, 19). Reid’s principle of changing invites opportunities for initiating significant, continuing change through a variety of means and genres, and we have seen it most evidently at work in our recreation of curricular documents.

While processes of programmatic and curricular reform can begin with the analysis and (re)construction of audience-specific documents, these documents frequently go unexamined and unrevised even when major paradigm shifts have occurred or the documents are seen as mere products of reform. With this article we suggest an alternative paradigm—that theorizing the (re)production of curricular documents provides a space for initiat-

ing and sustaining discussions on high-stakes topics such as curriculum and faculty development and pedagogical anchoring, and it also *promotes* reform by reconstructing the programs they represent. By suggesting this paradigm, we offer that programmatic documents serve as sites for resonance, resistance, and activity. We also offer that these sites enact the kind of productive knowledge we want to develop in our writing programs and to encourage as an approach to document production and as curricular reform in writing program administration more generally.

We argue, then, for a particular theoretical understanding of curricular reform and document revision. First, we theorize curricular reform as productive knowledge with a focus on the rhetorical (re)construction of documents and offer a heuristic for WPAs to undertake guide revisions. Second, we position guides - texts that typically communicate curriculum to readers - as *active* genre systems within writing program activity systems to establish further our claim for guides' dynamism, particularly their active roles as public documents and grassroots movement.² That is, while guides are often read as a program's nonnegotiable statement of purpose, they can also serve as dialogical sites that reflect and construct the programs they represent; thus they may become a means for changing that system. To locate this theoretical argument for the promise of figuring document revision as a form of knowledge production and generic reform, we discuss the evolution of two documents in the context of major curricular and programmatic changes—the new English 102 course guide at West Virginia University (WVU) and the new student guide to introductory composition at Purdue University. We believe that understanding curricular reform as productive knowledge and guides as active genre systems in writing program activity systems can help WPAs better undertake document revision as productive curricular reform in their own institutions.

THEORIZING CURRICULAR REFORM AS PRODUCTIVE KNOWLEDGE

Janet Atwill's research on productive knowledge and *techne* is especially helpful for WPAs because so much of our work is specifically involved in acts of production, whether making changes through curricular reform in general or document revision in particular.³ In *Rhetoric Reclaimed: Aristotle and the Liberal Arts Tradition*, Atwill reclaims an ancient definition of *techne* as productive knowledge to argue that it is an art of intervention and invention and that rhetoric is productive knowledge. Based on our interpretation of Atwill's work, we define "productive knowledge" as a flexible, context-dependent way for people to intervene in the world by making something new that changes their - and others - interactions in it. The three characteristics Atwill attributes to productive knowledge and *techne* help explain this

definition: "its concern with the contingent, its implication in social and economic exchange, and its resistance to determinate ends" (172). The three main features of Atwill's interpretation of *techne* are similar: (1) it is "never a static, normative body of knowledge," (2) it "resists identification with a normative subject," and (3) it "marks a domain of human intervention and invention" (7). The transformative potential - this promise of reform - of productive knowledge lies in its contingency, indeterminacy, and strategic moves to *intervene and invent* to make something new. Atwill offers readers an understanding of productive knowledge that has transformative potential in a number of contexts, and it is this prospect for transformation, which Atwill values for the classroom, that we want to use to extend to curricular reform.

Productive knowledge is an art, we find, that characterizes effective curricular reform in general and (re)production of guides in particular. As Reid indicates, change merely for the sake of change is inappropriate, but an appreciation of *changing* as a curricular stance creates reflective and revisionist opportunities for teachers and administrators (17). Theorizing course-guide revision as a type of Atwillian productive knowledge enables the recognition of curricular reform's epistemic import and the production of new and revised documents through a flexible and recursive heuristic for guide revision. This heuristic is a strategy for curricular reform through document revision that negotiates complex program needs and situations, creates dialogues between makers and users, engages tensions between production and consumption, and highlights the flexible, reflective stance that ongoing, located change requires of program participants. It encompasses five aspects:

- **Gathering and Reflecting.** Gathering information about the history and current status of the guide and the course from various sources and reflecting about it to better understand the guide's past and present shapes its—and the program's—future.
- **Creating a Vision.** Creating an informed, mediated vision is a strategy for guide design that negotiates program histories and realities with stakeholders' (sometimes different) scholarly and personal desires.
- **Designing and Framing.** Moving negotiated visions into production by designing and framing course-guide revisions as necessary, scholarly reform—not just tasks—in various programmatic, departmental, and even institutional contexts brings into clearer focus unresolved issues in composition programs and opens dialogic space for negotiating stability or more change in the midst of already changing programs.

- **Executing the Design.** Executing the design of a revised guide requires individual and collaborative production directed by the five rhetorical canons and three appeals.
- **Realizing Roles.** Realizing roles in reform is crucial for all stakeholders as it frames the potential and means for collaboration and production. It is particularly important for WPAs to identify and reflect about the roles they play—or (do not) want to play—as knowledge makers and agents of reform. Among community members, realizing roles helps avoid problematic distinctions between who is professionalized and who is not, and it supports the recognition that writing program administration and composition are disciplines that can be studied and practiced by those inside and outside of these fields.

With this heuristic, document revision becomes an ongoing, located opportunity to change audiences' and composers' curricular knowledge and action through the construction and use of the guide genre.

Productive knowledge that is reclaimed intervenes in a preexisting method or practice for invention to take place, transforming “‘what is’ into ‘what is possible’” (Atwill 70). Our document-revision heuristic directs this transformation within our own programs and also creates a new way for other WPAs to change curricula and programs by changing documents. However, because guides are often treated as fixed and thus forgettable course artifacts - like those we encountered at Purdue and WVU - rather than as active sites for curricular renegotiation, their productive potential can go unrealized, and, by extension, the potential of our document-revision heuristic can be unnecessarily limited. In addition, because WPAs work in complex institutional contexts, exploring writing programs as systems is a means to better understand and thus change interactions among people, texts, and agendas - further enabling the reflective and effective use of this heuristic.

WPAs AS CHANGE AGENTS AND GUIDES AS ACTIVE GENRE SYSTEMS IN WRITING PROGRAM ACTIVITY SYSTEMS

Activity theory offers WPAs a means for understanding writing programs as active sites and examining their own programs and roles because it orients program administrators within the complex web of relations, activities, and documents that constitute writing programs in general. Activity theory - initially developed by psychologist Lev Vygotsky and his colleagues A. N. Leont'ev and Aleksandr Luriiia in the 1920s and '30s (Vygotsky, *Mind in Society*; Luria, *The Making of Mind*) - is a conceptual framework for

describing human activities that emphasizes dynamic, collaborative interaction among members of a community who negotiate tools, rules, and roles to fulfill an outcome. Building on Vygotsky, contemporary educational psychologist Yrjö Engeström describes dynamic systems as overlapping “triangles of activity” that mediate complex and changing interactions between subjects, objects, instruments, rules, communities, and division of labor through processes of production, consumption, distribution, and exchange (78). Engeström’s model of an activity system helpfully identifies these critical elements and their complex interactions.⁴

Engeström’s model, a synthesis of smaller triangles of activity, accommodates the various local and multilocal interactions that Reid feels are critical for understanding curriculum revision as an enabling process through a focus on transformation.

Engeström’s human activity system model resonates with the rhetorical triangle, familiar to scholars and teachers of rhetoric for its recognition of the relationships among text, author, and audience located in—even encircled by—rhetorical context. Through Engeström’s model, we have come to re-envision rhetorical context as one dynamic player within the activity system rather than as a stable framework encompassing the system as it is seen in the traditional communication triangle. This model further expands the communication triad to emphasize a number of interacting elements - subjects, objects, shareholders in a community, rules, divisions of labor, tools, and instruments - that contribute to a sought outcome. It also emphasizes the relations among these elements as shifting processes of production, consumption, distribution, and exchange. Engeström’s portrayal of an activity system allows for recursive and ongoing interactions among all of its components, because the instrument for one interaction may be the subject of another, and so on. Activity systems’ emphasis on multidirectional movement among a number of dynamic elements reinforces the contingency, indeterminacy, and exchange that characterize productive knowledge.

Identifying writing programs as activity systems elevates writing programs as sites of collaborative activity and movement—spaces that welcome the potential of changing—and locates WPAs as subjects within this network of interacting components. The writing-program activity system has the general object of supporting and improving writing instruction, with more specific outcomes and organizational configurations differing across institutions and time. For example, writing programs located in English Departments at public research universities must negotiate a community that includes large numbers of students enrolled in required writing courses, and they must also negotiate issues of uneven power structures brought about when GTAs and contingent faculty staff these courses and when

WPAs are embedded in several layers of administration. At private or four-year colleges, where the system's founders may also be its revisers, concerns with community might focus on a smaller, but no less vital, set of long-term faculty relationships differently complicated because composition may be taught by tenure and tenure-track faculty within the English department or across the college.

Based on this model - and regardless of the configurations of different programs - guides can no longer be seen merely as texts that generate departmental income, forgotten as fixed products of outdated change, or figured as solitary tasks for WPAs to undertake. Instead, their production and consumption calls on a number of contingent negotiations and actions among subjects and community members - students, teachers, administrators - to participate as makers and users of this curricular and programmatic instrument. As guide creators and users who collaborate with the members of their community, WPAs become knowledge-makers who reflect about these documents' content, clarity, and suitability in the context of the program and turn this reflection into new understanding, new practices, and new documents. An important role for WPAs is that of change agent, one who can introduce this collaborative engagement and vitality to other community members to encourage their appreciation for, understanding of, and consequent participation in the potential for productive and continuing transformation. Document revision becomes a collective means for reflecting about and shaping course curriculum and leads to negotiating programmatic rules, tools, and roles collaboratively.⁵

Engeström's model, like any model, risks overgeneralizing the specifics of individual programs, but its particular limit in terms of theorizing about WPA work is most obvious in its placement of "outcome" outside the area of interactivity. In Engeström's application, a guide might be seen as an object—the "raw material" or 'problem space' at which the activity is directed and which is molded and transformed into outcomes" ("The Activity System"). However, because our field has tended to treat guides as outcomes of activity, we have found that predicted or anticipated change in curricular documents is integral to their process of negotiation and revision. We have also found that in writing program systems, contrary to Engeström's model, textual genres like guides may occupy the role of instrument, object, or outcome singly or simultaneously. Guides can in one interaction be an instrument of articulation and in another be the subject of debate or the agent for questioning a policy or rule they contain. Therefore, these documents have the potential to promote activity, not by serving as definitive statements of policies or outcomes, but by acting as witnesses to and even catalysts for interpretation and renegotiation of the policies that originated

them. These documents evoke change by creating the need for conversation, by calling into question certain aspects of the programs they represent, and even by causing administrators to rethink or to revise certain programmatic components. When viewed this way, curricular guides are simultaneously enactive, productive, and reflective.

Given our focus on guide revision as a productive art and as a means to promote and instantiate curricular reform, we are particularly interested in envisioning the role of documents, especially guides, as subjects of writing program systems that promote an ongoing cycle of inquiry so that they become *active genres*. In *Shaping Written Knowledge*, Charles Bazerman describes genre as a "social construct that regularizes communication, interactions, and relations" (62). Carolyn Miller determines genres by motive rather than by pattern or form, positing them as social and rhetorical constructs and thereby investing them with an inventive and creative power (155). More recently, Charles Cooper defines "genres" as "types of writing that make possible certain kinds of learning and social interaction" and, therefore, as essential to certain practices of communication and understanding (25). While we draw from these genre theorists to describe the malleability that guide genres can have, we also aim to disrupt any notions of regularity they promote, because our interest in curricular documents is grounded in our desire to render them unstable.⁶

To this end, we look to David Russell's and Anis Bawarshi's discussions of genre. Russell's 1999 discussion of "post-process" activity theory helps posit these documents' potential for promoting kinetic and rigorous activity—not by serving as definitive statements but by acting as witnesses to the negotiation and interpretation of program goals, means, and outcomes they inspire. Russell uses Vygotskian activity theory to theorize complex networks of human activity as "social or discursive practices, communities of practice, or discourse communities" (81); and to recognize that these communities give rise to a class of textual genres that are defined not by certain formal features they may share but according to their processes of (re)construction and use. Viewed in this way, these genre systems enact dynamic social and composing processes that are "capable of changing, though always capable of being (temporarily) stabilized as their conditions of use are stabilized" (Russell 82). Most significantly, these genres mediate the many interactions and the processes of their collective authors and participants because they are frequently under revision (83). Similarly, Bawarshi's recent research supports the notion that genres are ways to generate and communicate knowledge and actively shape how we know and act when we encounter genre systems. He affirms our belief that "genres are not merely passive backdrops for our actions or simply familiar tools we use to convey or categorize informa-

tion; rather, genres function more like rhetorical ecosystems, dynamic sites in which communicants rhetorically reproduce the very conditions within which they act” (Bawarshi 82).

Following Russell and Bawarshi, we identify curricular guides as sites of ongoing interaction and negotiation of programmatic rules in which critical (mis)understandings about participants’ roles and purposes can emerge and be negotiated to achieve a clearer re-vision of the program’s goals. It is in part from Russell’s concept of mediated interaction and Bawarshi’s notion of sites of interaction that we devised our own cyclical model to represent our continuing work with curricular documents (Figure 1). This representation of guides as active genre systems can be located within Engeström’s complex activity system, but, unlike Engeström’s model, it recognizes and integrates any number of fluctuating outcomes as part of the system itself. Located within writing program systems, the guides mediate students’ and instructors’ public interest with committee members’ and administrators’ ideological and epistemological interests in an ongoing cycle. Interactions between components in this system often occur as dialogue, reflection, and action aimed towards the (re)production and circulation of these documents. As a result, guides become a means for and site of dialogic engagement and programmatic invention and intervention. That is, they open a space for the (re)creation of documents and instigate (re)negotiation of interactions and beliefs in the writing program as a whole through the process of document (re)construction.

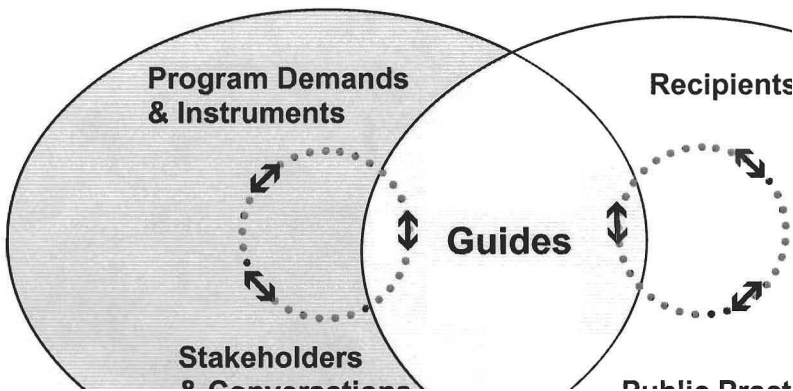


Figure 1. Interactivity of Subject Positions Caused by Guides as Active Genres. With this model, we theorize our work in curriculum revision at WVU and Purdue by placing the guides themselves (typically seen as products or “outcomes” in more traditional communications models) at the center of all other processes within the activity system—treating them as genre systems—and as the intersecting space between two spheres of activity.

TOWARD "WHAT IS POSSIBLE": DOCUMENT REVISION AT WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY AND PURDUE UNIVERSITY

Our theory of document revision as a process of in(ter)vention and reform has positioned us to welcome curricular changing as a productive art. Based on an improved understanding of our programs as writing program systems, our guides as dynamic genres, and our roles as knowledge makers and change agents, we have become better able to resee guide-revision tasks as productive opportunities for ongoing curricula and programmatic change. A discussion of the revision process of two documents at WVU and Purdue University demonstrates how we use this theorizing to undertake document reform at our quite different institutions. Ryan, WVU's Undergraduate Writing Coordinator recently hired and charged to revise their undergraduate writing program, and Graban, a member of the Introductory Writing Committee charged with leading a subcommittee on student guide revision at Purdue, renegotiated the content, use, and function of student and course guides. The document revision heuristic helped us revise our respective guides and, by extension, engage in broader programmatic reform and reflexive understanding. We offer brief discussions of our uses of this heuristic within our respective programs to promote it as a *flexible* means for writing program administrators to practice the art of guide revision as part of their own reform efforts.

Course Guide Revision at West Virginia University. At WVU, the Center for Writing Excellence (CWE) is an organizational structure within the English Department that unites undergraduate writing, creative writing, distance education, and professional writing and editing. A faculty administrator coordinates each writing emphasis and the Director of the Center for Writing Excellence administers the whole program. As the Undergraduate Writing Coordinator, Ryan is responsible for curricula development, faculty development, and GTA education related to the two required composition courses, first-year composition and sophomore composition. When Ryan was hired in 2001, she was charged by the hiring committee to revise the undergraduate program to strengthen coherence between the two courses, improve teacher morale and faculty development opportunities, and develop a program that would reflect of contemporary composition theories and practices. An expectation included in these aims was that course guides be updated regularly, not only because the department recognizes published-guides as the primary representation of course content, but also because their sale to students provides substantial funding for department travel. In her second year at the university, Ryan began to undertake these charges with a particular focus on the second required course, English 102, in part because of the clear message she had received from administrators, teachers, and

students that it was a “terrible course terribly organized, taught and administered.” Ryan knew she needed to better understand what made English 102 so “terrible” to make meaningful changes to the guide, course, and program, and she used the document revision heuristic to explore the course and embark on its re-vision.

The process of gathering and reflecting about the history and status of the course and guide as critical elements in the CWE writing program system enabled Ryan to understand the “what was” of the program and her role in changing it. She knew basic administrative information related to English 102; however, considering the interactions among the teachers, students, support staff, and administrators as an activity system highlighted programmatic challenges, particularly some uneven power relations that limited vital processes of consumption, production, and collaboration.⁷

As the course is staffed primarily by adjuncts, their membership in the community has a significant effect on the program as a whole. By asking questions, holding meetings, listening to stories told in the hallways and mailroom, examining old documents, and conducting surveys, Ryan learned that these disempowered and overburdened teachers feel subjected to unwritten programmatic rules, that is, feel unempowered to make the program. Generally, these least-paid, most-burdened teachers resist taking active roles in the program beyond teaching their own courses. Despite (and perhaps because of) problems they observe and experience within the program, they neither wanted nor knew how to take part in changing the curriculum or revising the guide. Seen in terms of the activity system model, these teachers emerge as selective consumers of the program and the guide; the classroom is their place of power and they resist changes - including changes to documents - that might destabilize it, and they accept those that might reinforce it. They wanted the guide (a collection of articles primarily about finding materials in the library and documenting those materials properly) updated by the WVU writing program administrator, and they wanted her undergraduate writing committee to correct proofreading errors were eradicated; they wanted more samples of documentation and revisions to reflect changes in the university library system. The ways they viewed and used the guide reflected an assumption that a course on research and argument is primarily a course about discrete library research and proper documentation, and they wanted the guide to model these skills.

Because curricular and policy materials related to the course were not readily available in document form - guidelines were often implicit or written on obscure pieces of paper in files no one used - there were no documents to suggest that English 102 should be or could be anything different. In addition, teachers received little pedagogical support or administrative

guidelines beyond rules "handed down" about the number of pages to be written and assignments to be given; they were free to teach the course however they wanted. Students' complaints about differing expectations across courses, tedious library assignments, documentation exercises that they did not believe helped them to write arguments, and unclear and inconsistent grading criteria and practices revealed problems related to these freedoms. Through this research, Ryan identified "the trouble" with English 102, in multiples: a lack of teacher preparation and support, inexplicit course policies and outcomes, and little interest among teachers participating in the program beyond their roles as classroom teachers. This disconnectedness was undeniably connected to an understandable discontent felt by teachers because of hiring practices and job conditions.

Identifying problems with the English 102 course and recognizing the guide as an active genre system helped Ryan imagine the guide revision as a site for and means of intervening in particular curricular and programmatic problems. An important dimension of this revision included the ways Ryan needed to realize her role in this system to develop effective strategies as a change agent. As a feminist, she wanted to be a partner, or, according to Charles Handy in *The Age of Paradox*, one who "(1) orchestrate[s] the broad strategic vision, (2) develop[s] the shared administrative and organizational infrastructure, and (3) create[s] the cultural glue which can create synergies" (qtd. in Cambridge and McClelland 157). Ryan sought to use the role of partner as a means to revise the course guide by acknowledging her expertise to create a vision for guide reinvention and by relying on her abilities as a leader to encourage collaboration and community among teachers as engaged participants in guide revisions and in the program. Being a partner and creating partnership opportunities seemed the best approach to acting as a change agent in this system, particularly because this role redistributes power and processes of production and invites teachers to be makers of knowledge and change. Through the process of changing the guide, Ryan initiated broader reforms to revise the culture of the program.⁸

With this deeper understanding of the writing program system, its challenges, and her own role in it, Ryan worked to create an informed, mediated vision for guide design that negotiated exigencies, scholarly desires, and system realities. Her participation in the 2002 WPA Workshop, study of writing program administration texts and documents, and background in composition theory and pedagogy helped her imagine change from a disciplinary perspective. Conversations with the English 102 Mentor Coordinator, a woman with twenty-five years of English 102 teaching experience as a lecturer and a member of the undergraduate writing committee, led to their collaborative brainstorming about pragmatic change in the local

environment and gave this interested teacher a means for sharing her ideas and expertise. Through this inventive work, Ryan arrived at the following goal, or mediated vision, for guide revision: (1) to use the guide to shape the course's purpose toward a Burkean parlor approach to argument intended to encourage students to enter into academic conversations, and to move away from the historical focus on teaching the course as a series of discrete documentation tasks and library scavenger hunts; (2) to (re)create and make course policies and outcomes explicit and available in the guide; and (3) to affect these changes to the guide in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Arriving at this vision allowed West Virginia University coauthor Ryan to design and frame the English 102 course-guide revisions as a productive art and to encourage teachers' participation as makers and users of the new guide. Ryan supported teachers' increased understanding of and contributions to curricular reform and guide revisions through committee meetings and workshops. It was critical for the undergraduate writing committee to discuss guides as sites and means of change to help committee members - as the primary group responsible for the revising the guide - engage in guide revision differently from their past revisions of it. In addition, in a workshop developed by the undergraduate writing committee for English 102 teachers, Ryan asked participants to put newly developed course outcomes in dialogue with new developed course-guide materials—course description, assignment overviews, and recommended pedagogical practices—to help participants learn and talk about the course revisions in general and recognize the guides' various uses for teachers and students. Thus meetings and workshops became forums for teachers to talk and learn about course guide revisions, to collaborate on the revisions, and to meet as a community.

For Ryan, executing the design of the revised course guide emphasized rhetorical invention and arrangement; it was manifested in four ways: (1) using the notion of entering academic conversations to frame the guide and represent the course specifically by creating a lead article to articulate this concept for student and teacher readers; (2) physically redesigning the guide to include (for the first time) material to frame the course and provide common policies; (3) making a section entitled "Learning by Doing," written by department members to include one-page articles with related workshops on research and argumentation and to bring together theory and classroom practice; and (4) moving the library section to the end of the guide to emphasizing the new "Learning by Doing" section. Ryan brought her vision of the course and guide revision to the committee of lecturers, faculty, and graduate students who collaborated on the redesign of whole guide and the creation and composition of the new section. The redesigned guide includes new textual content to meet problems students had raised

and that Ryan and committee members had observed: a description of the course's purpose and pedagogical approach, an outcomes statement, general assignment overviews, grade descriptors, and a common course attendance policy. Renaming the guide *Entering Academic Conversations: Research and Argumentation in English 102 at West Virginia University* reinforced these changes (see Appendix 1).

WVU's guide has been anecdotally successful: new teachers like the guide, all of the teachers like the clear policies and outcomes statement, and students lodge fewer complaints about course inconsistencies and unclear grading criteria. In addition, while some teachers still resist change and involvement as makers and producers of guides and curriculum, the committee members' engagement in reform is a promising sign of collaborative activity. Ryan hopes that the collaborative process of this guide revision and its circulation and use in the program supports ongoing change in the curriculum and in the interactions among members of the of the undergraduate writing program, including a recognition of guide revision as a collective opportunity for reflection, dialogue, and negotiation among teachers and administrators about programmatic and curricular issues.

Student Guide Revision at Purdue University. In Fall 2003, the introductory composition program at Purdue began a significant transition from a two-semester sequence of composition required for many students to a one-semester course required for all students. The new, single-semester course is an intensive "hybrid" course combining traditional and computer classroom instruction with regularly scheduled conferences. It emphasizes information literacy along with the production of new media. Some reasons generating this change included disparities in course content, pedagogical approaches, and students' FYC experience under the previous program.⁹ Another reason was an expressed need to focus attention on articulating a set of shared goals and outcomes, so the new course, English 106, motivated the reinvention of a shared curriculum with different syllabus approaches, led to the creation of a dedicated conference center and multimedia instruction classrooms, and increased the instructors' contact hours per student. Consequently, the new curriculum has challenged many students', instructors', and administrators' conceptions of class space and time, teaching and teaching preparation, and rhetoric and writing. Furthermore, it has required new approaches to articulating the program's goals and means both intra- and inter-departmentally—including prompting both instructors and their students to begin to theorize about and understand the need for such a course—to assess its outcomes better. As a result, program participants began a campaign to reconstruct every document connected with FYC at Purdue that attempted to establish or communicate policy.

Introductory Composition at Purdue (ICaP) is an organized structure within the university's English department comprising the various committees and groups that support first-year composition.¹⁰ Partly as a result of its multilayered mentoring program and diverse teaching staff, ICaP's members are often also involved with other writing emphases—a circumstance that both enriches and complicates FYC's role and involvement at Purdue. Stakeholders in Purdue's student-guide genre system include as many as ten members of the Introductory Writing Committee, representing program directors, tenured and tenure-track faculty, contingent faculty, and graduate students from introductory writing, professional and business writing, writing across the curriculum, second-language writing, and the writing center; about 145 instructors (also tenure-track faculty, part-time adjuncts, full-time lecturers, and graduate students); and other members of the program fulfilling the roles of mentors, assistant directors, and support staff. Recipients and users of the student guide include the approximately 5,200 students enrolling in FYC each year and their instructors. Appointed by the department head or voted in by the graduate student English association, the Introductory Writing Committee membership fluctuates from year to year. Graban has been a voting member of the Introductory Writing Committee since Fall 2002, when preparations for the change to English 106 first got underway.

As part of this effort, Graban was asked to lead a subcommittee on revising the student guide, a task that seemed unimposing at first; however, gathering and reflecting about information about current uses of the old guide helped Graban to realize the guide's potential for pointing out sources of ideological disparity. The old guide, called *Introductory Composition Courses*, was the sole program document written explicitly for students, informing them of their rights and expectations regarding their FYC requirement and serving as a public iteration of the program's overarching goals and policies. In theory, this guide was distributed and read with the instructor's syllabus and policy statement during the first week of classes; in practice, fewer than half of the instructors believed that it effectively engaged their students' interest in the course; nevertheless, instructors referred to it when justifying particular grades or assignments. Largely underused, the student guide had undergone no more than minor lexical or grammatical changes in more than twelve years; it no longer adequately attended to the changing curriculum.

In the process of gathering and reflecting about the document's history, Graban found herself returning to ICaP's other key program instruments—namely the flagship “Goals, Means, and Outcomes” statements—initiating frequent and continuing interactions with these documents; consequently, some goals and outcomes were further revised. This process allowed Graban

to begin to negotiate among the different expectations and beliefs that ICaP stakeholders brought to the project by offering guide revision as a helpful component in reflecting about the new curriculum.

Because it is ICaP's practice to vote on all new initiatives, Graban's work invited rounds of discussion among various members of the department. Thus, early in the revision process, Graban had to realize her role as a negotiating member of a curricular committee and be willing to direct conversations about the student guide into other means of communicating such as one-on-one meetings or e-mail communications when consensus could not be reached. Early revisions of Purdue's student guide revealed ICaP members' difficulties in relinquishing their individual premises and the ideals they felt defined the reasons they taught and their students learned. A gap between intangible goals and measurable outcomes related to articulating course aims in terms of social epistemology, civic ideals, and individual growth emerged in one revision. Based on study of the old guide, use of the "Goals, Means, and Outcomes Statement," and conversation with committee members, Graban arrived at the following informed, mediated vision for Purdue's student guide: enlarging the parameters for what constitutes acts of "writing" and "composing," speaking more rigorously to students about how they could recognize their own measures of success in the program, and addressing the various roles FYC plays in socializing students into Purdue University, the academy, and civic society.

Graban designed and framed the student-guide revision as part of programmatic reform by employing Ellen Barton's notion of "rich features" in discourse analysis to explore ideological inconsistencies in the student guide and in discussions of the program. Barton's rich features are those lexical and semantic elements that show evidence of social interaction in a text—they have both linguistic integrity and contextual value (23); therefore, rich features can be small or large, syntactical or organizational, they can occur at the word or on the genre level, and they can apply not only to the written text but also to the text's interlocutors and their purposes for writing (24). Examining these elements helped Graban and her subcommittee to recognize lingering current-traditional notions (Berlin 58), explore cooperative contention among stakeholders, and note a critical lack of vocabulary for fully integrating technology into the new course. In the language of the old guides Graban found no references to "technology," "Internet," "online," "media," "digital," "electronic," "production," or "creation"; although nine references to "composition" occurred, they only named or identified the course as "introductory composition." Furthermore, ICaP's notions of writing had already broadened to include composition in all forms of media, yet it was difficult to articulate those notions without resorting to a list of

preferred applications or letting named technologies drive the course. Other contentions ranged from theoretical disagreements on the treatment of grammar and the use of grading norms to strategic discussions about changing the program rhetoric without being unduly disrupting to broader university discourses.

Graban received the most feedback in response to presentations of evolutionary drafts of the student guide at committee tables and training sessions; stakeholders also “talked” through their votes. Outside of the committee room, she raised awareness of and elicited conversations about the student guide over the instructor listserv, the ICaP website, and during a training workshop for returning instructors. The summer prior to the transition, Graban also developed a workshop for students developed a workshop for students learning to write public documents in a pilot section of English 106. This opportunity allowed her to demonstrate to students the rhetorical and theoretical significance of working collaboratively on unstable articulations of policy, ideology, and public identity.

Executing the design of a revised guide based on these studies of the guide and conversations about it led to individual and collaborative production that were substantively informed by the five rhetorical canons and appeals. Graban, whose efforts focused on arrangement, style, and delivery, observed several problematic psycho-dynamic positionings within the organization of the guide that she sought to change: the tone was optimistically broad yet offered little or no room for student questions; the narrative speaker was the introductory writing program, while the narrative subject fluctuated inconsistently between program and student; the instructor was positioned as an interested (albeit undermined) third party. In rewriting the student guide, Graban emphasized the roles of instructor as an autonomous agent in carrying out the goals of the program and student as an autonomous agent in negotiating the shared goals of the program in three ways: (1) framing ICaP’s policies using student queries by reorganizing the guide as a series of questions that students tended to ask; (2) putting various sections of the guide in a deliberate relationship and hence in conversation with other sections; and (3) creating reciprocal agency by using subordinating conjunctions, logical and conversational transitions, and flow markers to iterate ICaP’s policies as responses in a particular context and to create a tone that was reminiscent of discursal turn-taking, with students taking the first turn. In the new guide, the instructor shares the same “we” position as mentors, program leaders, and anyone else who shared the ICaP vision. The student occupies “you” and “I” positions of simultaneously speaking and being spoken to. The result is a document that shares and alternates, rather than blends, the writerly and readerly roles (see Appendix 2).

The new framework also allowed the subcommittee to be more creative in the ways they described and positioned ICaP's courses as (1) intrinsic to students' broader intellectual development, and (2) responsive to greater and more vital literacy practices. They achieved these aims by recompiling the "course policies" section to include apologia for vital course goals, renaming it "instructor policies," and bringing it in much earlier in the document. They created a "resources" section that aligned introductory composition with the library, the multimedia development center, the writing center, and even the program for adaptive services, demonstrating that English 106 and 108 are not the only spaces where students can develop as writers. Feedback on the final circulating version has been positive so far; program members' vested interest in continuing to revise the document underscores the mood for revision, and ICaP has committed to evaluating its use and usability this year, agreeing that the student guide is best viewed as a flexible document. Graban hopes that this commitment will not only carry over into other program documents, but also help encourage a systematic and rigorous reflection of program goals each year.

THEORIZING DOCUMENT REVISION: CHANGING DOCUMENTS, CHANGING PROGRAMS

Sharing and reflecting about our different uses of this heuristic underlines its flexibility and reinforces for us the importance of theorizing curricular reform as a productive art capable of being used to change our guides, our curricula, our programs, and our perspectives by initiating cycles of inquiry. Recognizing the different writing programs as activity systems in which these guides function has necessarily caused us to question programmatic rhetoric and identity, embedded power structures, discourse operations, and processes of production and consumption tied specifically to the guides' circulation. This model also helped us better recognize venues of teacher training, orientation workshops, composition classroom, and committee table as valuable spaces in which certain aspects of programs and curricula are negotiated or reconsidered. We have also learned the importance of teaching other teachers, students, and administrators how we identify and conduct document revision as reform and as the role of collaboration among stakeholders, who include WPAs. We do so in the hopes that people understand better how course and student guides serve their generic function as "the articulation and effect of what we do and the reason and means for why we do it" (Bawarshi 45) - and thus how the guides construct and represent curricula and programs; thus, too, how guide revision is a productive means for curricular and programmatic reflection and transformation.

Through writing together, we observed the ways we adapted the heuristic to attend to our different writing program systems and needs, and we saw that the heuristic points to the potential this theorizing has for other WPAs' document revision practices in their institutions. For instance, we observed that many of the changes to the WVU course guide focused on adding documents and disrupting long-standing power dynamics and limited interactions; at Purdue, student guide-revision emphasized identifying and appropriating discourse and reflecting about the new curriculum as it emerged. We also saw that these changes reflect our larger institutional and program histories. The guide revisions at Purdue reflect reform in a writing program with an established national reputation for scholarship and teaching in composition studies that was in the process of undertaking an innovative change to the first-year composition curriculum. Graban engaged the heuristic as a means of dialogic interrogation of a specific student text as part of significant curricular change. Alternatively, West Virginia University recently affirmed its commitment to the teaching of writing with the establishment of the Center for Writing Excellence in 2000 and new tenure-track lines in composition studies in 2001, including Ryan's position, and is developing and professionalizing preexisting and new writing programs. As such, Ryan's use of the heuristic to institute broad changes to set a guide, undergraduate course, and program on a new path is appropriate to the larger changing scene. We intend for our descriptions of the heuristic at work within these two programs to help other WPAs imagine ways to negotiate their roles as knowledge-makers and change agents, and to adapt this approach to guide revisions into their own writing program systems. Ryan, who is an active WPA, plans to extend this approach to document revision to other venues to continue reforming and developing curriculum, community and faculty development, and to implement a deeper understanding of the teaching of writing. Graban, who is not currently an active WPA, regularly carries many of the rhetorical implications of this work into her participation in other committees and scholarly projects. We have learned, as theorists and practitioners, to embrace the potential for change that this approach to document revision encourages.

For Reid, reflective curricular reform keeps us in a state of productive flux and encourages us to anticipate change more regularly and comprehensively (12). We agree, although we find theorizing document revision and guides as a more specific genre directs this potential for transformation. Theorizing document revision as productive knowledge and guides as active genres in writing program activity systems can help WPAs to improve their understanding and to carry out guide revisions as acts of located knowledge-making in dynamic sites to (re)produce guides through a dynamic heuristic and

to improve communication of the importance of rhetorical reform to help teachers, administrators, and students use guides effectively, to understand document revision, and to participate in curricular change. Ultimately, this perspective allows WPAs to embrace the stance that attends the heuristic—a recursivity that is both tool and medium for invention—and challenges the notion that WPAs simply build and maintain programs.

APPENDIX 1

Table of Contents for 2003-2004 *Entering Academic Conversations: Research and Argumentation in English 102 at West Virginia University*

Part One: James Paul Brawner Expository Writing Contest Winners
Female Performers as a Marketable Means of Domesticating Post-War Women
Bobbie L. J. Godbey (first prize, 2002)
Race: A Problem in Death Penalty Cases
Jennifer Narus (second prize, 2002)

Part Two: Learning about English 102
Welcome to English 102
Outcomes Statement for English 102 at West Virginia University
English 102 Course Goals
English 102 Policies and Procedures
General Grade Descriptors for English 102
Assignment Overviews
Procedural Basics
English 102 Support

Part Three: Learning by Doing
Entering Academic Conversations, *Julie Vedder*
Reading and Interpreting Arguments, *Robert Fanning*
Evaluating Internet Sources, Greg Thumm
Workshop on Taking Notes, Elizabeth C. Junkett
Paraphrasing and Summarizing, *Carolyn Nelson*
How to Incorporate Sources Into Your Paper, *Tim Sweet*
Using Evidence, *Beth Madison*
You Want us to WHAT?? But This is A Writing Course. . . or
Preparing the Oral Presentation, *JoAnn Dadisman*

Part Four: The Libraries

- Library Resources and Services, *Jing Qiu*
 Using the Evansdale Library, *Barbara LaGodna*
 Using the Health Sciences Library, *Virginia Bender*
 Government Documents in the WVU Libraries, *Christine Chang*
 West Virginia and Regional History Collection, *Harold Malcolm Forbes*
 The Appalachian Collection, *Jo B. Brown*
 The Map Collection, *Christine Chang*
 The Rare Books Room, *Harold Malcolm Forbes*

Part Five: Using Library Resources

- MountainLynx: The WVU Library Online Catalog, *Jing Qiu*
 Periodical Articles, *Penny Pugh*
 How to Find Book Reviews, *Hilary Fredette*
 Locating Biographical Information, *Marian G. Armour-Gemmen*
 Welcome to WVU Libraries' Web Services for English 102 Students,
Beth Jane Toren
 What to Do When We Don't Have It: Using Interlibrary Loan,
Hilary Fredette

APPENDIX 2

Excerpt and Organizational Structure from the Revised *Student Guide to Introductory Composition at Purdue*

This excerpt from the introduction illustrates that the new student guide positions students as asking both mediated and authentic questions (the former represented by departmental paraphrasing and the latter represented by an imposed watermark in the ICaP program font). Each section of the guide was designed this way, offering recipients and stakeholders a visual representation of the tensions ICaP sometimes felt between students' questions and its own rhetoric.

WHAT IS INTRODUCTORY COMPOSITION?

Students at Purdue have diverse academic interests and professional goals. And although not every student at Purdue is an English major or strives to become a career writer, the ability to communicate creatively and effectively is important to all of us for several reasons: 1) it provides us an outlet for sharing our ideas and an opportunity for making those ideas better, 2) it empowers us to understand different conventions, genres, groups, societies, and cultures, and 3) it allows us to have a voice in multiple academic, civic, and personal situations. In short, writing is a way of learning that spans all fields and disciplines, it is broadly defined to include many reasons for and methods of composing.

Similar discursive strategies are at work in the reorganization of this guide's original structure:

Organization of Old Student Guide

- Introduction
- Introductory Composition Courses
 - English 101
 - English 102
 - English 103
- Class Policies and Grading
- General Grade Guidelines
- Honesty and Use of Sources
- What You Can Expect in FYC
- If You Have Problems

Organization of New Student Guide

- What is Introductory Composition?
- Are all Introductory Composition classes the same?
 - English 106 (including English 106I)
 - English 108
- Do all Introductory Composition instructors teach the same way?
 - Instructor Policies
 - Academic Honesty
 - Evaluation and Grading
- What if I want more help with or resources for my composition class?
 - Writing Center
 - Digital Learning Collaboratory
 - Adaptive Programs
- What if problems arise?

NOTES

¹ Because this is a feminist collaborative effort, the coauthors are listed in ascending alphabetical order and not in a pre-determined order of importance.

² By "guide" we mean to describe those texts that help readers - makers and users - understand and negotiate a course. Guides might include explicit features like policies and procedures, resources, and specific information - activities or articles - in support of course outcomes. We use "student guide" to refer to the *Student Guide to Introductory Composition at Purdue University*, which is addressed specifically to the students and implicitly to the instructors, and "course guide" to

refer to the WVU guide to English 102, which is addressed to students but also serves as teachers' primary introduction to the course.

³ In the "Guest Editors' Column" of the 2002 Special Issue of *Technical Communication Quarterly*, Tracy Bridgeford and Michael Moore focus on Atwill's interpretation of *techné* as "an underlying context" for their discussion of the teaching of technical writing and technical communication (125). We extend that discussion into the writing of program documents.

⁴ Engeström's model of the structure of human activity and its stages can be viewed on Web site of the University of Helsinki's Center for Activity Theory and Developmental Work Research (<http://www.edu.helsinki.fi/activity/pages/chat-andddwr/activitysystem/>).

⁵ Although this discussion focuses on our use of curricular guides, we regularly interact with and value the other tools that accomplish this objective, including e-mails, statements of policy, workshop materials, meetings, Web sites, and listservs. As well, we acknowledge that more implicit tools—totems and taboos of different communities—also shape the use and interpretation of explicit rules and relationships.

⁶ Efforts to rewrite program documents quickly become opportunities for curricular, programmatic, and institutional reflection, which we further liken to Carolyn Miller's notion of recurrent rhetorical situations (157), and Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin's "duality" of rhetorical structure in "Rethinking Genre from a Sociocognitive Perspective" (493). In the former, Miller argues for genres as ethnomethodological classifications—ones that "seek to explicate the knowledge that practice creates" (156). In the latter, Berkenkotter and Huckin attend to disciplinary structures as simultaneous medium and outcome.

⁷ That is, approximately thirty-five tenured and tenure-track faculty, part-time adjuncts, full-time lecturers; graduate teaching assistants teach 2,500 students in classes of twenty-two students each year. Each student is required to buy the course guide.

⁸ In addition to revising the course guide, Ryan—in collaboration with administrators and the undergraduate writing committee—developed a peer mentoring program, an instructor's Web site and an improved contractual arrangement for adjuncts.

⁹ Under the former system, FYC at Purdue offered three courses: the two-semester English 101–102 sequence, culminating in academic writing and research, and English 103, a one-semester course for accelerated students. Depending on placement and major, some students enrolled in as many as six hours of composition, some only three, and some students none, according to whether they tested-out or whether their major required a second semester of composition. Therefore, not all Purdue students were guaranteed to experience guided instruction in academic

writing, research, or visual rhetoric. English 106 (the four-credit one-semester replacement for the six-credit English 101–102 sequence) and English 108 (formerly English 103) have eliminated the test-out option, ensuring that more students will take FYC, although exemptions from English 108 are still possible.

¹⁰ At Purdue, this support extends beyond the daily classroom into opportunities for professional and pedagogical development, in part as a way of encouraging classroom-based research that can contribute to current knowledge about what makes effective composition practices.

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(Re)Casting the Spell of Assessment

Huot, Brian *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning*. Logan: Utah State UP. 2002. 216 pages. \$21.95 (paper).

Shane Borrowman

I regularly teach courses in composition pedagogy for students in secondary education. They represent a range of experience, but all of them are far more savvy about (and scared by) large-scale assessment than I was as an undergraduate learning to teach English. This is evident particularly when we turn to discussions of what Huot refers to as “assessment as something done because of a deficit in student training or teacher responsibility” and assessment as “the tool of administrators and politicians who [wish] to maintain an efficient and accountable educational bureaucracy” (1). These almost-educators must pass the Washington Educator Skills Test—Basic (WEST-B) and the Washington Educator Skills Test—Endorsements (WEST-E). They must pass these standardized tests in order to become certified; concurrently, they must learn to teach their students to read, edit, and write in ways that satisfy Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs) and lead to student success on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL)—plus AP tests and the SAT and the ACT. Compared to contemporary students’ experience, my education in the art of teaching was acronym free and almost willfully ignorant of high-stakes large-scale assessment.

In *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment for Teaching and Learning*, Brian Huot speaks to two audiences—scholars and administrators working in assessment and teachers hypnotized by the cobra-like spell of assessment. The clarity of the text is remarkable, given the disparate needs and knowledge of these different audiences, as is the breadth and depth of its coverage. Although Huot explains his own rationale behind this work in chapter one, “(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment,” perhaps the strongest reason for teachers and scholars in rhetoric and composition to read the text is articu-

lated in chapter four (“Toward a New Theory of Writing Assessment”). Here Huot observes that “writing teachers and scholars feel frustrated by [and] cut off from” the study of assessment, given its technical jargon and apparatus with its roots deep in the measurement community—leaving these outsiders feeling “inadequate and naïve” (81).

As he grounds his work in the history and theory of assessment, Huot’s argument takes some intriguing turns. In chapter two, “Writing Assessment as a Field of Study,” Huot reframes the history of writing assessment as a *multidisciplinary* rather than an *interdisciplinary* area of study, “since it has taken place within various disciplines” rather than across them (25)—with college English and educational measurement identified as the two best-represented groups (29). Huot rereads the three most common views of the history of writing assessment as they are articulated by Edward M. White and Kathleen Blake Yancey, from college English, and Roberta Camp, from educational measurement, with a particular focus on the issues of reliability and validity. The latter topic, Huot argues, can “provide a unifying focus that permits those in different fields to bridge gaps and make connections” (46). The remainder of this chapter is a structured analysis of the concept of “validity and the act of validation as argument” (53).

For teachers, chapters three and five are particularly engaging—chapters where Huot covers “Assessing, Grading, Testing and Teaching Writing” and “Reading Like a Teacher,” respectively. He observes that assessing student writing is “often framed [in our professional discourse] as the worst aspect of the job of teaching student writers” (63). Because of this uneasy attitude toward the activity that consumes the bulk of a writing teacher’s time, testing, assessing, and grading are lumped together, and the theoretical and pedagogical issues facing each issue are only haphazardly interrogated. Rather than marginalizing assessment practices in our discourse and in our classrooms, Huot argues that assessment should “become a more integral part of our pedagogy” (77) and maintains that a shift in practice could and should lead to a tectonic shift in our “beliefs, assumptions and attitudes” (79). Extending the work of chapter three, chapter five focuses the shift for which Huot argues on a single, narrow area: teacher response to student essays. Here, Huot articulates a theory of response designed to create “a dialectic between the way we think about language and teaching and the way we read and respond to student writing” (112).

Chapter six, “Writing Assessment as Technology Research,” presents the notion that “assessment [is] a technology in and of itself” (137). Supporting this view, Huot briefly traces the history of assessment as a “creation of the twentieth century” social scientists geared, in the case of writing assess-

ment, evermore toward the production of “high enough rates of interrater reliability” (137–38). Concern with reliability, rather than validity, guides scholarship and practice. The immediate casualty of this production drive, of course, was the messy act of writing itself, the direct assessment of which fell out of favor (and practice) until the technology of assessment developed enough to allow student writing to be reliably, if not validly, assessed. Driven by concerns about reliability, however, direct assessment of writing caused assessment researchers to focus “on how to create procedures for reading and scoring student writing in which teachers could agree” (144). Like Peter Elbow, Huot argues that the training that produces such reliable scoring creates an unnatural reading environment only dimly related to the normal atmosphere in which reading takes place. Extended to its logical (or illogical) end, the link between reliability and the creation of an unnatural reader and reading has led to the development of computer programs that simulate the scoring of a human reader (144–46). This focus on reliability at the expense of other concerns affects assessment practices and also assessment research—where the focus should be on asking “what we want to know about students” rather than on “the writing of prompts and rubrics, the training of raters, and ultimately the production of reliable scores” (163).

Huot’s final chapter, “Writing Assessment Practice,” is summative, and thus works as a conclusion, but its narrative construction and reflective approach make it perhaps the most engaging section of the book. Considering the regularly posted calls for help with assessment that appear on the wpa-l (a listserv for writing program administrators based at Arizona State University East and hosted by David Schwalm and Barry Maid), Huot argues that in the field of English “there appears to be no cumulative culture about assessment practice, since similar requests are made over and over” (171). Drawing on these common calls for aid and comfort, Huot unpacks and interrogates four broad, general assumptions about assessing and teaching writing and administering writing programs: (1) those who administer writing programs do not consider expertise in assessment important; (2) teaching and administering a writing program exist separately from one another and from assessment theory and practice; (3) writing assessment is generally reactive rather than proactive; and (4) the people who decide when and how to assess writing are generally neither the people who teach writing nor the people who administer writing programs. These four “daunting” assumptions (171–172) allow Huot to summarize the ideas presented in the previous six chapters and lead to his conclusion that “in order to (re)articulate assessment as something controlled by teachers to promote teaching and learning, teachers must learn not to avoid it or to leave it in the hands of professional testers or administrators” (190–191).

In the end, I am left with two images: (1) the image of the future teachers whom I train, teachers of writing already steeped in an awareness of assessment as something controlled by, something owned and driven by, outsiders rather than teachers and (2) “the scene in *The Wizard of Oz* in which the Wicked Witch rubs her hands together with a pensive look on her face cackling, “These things must be done delicately, or you’ll hurt the spell” (190). The two images—the first my own and the second from Huot—contain the lesson of *(Re)Articulating Writing Assessment*. Teachers of writing (along with the teachers of the teachers and the administrators of writing programs) must think of assessment as something over which they can and must exert some control. Assessment is a technology, not a magical spell whose ingredients are obscure and whose language is arcane. Rather than living under the pseudo-spell of assessment, teachers, scholars, and administrators must (re)cast assessment in a new, more proactive, more productive manner.



Contributors to WPA 28.3

Shane Borrowman is a former WPA at Gonzaga University, where he teaches introductory courses in writing and literature, advanced studies in drama and fiction (focused primarily on the literatures of the American West and of the Vietnam War), and writing and literature pedagogy. His edited collection, *Trauma and the Teaching of Writing*, will be published by the State University of New York Press in January 2005. Currently, he is editing (with Edward M. White) a rhetoric and reader on issues of social justice in America.

Barb Blakely Duffelmeyer teaches popular culture analysis and graduate courses in critical composition pedagogy, qualitative research methodology, and the seminar for new teaching assistants at Iowa State University. She has published on critical computer literacy, critical composition pedagogy, and TA development in *Computers and Composition*, *Pedagogy*, *Explorations in Media Ecology*, *Composition Forum*, and *The Journal of Visual Literacy*. She has presented at NCTE, CCCC, Computers and Writing, and Rhetoric Society of America.

Tarez Samra Graban is a Ph.D. candidate in English at Purdue University where she regularly teaches first-year and accelerated first-year composition, written communication for ESL graduate students, and oral English proficiency. From 1999-2001, she served as mentor for and then director of Marietta College's writing center in Marietta, Ohio. Her scholarship includes work in humor studies, feminist rhetoric, discourse analysis, writing pedagogies, and writing program administration.

Susanmarie Harrington is Professor of English and Director of Writing at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. With Linda Adler-Kassner, she is the author of *Basic Writing as a Political Act* (Hampton). She has published numerous articles on writing assessment and writing program administration.

Amy Martin directs the writing centers at Pace University's New York City and Westchester County campuses and is an assistant professor of English. Her publications have appeared or will appear in *Academic Exchange Quarterly*, *Issues in Writing*, *Writing on the Edge*, and the collection *The Writing Center Director's Resource Book*. Among her research interests are the politics of writing centers, intellectual property and plagiarism, and student collaboration.

(Contributors Continued)

Jeanne Marie Rose is Assistant Professor of English and Composition Coordinator at Penn State Berks, where she teaches courses in first-year composition, professional writing, and American literature. Her research focuses on the institutional status of composition, specifically the relationship between composition and literature. She recently published in *Computers and Composition*.

Kathleen J. Ryan is Assistant Professor of English and the Undergraduate Writing Coordinator at West Virginia University. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in composition pedagogy. Her research interests include rhetorical memory, feminist rhetorical studies, teacher education, and theorizing writing program administration.

Announcements

WPA 2005 Summer Conference, Workshop, and Institutes

Workshop, July 3-7, 2005 Conference July 7-10, 2005
Conference Theme: Writing as Writing Program Administrators
University of Alaska Anchorage

In the summer of 2005, WPA will be held in Anchorage, AK, a multi-cultural city of approximately 260,000 residents that sits at the base of the Chugach Mountains and along the coast of Cook Inlet in South-Central Alaska. The city has a major international airport, railroad passenger service, municipal bus service, and many amenities.

Alaska has a unique history and culture and provides some of the most stunningly beautiful scenery in the world. And as Elaine Maimon, Chancellor of University of Alaska Anchorage and one of the plenary speakers said, "Anchorage is the best possible place to be in July. No one will want to leave." Temperatures are in the cool 50s in the evenings and the pleasant 60s and 70s during the day. The food is good – summer brings fresh halibut and salmon. The days are long – summer nights enjoy the midnight sun. Summer visitors can browse through a museum, shop the open-air markets, enjoy the patio at local eateries, watch wildlife from a safe distance, ride a bike on a paved bike trail, or take a hike in the wilderness.

At the University of Alaska Anchorage in July 2005, WPAs, composition teachers, and others from many institutions will gather for the purpose of scholarly and social exchange. In plenary sessions, small-group discussion sessions, mini workshops, and concurrent sessions, participants will consider genres and purposes of the writing we do as writing program administrators, addressing such topics as

- Writing with, for, and about the writing programs WPAs lead
- Writing about the work of writing program administration
- Writing research and scholarship that is informed by their work as WPAs
- Writing with and for other WPAs
- Other issues of shared interest and concern to the WPAs in programs for first-year composition professional writing, writing centers, and writing across the curriculum.

(Announcements Continued)

Preceding the conference, a workshop focusing on practices for people new to a WPA position is available. Workshop participants gather Sunday afternoon, July 3, and meet all day every day through Thursday morning, July 7. Workshop leaders Irwin (Bud) Weiser (Purdue University) and Lauren Fitzgerald (Yeshiva University) will also be available for one-to-one consultations in the evenings.

To make reservations or learn more about the accommodations and the UAA campus, go to this website: <http://www.uaa.alaska.edu/conferences>. Reservations can be made online, or forms can be faxed (907-751-7377).

Assessment Institute July 7, 2005

WPA offers an assessment institute on Thursday, July 7, from 9:00 to 4:00. This workshop is limited to ten participants. The \$135 fee includes lunch, and morning and afternoon snack breaks. This institute will be held on the UAA campus at The Commons. Institute leaders are Meg Morgan, George Meese, and John Lovas

Technology Institute July 7, 2005

New this year, WPA will offer a technology institute on Thursday, July 7, from 9:00 to 4:00. This workshop is limited to ten participants. The \$135 fee includes lunch, and morning and afternoon snack breaks. This institute will be held on the UAA campus in Gordon Hartlieb Hall. Institute leaders are Samantha Blackmon (Purdue University), Barbara Schneider (University of Toledo) and Will Banks (East Carolina University)

Call for Proposals: We solicit proposals for *The Eighth National Writing Across the Curriculum Conference, May 18-20, 2006, at Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina.*

We encourage proposals from all disciplines—and from cross disciplinary teams—on a wide range of topics of interest to faculty, graduate students, and administrators at two and four year colleges. These topics include: WAC: writing across the curriculum; WID: writing in the disciplines; CAC: communication across the curriculum, which includes oral, visual, digital, and written communication; and ECAC: electronic communication across the curriculum. The keynote address will be delivered by Anne Herrington and Charles Moran, both of the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. *Proposal Deadline: September 26, 2005.*

(Announcements Continued)

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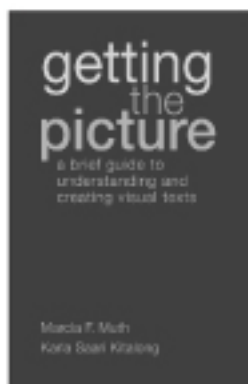
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