Faculty Beliefs in Successful Writing Fellow Partnerships: How Do Faculty Understand Teaching, Learning, and Writing?

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Abstract: Faculty hold beliefs about students, how they learn, the nature of knowledge, and academic tasks like reading and writing. These beliefs may be difficult to access (Fives & Buehl, 2012) and change (Richardson, 1996), and there may be inconsistencies with regard to triangulating espoused beliefs with actual teaching practices (Hora, 2014). Given the challenges of identifying and changing faculty beliefs, this study explores faculty work with writing fellows as a mHYPERLINK "http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode" \o "Read the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License" modifications. Findings suggest that faculty beliefs informed and were informed by their work with the writing fellows. Implications include awarding writing fellow partnerships to faculty with constructivist beliefs about learning and writing and the use of writing fellows as an authentic context to reveal faculty epistemologies.

Introduction

Understanding faculty beliefs has been the focus of educational research and faculty development for a quarter of a century (Fives & Buehl, 2012), but two key challenges face this line of work: (1) accessing teacher beliefs, that is revealing them and corroborating stated beliefs with classroom practice (Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2002) and (2) shifting teacher beliefs, as they are generally understood to be resistant to change (Pajares, 1992; Richardson, 1996).

While researchers in education and educational psychology have been exploring the construct of faculty beliefs, scholars in composition studies and writing program administration have been implementing writing fellow programs as a means to promote and support faculty change. As educational researchers and faculty developers have worked to better understand instructor beliefs, writing across the curriculum programs (Haring-Smith, 1992; Zawacki, 2008) and writing centers (Soven, 2001) have worked to support and augment course-specific writing instruction via writing fellows. Writing fellows, or writing mentors, are students who serve as course-embedded writing tutors and work directly with the course instructor to provide course-specific writing support. Writing fellows may conference with students, provide written feedback on students' drafts, help faculty compose prompts and stage assignments, and give some classroom instruction around the writing process. In the case of our university context, fellows do not grade writing, but instead offer feedback to support students' revision of writing assignments in the course.

As prior research suggests that it is challenging to reveal faculty beliefs, a primary goal of this study was to use the context of the writing fellow partnership to explore faculty beliefs about student learning, knowing, and writing. Further, given that earlier work suggested that faculty beliefs are difficult to change (Richardson, 1996), an additional goal of the work reported here was to understand the potential of writing fellow partnerships as prompting faculty change. Thus, the goal of this study was twofold: to collect interview data in which faculty discuss the context of writing fellow partnerships and their revised course documents, then seek trends in the data to (1) illustrate and animate beliefs about learning, teaching, knowing and (2) understand ways that working with writing fellows may challenge and even change these faculty beliefs.

This article presents analyses of interview data from three university faculty from different disciplines who had successfully worked with writing fellows during the previous semester. In order to explore these faculty members' beliefs about learning and knowing, as well as the way they understand student writing processes specifically, I conducted interviews with each faculty member about their writing fellow partnerships, course, and assignment revisions. I then analyzed the transcripts for evidence of faculty members' epistemologies, understood as their beliefs about teaching, learning, and academic tasks such as student writing.

The following research questions guided this inquiry:

1. What can we learn about faculty members' beliefs about learning and writing by studying successful writing fellow partnerships?
2. In what ways, if at all, does working with a writing fellow prompt shifts in faculty members' beliefs about learning and writing?

Conceptual Framework

Writing Intensive Courses and Writing Fellows

For over two decades, many colleges and universities have been designating and requiring "writing intensive" courses as part of their curricula (Kuh, 2008). Identified as a high impact practice by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (Kuh, 2013), writing intensive courses, generally speaking, are those that require a certain amount of writing and provide support for writing via scaffolded assignments and smaller class sizes. Students may take these courses as part of their major or general education requirements.

Some writing fellow programs have developed as a means to support writing intensive courses. Since the early writing fellow programs were established in universities during the 1990's, Writing across the Curriculum researchers have explored the nature of writing fellow partnerships as a means to support student learning as well as to instigate curricular change relative to faculty assigning, supporting, and evaluating student writing. Terry Myers Zawacki (2008) explained that writing fellow programs, and the intensive writing courses that they support, are grounded in an instructional epistemology that emphasizes writing as a means to promote learning and that recognizes students "need writing instruction throughout their academic careers…and that faculty across the curriculum are responsible for this instruction" (p.3). Other scholars have described writing fellows situated in a unique role where they can serve as liaison between students and faculty as each group enters the discourse of the other (Mullin, Schorn, Turner, Hertz, Davidson, & Baca, 2008). In this way, fellows serve as "collaborative mediators" (p.4), supporting students' understanding of faculty expectations and vice-versa.

Writing fellows in current context. At the site of the study reported here, the campus was in its third year of a large General Education (GE) revision to include designating courses as Writing Intensive and requiring students to take two of them in order to graduate. "Writing Intensive" was

explicitly defined by this campus's GE Governance Documents as requiring that students revise at least one assignment after receiving feedback from the instructor, peers, or the writing fellow (Appendix A). For this campus, designating "WI" courses, and requiring them of students, was a new practice, part of the faculty-led GE implementation that began three years prior. In order to receive this designation, the course syllabi had to specify a quantity of graded writing (3000 words and 30% of course grade) and at least one structured feedback-revision cycle for a writing assignment during the semester. The writing fellow program was funded as a means to support this process-based model of writing instruction and designed to work in tandem with the university's existing writing center (Moriarty, Baer, Diven, Hager, & McNabb, 2016).

With regard to the logistics of assigning writing fellows on this campus, two months before the semester begins a call for applications is sent out via the faculty email list (Appendix B). Writing fellows are granted based on course designation as "Writing Intensive" in the campus-wide Gen Ed revision and anticipated course enrollment, with higher enrollments receiving preference. In the application, the course faculty member identifies and invites the student that he or she would like to serve in role of writing fellow. Once the partnership has been approved by the Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) Director, the WAC Director meets with the faculty member and writing fellow to compose a job description for the writing fellow role. The faculty member revises the course syllabus to include student meetings with the writing fellow and to allow for writing fellow feedback of assignment drafts. The WAC Director supports the writing fellow with relevant readings about responding to student writing and meets with the writing fellow three times across the semester to check in about the partnership. Writing Fellows are paid $11 an hour and work between 60-90 hours across the 16-week semester. Assessment artifacts include exit reports and student surveys. These practices are in line with those of other writing fellow programs (Moriarty, Baer, Diven, Hager, & McNabb, 2016).

Faculty Beliefs in Teaching and Learning Contexts

Thoughtful review work by Fives and Buehl (2012) and Fang (1996) helped us understand that the construct of teacher beliefs has been broadly, and somewhat differently, defined across decades of research. For the purposes of the current study, beliefs are understood as a concept that differs from knowledge (Richardson, 1996) in that they are beliefs *about* knowing and include both explicit (Fives & Buehl, 2012) and implicit or tacit (Kagan, 1992) assumptions about students, how they learn, and their relation to the course content. Beliefs differ from knowledge in that beliefs have a stronger affective characteristic and may be "rooted in episodic memory" (Strømso & Bråten, 2011, p.55), to include teachers' prior experiences as students themselves and in other prior learning contexts.

Studies using epistemological belief scales. Of particular importance for the current study are teachers' epistemological beliefs, which are defined as an understanding about the nature and speed of learning and stability of knowledge (Schommer, 1993.) Also important are instructors' conceptualizations of teaching and learning relative to student writing.

Research exploring epistemological beliefs have used a variety of approaches, ranging from qualitative interviews (Baxter Magdola, 2004; King & Kitchener, 2004; Perry, 1999) and textual analysis (Hays, Brandt, & Chantry 1988) to quantitative scales (Schommer, 1993; Schraw, Bendixen, Dunkle, 2002) to measure individuals' beliefs about learning, knowledge, and certainty. A widely-used scale, the Epistemological Beliefs Questionnaire, developed by Marlene Schommer (1993), has been used across multiple studies and contexts in an effort to better understand the construct of epistemological beliefs and its relationship to other constructs and behaviors. For that reason, the research reported here will rely on the definition of epistemological beliefs as articulated by the Epistemological Beliefs Questionnaire, a Likert-scale measure consisting of 63-items that assesses

belief in quick, fixed ability to learn and simple, certain knowledge and defines epistemological beliefs in those terms.

Prior work with the Epistemological Beliefs Questionnaire and similar quantitative measures of knowledge beliefs have linked these beliefs to students' academic performance. There is evidence that students' epistemological beliefs play an important role in students' learning and academic performance in tasks like reading (Haas, 1994; Schommer-Aikins & Easter, 2006), rhetorical writing (Neely, 2014; Penrose & Geisler, 1994), and overall grades (Schommer, 2002; Schommer, Crouse, & Rhodes, 1992). Students who view knowledge as less certain and simple, and view learning as a slow skill that can be acquired, tend to perform better on academic tasks compared to students who view knowledge as stable and certain and learning abilities as fixed.

However, less attention has been paid to teachers' epistemological beliefs and the potential links among teachers' beliefs, instructional practices, and pedagogical decisions. Studies that have explored the epistemological beliefs of teachers report on those at the K-12 and pre-service levels. For example, Bendixen and Corkill's (2011) cross-sectional study of K-12 teachers, using a measure derived from Schommer's Epistemological Beliefs Questionnaire, the Epistemological Beliefs Inventory (Schraw, Bendixen, Dunkle, 2002), found that pre-service teachers held different epistemological beliefs compared to practicing new teachers, whose beliefs were also different from those who had been teaching for over five years. Teachers with more experience viewed knowledge as more complex when compared to the beliefs of teachers with fewer years of experience. Further, teachers with more experience also tended to believe that the students' abilities to learn were more fixed and stable when compared to the learning beliefs of more novice teachers.

With regard to the relationship between pre-service teachers' epistemological beliefs and their perceptions of teaching, Chan & Elliott (2004) found a significant positive correlation between traditional views of teaching—viewing teaching as the transmitting of knowledge to a relatively passive learners—and the epistemological belief of fixed ability to learn, certain knowledge, and stable, expert knowledge per the Epistemological Belief Questionnaire. Thus, pre-service teachers who viewed teaching as a simple transmission of knowledge also had simple, stable views of knowledge itself and a belief that the ability to learn was a fixed, stable trait in students.

Another study, this one of practicing teachers, accounted for the way that beliefs may relate to instructional behaviors in the classroom. Weinstock and Roth (2011) found middle school teachers' epistemologies were related to teachers' support for student autonomy, assessing teachers' epistemological beliefs via Hofer's (2000) Personal Epistemology Questionnaire, a scale assessing teachers' views of certainty, simplicity, and justification of knowledge. In order to account for support for student autonomy, the researchers administered a scale to students asking them the extent to which the teacher (a) considered the students' perspective, (b) provided choices to students, (c) encouraged independent thinking. Correlational analysis indicated that teachers who had more sophisticated epistemological beliefs also had students who reported that those teachers considered their perspectives more frequently in the classroom, supporting a relationship between beliefs and instructional behavior. Another study involving pre-service K-12 teachers related their epistemological beliefs, assessed via a modified epistemological belief measure, to their conceptions of teaching and found that more "sophisticated" beliefs predicted more constructivist teaching strategies, as reported in interviews (Cheng, Chan, Tang, & Cheng, 2009).

Qualitative work exploring faculty beliefs and challenges of triangulation. Other studies have operationalized the construct of teacher beliefs via more qualitative means, not using epistemological belief scales but instead using interview assessments to explore faculty beliefs about the nature of student learning and knowledge. For instance, interviews with college faculty who had won teaching awards made connections between epistemological beliefs and "constructivist" teaching practices,

which refers to viewing teaching as a complex building of knowledge by students via reasoning, with the role of teacher as one of facilitator as opposed to knowledge transmitter (Dunkin & Precians, 1992).

Despite the variety of studies reported above, and the range of quantitative and qualitative approaches, there are key limitations in that they provide self-reported data from teachers about their beliefs. In many cases, these self-reported beliefs, whether captured via scales, interviews, or both, are not often coordinated via additional data sources, such as evidence to include class observation or assignment artifacts. Several studies address this issue of triangulation, including work by Hora (2014) that coordinated interview data about faculty beliefs about learning with classroom case-study observations. Findings suggested that beliefs seemed to related to the pedagogical decisions of faculty, but that other factors, including time constraints, content, class size, departmental culture and workload, and availability of teaching tools also heavily influenced the instructors' decisions in observed class sessions. This suggested that, while beliefs may influence instructor choices, there are other factors at play as well.

Earlier work by Hillocks (1999) studied first year writing faculty members' epistemological beliefs via interviews and coordinated that data set with classroom observations. Analyses found alignment between teacher beliefs about knowledge, and especially the task of writing, and their instructional practices, with faculty whom Hillocks categorized as holding more "objectivist" stances also using more mechanics and usage worksheets and lecture-style instruction. This objectivist position was explained as a more certain and stable view of knowledge and error. As with other studies of pedagogical decisions, Hillocks found a host of other factors, including attitudes toward students and teaching, knowledge of students, professional identity, and institutional constraints as also influencing teaching practices. However, even with "noise" from these other influences, he identified a relationship between epistemology, as revealed in interviews, and practice, as seen in classroom observations.

A more recent study of English language teachers' beliefs found incongruences between beliefs and practice, attributable to competing considerations and the complexity of classroom and university teaching cultures. Phipps and Borg (2009) observed and interviewed, using stimulated recall, three experienced English as a foreign language teachers working in a new university context of a language preparation program. Faculty in this study reported beliefs about language teaching that were consistent with valuing situated language instruction (Borg, 2003), which includes teaching grammar in context as opposed to worksheet-style exercises. However, observations and interviews showed that some faculty did teach decontextualized grammar lessons in order to meet the expectations of the students, a value in competition with their beliefs. Misalignment also occurred between stated beliefs and actual practice regarding group work; one faculty participant stated beliefs that included valuing collaborative group work, but she avoided opportunities for student group work in the observed lesson. When asked about this, she reported concern about classroom management and a loss of control as teacher-leader of the activity. Phipps and Borg reported that reflection around these incongruences were critical moments for the language teachers' growth, and that some inconsistencies were actually resolved in the course of the investigation. Thus, while faculty beliefs may inform *intended* practice, a conclusion of other studies reviewed here, sometimes competing factors may get in the way of *actual* practice.

Work providing syntheses of teacher belief studies. In her synthesis of over two dozen studies regarding teacher beliefs, Kagan (1992) found these beliefs to be "congruent with teaching styles" (p. 66) and relatively unchanging. That is, in the studies she reviewed classroom practices were consistent with teachers' conceptions about student learning and beliefs about good teaching. Her review highlighted the difficulty of accessing these beliefs, with methodologies ranging from the quantitative scales to assess teacher beliefs to retrospective interviews using videotaped lessons of

teachers. Thus, finding methods to tap into the beliefs that underlie teacher practice is of great interest to researchers. Further, all of the studies she reviewed explored the beliefs of K-12 teachers, a population of teachers that is critical to research, but studies of college and university faculty were not included in the review, perhaps due to the limited number of studies of faculty beliefs.

Another large-scale synthesis project specifically included studies of college faculty beliefs. Kane, Sandretto, and Heath's (2002) extensive review of over 50 studies of the beliefs of university academics provided the critique that over half of the studies made claims about the links between espoused and actual beliefs, but really only collected data on espoused beliefs. In this way, much of the research on faculty beliefs really only tells "half the story" (Kane et al., p. 184) because these studies reported on data that only included interview or questionnaire data about faculty *espoused* beliefs, which may not be congruent with faculty members' actual *practice*. Because of this, Kane and colleagues issued a call for studies to triangulate interview and other data that indirectly assess faculty beliefs with data that includes observation, direct reflection, think aloud protocol, or document analysis as a means to account for actual classroom practice.

Systems of Highly Personal Pedagogies

The aforementioned research draws connections between belief and practice, but also complicates the relationship between beliefs and practice with other realities, including time constraints, and institutional and departmental cultures and expectations. Add to this the unique prior experience of every faculty member who has delivered a course—identity, attitudes, experiences as students, readers, and thinkers—and we see that each teacher brings a distinct and idiosyncratic perspective to each instructional encounter. Kagan (1992) used the term "highly personalized pedagogies" (p.74) to describe the rich belief system that teachers develop as they gather classroom experience. Highly personalized pedagogies inform, and constrain, teachers' "perceptions, judgments, and behaviors" (p.74) within instructional encounters and contexts. Highly personalized pedagogies, according to Kagan, include teachers' ideas about students, learning, classrooms, and content (p.66) and encompass the personalness of teaching practice and confluence of factors that contribute to it. These characteristics account for the creative and often private problem solving practices that teachers engage in within classroom contexts.

Factors influencing teacher beliefs. A body of work about teachers' beliefs suggests that they are informed by non-teaching experiences. For instance, years of classroom encounters as students and learners (Holt-Reynolds, 1992; Kane et al., 2002) shape teaching beliefs. Faculty members' research identities may also inform teaching beliefs (Elen, Lindblom-Ylänne, & Clement, 2007). In addition, their fields, each with its own assumptions about knowledge and what constitutes evidence, also may influence beliefs about teaching within that discipline, which Kagan called "orientation to subject." Thus, highly personalized pedagogies seem to be related to the epistemological approach of the discipline in which faculty conduct their research as well as faculty members' identities as experts and researchers (Strømso & Bråten, 2011).

Writing Fellows as Context to Reveal Faculty Beliefs

In sum, teachers' instructional choices are informed in part by their beliefs, but other mitigating factors may influence classroom choices. We have tentative understanding about teachers' beliefs and how they are shaped. Faculty beliefs arise from the unique range of experiences, in school and out of school, that instructors gather as learners across contexts and build upon as they gather teaching experiences. Thus, interventions such as faculty development or teacher education may be outweighed by the influence of these established prior beliefs (Richardson, 1996). Put another way, even the most well-designed and well-intentioned Writing across the Curriculum programming may

struggle to "move the needle" with regard to shifting faculty beliefs about students' learning and their beliefs about academic tasks like writing.

Given the dual challenge of identifying (Fives & Buehl, 2012) and changing faculty beliefs, exploring faculty work with writing fellows may provide a unique context in which faculty can make their beliefs about teaching, learning, and writing explicit. In addition, working with a writing fellow may also provide a context in which faculty are motivated to test new practices relative to assigning and supporting student writing given the writing fellow's job description. This study uses the context of writing fellows to access faculty members' epistemological beliefs and course practices via semi-structured interviews.

Method

Procedure

Identification of successful writing fellow partnerships. Of the 15 faculty who worked with writing fellows during this Spring semester, five faculty writing fellow partnerships received among the highest ratings from students enrolled in the supported courses on the Writing Fellow Survey. Student ratings on the question "To what extent was your work with the writing fellow helpful?" averaged 3.87 (SD 0.11) or above across this group of writing fellow partnerships on a 4-point scale. The average across the group for the semester was 3.74 (SD 0.32), significantly lower than the group of "highly successful" partnerships ($p<.05$).

After receiving Institutional Review Board approval for the study, I contacted the five faculty whose writing fellow partnerships were in the top third in terms of student ratings on the helpfulness question mentioned above. Three faculty agreed to participate in 90-minute, semi-structured interviews.

Participants

Faculty were identified from a pool who had worked with writing fellows during the previous semester and whose writing fellow partnerships were identified as "highly successful" via student survey results.

Adam. A full professor in the College of Business, Adam had been teaching at the college level for approximately 40 years. He holds a Ph.D. in Marketing and teaches both undergraduate and graduate-level courses in service marketing, for which he had received multiple teaching awards.

Linda. As an instructor in the Visual and Performing Arts program, Linda teaches both upper and lower division courses in Art History. She holds a Master's degree in History and had been teaching at the college level for about 5 years. Her upper-division courses historicize modern phenomenon such as design in science fiction films and are popular among students.

Samuel. Samuel is an Associate Professor in the Political Science department and teaches courses on constitutional law and political theory, holding a Ph.D. in Government. He had been teaching at the college level for approximately 11 years.

Faculty interviews. The three faculty were asked about the experience of working with the writing fellow. The interview guide is available in Appendix C.

Course documents. During the interview sessions, I presented faculty with their course materials, including their syllabi and assignment prompts, which they had included in their writing fellow application materials. During the interviews, I asked them to provide me with the syllabi and revised assignment prompts and to explain their rationale for the changes they made to accommodate their

writing fellow partnership. In order to understand faculty members' rationale behind course curriculum changes, and the possible epistemological shifts that those changes represent, each faculty participant was asked to trace the process (Prior, 2004) of their writing assignment artifact revisions (course syllabi, assignment sheets, and other supporting documents) via in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The process tracing protocol is available in Appendix D.

While the syllabi and other course documents were not direct data sources or elements of analysis for the current study, they provided context for the faculty members as they explained the changes they made to their course to accommodate the writing fellow partnership. Including classroom documents as part of the study was an attempt to triangulate faculty members' espoused practice with their actual teaching practice (Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2002).

Analysis

My guiding interest in these faculty interviews was to understand how talking about writing fellow work revealed faculty beliefs about learning, writing, and this type of course support. Given the exploratory nature of my research questions, I approached analysis of the transcript data from a grounded theory methodological perspective described in each of the coding steps below (Charmaz, 2014; Strauss & Corbin,1998). Thus, while I was mainly interested in the way that faculty explained students' learning and writing, as well as the role of the writing fellow, I remained open to other themes in the transcript data.

Once I had transcribed and de-identified the faculty interviews, I read the transcripts for emergent themes, then refined those themes into focused codes, using processes rooted in grounded theory methodology described below. Tables and details about both initial and final, axial, codes are included in this section in order to provide a deeper sense of the coding process. This is a response to grounded theorists' call for greater transparency (Chesney, 2001) in analytical processes.

Initial Coding and Development of Categories and Themes

During the initial and open coding process, I followed the guidance of grounded theorist Barney Glaser (2002), who recommended use of gerunds, as they better capture the "sense of action and sequence" happening within the transcript data (Charmaz, 2014, p. 151). The coding process was highly recursive and involved checking back with the transcript data throughout the analyses. Once I had identified initial codes in the data via the open coding process, I "coded the codes," careful to check back with the transcript data. From this process I arrived at the categories. These initial themes, their codes and subcodes, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Initial Themes, Categories, and Codes

Theme	Codes	Subcodes
Epistemology	Beliefs about writing	Understanding student writing epistemologies
		Viewing writing as a process
		Changing or challenging beliefs about writing due to writing fellow partnership
		Perceiving student needs around writing

	Beliefs about learning	Viewing learning as a process
		Learning from the Writing Fellow
Logistics	Constraints	Time
	Changes	Modifying syllabus to accommodate Writing Fellow role
Values	Internal	Valuing writing as pedagogical practice
	External	Valuing role of and input from Writing Fellow

Axial and Final Codes

From the intensive early stages of analysis, I was able to identify themes within the codes and categories. At each step, I returned to the interview transcript to check the validity of each code, category, and thematic label. Axial coding is a stage of focused coding that seeks dimensionality within each coding category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), so I approached axial coding mindful of gradation, or degrees, within each of them. The axial codes presented in Table 2 were the final categories of analyses and are narrated in the findings section below.

Table 2. Axial Codes: Final Themes, Codes, and Summaries of Examples from Interviews

Theme	Final Code	Summary of examples Faculty member...
Epistemology	Beliefs about student learning	Views writing as a process
	Beliefs about student writing	Understands student learning as constructive
Openness	To innovation and change	Is open to changing syllabus and modifying writing assignments
	To writing fellow suggestions	Collaborates with writing fellow
	Understanding role of writing fellow	Respects writing fellow input
Flexibility Capacity	Changes to syllabus	Modifies syllabus to accommodate writing fellow
	Time	Provides additional class and assignment time for writing assignments

Findings

Successful Faculty Writing Fellow Partners' Epistemologies

Teacher beliefs encompass epistemological beliefs, described in greater detail in the earlier review of studies of faculty beliefs. Epistemological beliefs refer to an individual's ideas about the nature of learning (Hillocks, 1999; Schommer, 1993) and knowledge (Hofer, 2002). With this broad conceptual understanding in mind, I analyzed the data as described above. The following sections describe the final codes, situating them within the context of the transcripts and faculty narratives.

Epistemologies: Beliefs about teaching and learning. Faculty members' interviews revealed beliefs about learning as construction of knowledge and a shared responsibility between students and faculty to collaboratively build this knowledge. This was particularly evident in Adam's interview, where he described the way he approached his undergraduate marketing course, "I set my class up to be a 'we' thing. This is our journey in learning...it is our job as a class group to discover the truth about this topic." He went on to explain that he sees his students as responsible for one another's experiences:

> Why do we have a class? Why do we have class discussion? It's the sharing of ideas. And, quite frankly, if you're not sharing your ideas, then you are stealing from the rest of the class because you're in there taking what they have to offer and you're not contributing. I don't tell them that, but that's part of what happens. I tell them that it's like a business meeting. You're there to contribute.

Adam's view of the collaborative nature of teaching and learning was further revealed when he referred to the peer review document he brought to the interview, which he pointed to during the process tracing part of session (Appendix D). During this part of the interview, I saw Adam grappling with tension of valuing collaborative learning versus controlling his classroom with regard to the peer review activity. Five semesters prior to this interview, I worked with Adam to create a group peer review guide in order to facilitate in-class peer review, an activity that he had continued with for the semesters since its development. He explained about this peer review activity:

> It's easier to just do lecture stuff, you can control that, and I'm a control guy. I like being in control. Part of the problem with doing the exercises and in class stuff is—well, to some extent the peer review in class terrifies me because I have no clue: Are they really going to do the assignment? Did they really read the stuff ahead of time? Because some of them haven't, and it makes me furious because, hey! You're making me look like an idiot because you didn't do the work. So, yeah, this is lame, because you can't do the peer review if you haven't [read the paper you should have] reviewed!

Here we are able to see Adam's advanced view of teaching and learning—his value of collaboration, co-created classroom experiences, and shared responsibility of learning—challenged by the logistics of running a class where students may not do the assigned preparation homework. (In this case, it was to read their peer's draft.) What is interesting about this utterance is that it illustrates the challenge to faculty beliefs and values that composition pedagogy may bring to instructors across disciplines. Perhaps if Adam's epistemological beliefs and values were different regarding teaching and learning, and less "sophisticated," he would have given up the peer review activity in favor of classroom control and predictability. Further, working with the writing fellow and scheduling the peer review sessions into the course syllabus committed him to these practices ahead of time, possibly keeping him engaged when his confidence in them waned.

Epistemologies: Teacher beliefs about writing. The interviews revealed that this group of faculty held process views of writing and valued writing as a critical thinking venue for students. As Samuel explained:

> I don't know that you can say that you know the material unless you can actually write a paper on it. For me, I never felt like I knew something until I wrote on it. I think there's just a mental process that as you work through it and have to put your own ideas on paper you have to process it. And that's how you really come to know something. In a way, it's like teaching, that until you've taught something, it's difficult to say that you know it. It's kind of comparable.

He went on to explain that analytical reading and writing promote a type of thinking that he hopes students carry with them, even if they cannot recall the content of his courses:

> With my class, I don't know that someone is going to remember some Supreme Court case from the 1930s on the Commerce Clause 10 years from now, but hopefully the ability to read important material and make a coherent argument in response to it will stick with them.

Thus, for Samuel, his course material was an occasion for students to build reasoning and writing skills that he hoped students woulld transfer into circumstances and contexts long after his course. He did not expect long-term content recall, but rather viewed the material as an opportunity for students to grow their critical thinking; this teaching epistemology reflects a "big picture" perspective and growth view of students' performance on academic tasks such as writing (Hillocks, 1999).

Linda explained the way that she assigns writing now, which is in line with the requirements of the campus General Education Writing Intensive course designation that require a discussion of genre conventions, as well as assignment staging (Appendix A). She expressed support of these curricular changes as she said:

> I feel that if the student doesn't know how to do it [write a paper in this genre] coming in, then forcing them into it doesn't always work. Sometimes it might, if they're really driven and dedicated, but if they just shut down then that doesn't help them. So, it makes sense to try to scaffold it [the paper assignment].

In this comment, Linda's beliefs that students can learn how to learn (Schommer, 1993) are revealed as she explains the way she teaches writing in the discipline of art history, something that may be new to her students. Her approach also helps students to see that knowledge about writing can change across contexts; thus, students who are strong writers in one class may need help adapting to writing in new genres of another discipline (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011).

For Adam, the drafting process was something he valued and had only really began formally implementing in his courses after taking the Writing across the Curriculum seminar several years prior to the interview. Prompted by the GE Writing Intensive course changes, the peer review and writing fellow provided the mechanisms for feedback in his course. He referred to that seminar in the interview, where he explained the way he hopes students approach writing in his courses:

> Write rewrite, like we learned in the [WAC] seminar, the way that writing gets better is by looking at this as a process, and that if you think you've got to get it right the first time, then you really don't understand what the process is. So the drafting ingrains with [students] the multiple attempts at doing this, which I think is good.

Again, for Adam, modifying his main course writing assignment and staging it so that students receive feedback from the writing fellow and via peer review represented a significant change in practice, one that seemed to align more with his beliefs about teaching and learning. However, this is a change that he may not have made on his own without the additional support of the writing fellow and WAC programming. In this way, the writing fellow provided a resource, namely time and feedback, in order to help Adam to align his teaching practice and beliefs (Phipps & Borg, 2009). Without the writing fellow, his espoused beliefs and teaching practice may have continued to be misaligned because Adam did not have time or expertise with the class activity. Work with the writing fellow provided Adam and his students with resources to provide meaningful feedback to students about their writing.

Openness: Changing and innovating

The interviews also revealed faculty beliefs about student writing, as well as the way faculty were (or were not) taught to support student writing in their courses. Both Samuel and Linda's interviews mentioned their own lack of instruction about teaching and supporting student writing in their courses and the way that they had coped with that lack of training. In all cases, the writing fellow had filled in some of that deficit and, for Adam, had even served as a model for how to provide feedback to students about their writing. The key to the success of these partnerships appears to be not just the availability of the writing fellow to provide resources, but also the openness of the faculty members to change their existing teaching practices around writing and course operations generally. The faculty members' receptiveness to the writing fellows' input was critical to the success of the partnership, findings that resonate with earlier work that related open, constructivist views of knowledge building with these types of teaching and classroom practices (Chan & Eliott, 2004; Dunkin & Precians, 1992).

For Samuel, who had been teaching political science for well over a decade, working with Simone, his Writing Fellow, provided him with insight about writing from a student perspective:

> Simone reminded me about what students need and the way they learn. It let me think about the writing projects like a student did. I don't know that I got a lot of instruction about it [teaching writing] in grad school…some professors did a better job than others on giving students instruction on what they needed to do to write a successful paper. But, it was uneven. Very uneven. Then a lot of it fell to the TAs, as my recollection, to kind of just wing it and figure it out on our own. This was a big research university, of course, and the faculty were more concerned with their own research and, so, they were very happy to leave it to us TAs.

So, Samuel's partnership with Simone was an opportunity to renew his understanding about the students' writing tasks and gain her insight as a student-writing fellow. His openness to, and respect for, her perspective was critical to the success of their partnership.

Like Samuel, Linda, a newer Art History faculty member, had also not received support in writing instruction as a graduate student and newer faculty member, as she explained:

> I wasn't taught how to teach or assign it [writing] in any way! For the most part, no one ever sat down and said "this is what you should look for in student writing." And in retrospect if I had to admit it, my first class I was probably not as hard on students as a could have or should have been, as far as thesis and coherence. As time has gone on, though, I've kind of taught myself how to approach you know, "don't obsess over every little comma."

As she continued, Linda referred to the early draft feedback guide that her writing fellow, Logan, had created as part of his partnership with her class. She said, "I admit that I was pretty skeptical about the rubric idea for dealing with the first drafts. Logan's comment sheet really streamlined the process, though. I'm going to use it again next semester." Thus, for Linda, as with the other faculty, the writing fellow's perspective and input were valued by the faculty member, who used this input to shape the course.

Finally, Adam, the marketing faculty member who had been teaching the longest of the faculty participants, explained that he had learned about giving feedback from reading the type of feedback that Alexis, his writing fellow, had provided on students' papers, "I still have trouble with giving good, direct feedback on their writing and I still don't feel real comfortable with it, so it was useful to see Alexis' comments on the papers." In this way, the writing fellow's comments served as examples for the types of feedback that the faculty member could provide to their students.

In these interactions, the writing fellow partnership itself was a learning context for the faculty members, mainly due to their openness to the writing fellows' input and to making modifications to their course syllabus to accommodate the writing fellow role. As a result, the faculty members became learners in the partnership, and their experiences with the writing fellow and shifted classroom practice and became opportunities to innovate. From a programmatic perspective, the hope is that the investment in the writing fellow partnership will carry forward, informing faculty members' work with students beyond that which involves writing fellows; ideally, the insights that faculty gain through these partnerships become part of the collection of the experiences that inform their future teaching practices (Strømso & Bråten, 2011).

Openness: Understanding the role of the writing fellow

A common characteristic among these faculty was their view of the writing fellow as a valuable resource both for their students and for their own work as course instructor. This view was in line with the job description that was sent out in the writing fellow call for applications (Appendix B), which made it clear that writing fellows were neither graders nor copy editors, but rather peers who were embedded in the course to support students' writing processes. Even though the writing fellow role is made clear in the call and in meetings with faculty and writing fellows, sometimes faculty will look to writing fellows to serve as copy editors for students' writing, expecting that the writing fellow feedback will focus on line editing student papers instead of giving feedback to prompt revision. However, faculty in these successful writing fellow partnerships did not view the writing fellows as copy editors, but instead appreciated and leveraged the unique perspective they brought to students. Some of the faculty described the writing fellows as course liaisons of sorts, mediating the space between student and instructor and helping to translate task expectations and clarify misunderstandings about content and assignments.

The role of writing fellow as course liaison was especially evident in Samuel's course, as he described Simone's collaboration with students:

> Simone had taken a lot of classes with me and so could talk with them and say "these are the things he expects in his papers." So it went beyond something written down [on the assignment sheet]. She could communicate with them and help them figure out what types of questions they should address.

Simone's collaboration was not limited to her work with the political science course students, either, as her insights also served to support Samuel's faculty role:

> She would point out things that students were going to be uncertain about. She'd let me know that, even with the way I'd explained it to them, they don't really get it until they do it. And that was helpful for me, because I think that I explained all of this very clearly, and maybe I did explain it as clearly as possible, but for the student it was still difficult.

In these ways, Samuel viewed Simone as a conduit for information to his students about his expectations, but also as a sort of benevolent informant who would let him know how students were doing. He was open to her perspective and appreciated it to let him know how students were faring with regard to the writing tasks. He explained this idea when he said:

> I'd like to think that my rapport with students is good, but with a class of 44 it's hard. In her meetings with students, Simone was able to see who was struggling and let me know…she saw them differently than I could. Plus, something that occurs in that relationship [writing fellow and student] that we could not replicate as faculty.

Thus, faculty recognized writing fellows as "collaborative mediators" (Mullin et al., 2008) in their courses, occupying the unique role of not-student and not-faculty, helping each to understand the other. Although the faculty members explained the ways that the writing fellows helped students, their openness to the writing fellows' perspective may have also helped to mitigate their own isolation that may come from teaching, which Kagan (1992) recognized as an "inherently private affair" (p.79) that may include uncertainty and self-doubt. While these affective components were not recognized outright by faculty in the interviews, they did recognize value in collaborating with writing fellows, identifying the social aspect of working with the writing fellows with regard to their teaching and support of writing.

Faculty flexibility, adaptations, and capacity. Across the interviews, faculty mentioned the adaptations that they made in order to accommodate the requirements of the "Writing Intensive Course" designation (Appendix A) and writing fellow role. In all cases, these modifications provided a greater capacity to support student writing, including attention that faculty members could not have given student writing on their own.

Linda described the syllabus changes she made for the writing fellow as logistical, as she reported "having to adjust the syllabus schedule, set blocks of time reminding students that they have a paper step due, or to meet with Logan." These course modifications, of staging the writing assignments across multiple weeks and integrating the writing fellow, allowed Linda to provide support to students that, as she explained, would not otherwise be possible:

> I really have come to the point where I, if I've worked with them over the semester, I read their introduction and I'll read their thesis, and the topic sentences and go through some of the paragraphs and read the conclusion, then maybe go back and see whether it all made sense to me, and then I'll grade accordingly. Yeah, because otherwise if I sit down and read 30, 8-10 page papers, I won't be able to have them done by the time that grades are due. You know, if I read the entire thing, which is why I like to work with them throughout the semester so that I can get an idea of their writing and their style. I can go through and pick through the content and see if it all made sense.

Samuel, like Linda, was flexible with changing his syllabus to accommodate the writing fellow's role, which included meetings with students and draft feedback. He also explained that the tradeoff was worth it:

> There were some learning pains, and that was me, making sure that students were aware of what they needed to do to meet with Simone...But these [feedback on drafts] are things that students wouldn't get otherwise because we're trying to "keep the lights on."

For Adam, the changes seemed to be an opportunity to clarify his expectations for the assignments and staging of the assignments along with the content of the syllabus. As he explained, "Most of the changes had to do with clarifying the assignment for the students and helping them it had to be step by step every little thing—this is what you're going to do, this is what Alexis is going to do, this is what we're going to do together. What do students have to do before class? During? What do you do after class?"

By accommodating the writing fellows' role into their courses, support for writing was amplified for students, but also perhaps for faculty themselves. Among her insights about teacher beliefs, Kagan (1992) wrote to describe the classroom, "In a landscape without bearings, teachers create and internalize their own maps" (p.80). Samuel, Linda, and Adam identified their writing fellows as a resource that expanded their students' experiences of course assignments by providing attention and feedback that they could not otherwise give. The interviews also suggest that, at least to some extent, faculty allowed their writing fellows access to their own internalized teaching maps that Kagan described, sharing with the writing fellows some of the private spaces of teaching decisions, at least regarding due dates, assignment scaffolding, time limitations, and giving feedback. Perhaps in this way the writing fellows helped to make the teaching practice less isolating; ideally, the faculty members' experiences with the writing fellow will become woven into their highly personal pedagogies, part of the reservoir of experiences that inform their teaching practices moving forward.

Discussion

The purpose of this inquiry was to better understand university faculty members' beliefs about learning, knowledge, and writing in successful writing fellow partnerships. The three faculty participants had epistemological beliefs that reflected constructive and collaborative views of learning, an understanding of writing as a process, and openness to writing fellow input and assignment changes. Findings here echo earlier work regarding the complexity of faculty beliefs (Fives & Buehl, 2012; Pajares, 1992) and that stated beliefs are aligned with practice (Kane, Sandretto, & Heath, 2002). The writing fellow partnerships allowed a context for studying beliefs *in situ*, revealing faculty beliefs that motivated instructional decisions and necessary course modifications to accommodate the writing fellow role. The interviews and process tracing document prompts allowed faculty to discuss the rationale behind the decisions that they made, revealing the reasons and beliefs that informed their choices.

Although this study involved a small sample of faculty across disciplines, findings do raise some questions and implications for future work regarding faculty beliefs and their potential for reciprocal influence on writing fellow partnerships. For instance, in her work exploring writing fellows as agents of change, Terry Myers Zawacki (2008) explained her strategic placement of writing fellows with faculty; sometimes she placed writing fellows with faculty to promote their learning about process models of writing. Writing fellow placement was sometimes made with the hope of shifting and challenging faculty practice, not just supporting it. Findings from the current study suggest that faculty members with constructivist epistemological stances toward learning and a greater degree of flexibility and openness toward revising syllabi had successful writing fellow partnerships. Thus, when considering faculty eligibility for writing fellow partnerships, writing program administrators should consider faculty beliefs and flexibility in placement decisions. A formal assessment of faculty epistemological beliefs may be impractical, but interview questions, informal conversations, or an

application question may reveal faculty epistemological stance, which in turn may help writing programs decide how to allocate writing fellow resources for greatest success and impact.

Selection and preparation of faculty to participate in writing fellow partnerships was the focus of Emily Hall and Bradley Hughes' (2011) article, in which they argued for careful selection of faculty participants for writing fellow partnerships. Here they explained paying careful attention to faculty members' dispositions toward students, commitment to teaching and writing, and "willingness to experiment" with their teaching (p. 24) when deciding which faculty would receive writing fellow support. Like the findings reported in the current study, they explain that successful partnerships seem to depend on faculty attitudes and beliefs about student learning and writing.

The success of writing fellow partnerships likely depends on faculty epistemologies, attitudes, and dispositions. However, prior work about teacher beliefs reminds us of the complex and multidirectional factors (Hora, 2014) that inform teacher practice, from in-class decisions (Lee & Porter, 1993) and instructional design (Pajares, 1992). Adding to the complexity of faculty beliefs is research that suggests that they may vary across disciplinary and generational lines. A body of research about academic faculty suggests that they hold general teaching and learning beliefs in addition to ones that are specific to their disciplines. In quantitative explorations of faculty beliefs, researchers found discipline predictive of content-oriented, transmission style teaching, with faculty in the hard sciences more likely to view their role as "imparting facts, principles, and concepts." (Singer, 1996, p. 665). This prediction remained even when other factors, such as gender of faculty member, age, and institutional selectivity were held constant. Other, more qualitative research involving academic historians (Quinlan, 1998) reported faculty beliefs about teaching and learning sharply contrasted by faculty members' age groups.

In the current study, interview data revealed ways that these three instructors' assignment design, in class behaviors, and collaboration with writing fellows were informed by faculty beliefs and attitudes. As we consider implications for research with faculty members in writing fellow partnerships, we should also account for the way that faculty members' experiences in the classroom, with students, assignments, and with writing fellows also "push back" on these beliefs; if all goes well and the instructor is open to such feedback, it creates context for growth and self-reflective change. Accounting for these changes, and telling their stories, may help us better understand how to promote change in faculty beliefs about student writing.

Taken together, however, administrators may still wonder how to best implement writing fellow programs. Given limited financial and labor resources, how should we decide who receives writing fellow support? On our campus, for instance, demand for writing fellows outstrips funding, as is the case for most programs. So, should writing program administrators partner writing fellows with faculty whose dispositions toward learning and writing reflect constructed views of knowledge and process models of writing, such as those reported in this study? Or, should we instead perhaps leverage writing fellow partnerships to help develop these dispositions among faculty whose epistemological beliefs reflect a more fixed view of student learning and writing, hoping to promote shifts in beliefs and practice? Put another way: Do we support faculty whose practice already evidence more "sophisticated" or "advanced" epistemologies regarding student learning and writing? Or, should work to leverage writing fellow partnerships to promote change in the practices of faculty whose practices reflect less advanced epistemologies? These are questions that prior studies of writing fellows have sought to address (Mullin, et al., 2008) and grapple with (Zawacki, 2008), reporting even preparing writing fellows themselves for the challenging role as agents of change (Hall & Hughes, 2011).

Limitations and Lingering Questions

The small sample size of this study, only three faculty members, should not be considered generalizable to a larger population of faculty. However, findings here do align with prior research suggesting relationships between faculty beliefs and practice, particularly with regard to writing fellow partnerships. In addition, defining these partnerships as "successful" via the writing fellow survey is also problematic. It might be the case that the writing fellow him or herself was exceptional, as rated by the student, and that the survey is not the most accurate assessment of the writing fellow collaboration. Future work might include a student survey question to assess how well the writing fellow and faculty member worked together to support learning in the course. My rationale for using data from the student surveys was to account for the perspective of the students served by these partnerships and to define successful partnerships through this outside perspective.

Additionally, the focus on only successful writing fellow partnerships may also be problematic. We might also learn from a study of less successful partnerships, which may reveal tension between instructor beliefs and practice. Further, longitudinal case studies may help us to understand how several semester-long writing fellow partnerships might change faculty members' perceptions and practices around assigning and evaluating writing and the possible role of faculty beliefs in these interactions.

If, as writing researchers and writing program administrators, we hope to understand the culture of writing on campus and perhaps shift it (Soven, 2001), then what is the best use of writing fellow resources? Can a semester-long writing fellow partnership change faculty members' perceptions and practice around assigning and evaluating writing? We have seen such changes in the study reported here, but participating faculty members' dispositions toward writing and student learning were open and amenable to these changes because they applied for writing fellow support. Future research might explore the extent to which we can leverage writing fellow partnerships to promote change in the practices of faculty whose practices reflect less advanced epistemologies. On our campus, with its nascent writing fellow program, we continue to consider the potential of writing fellows relative to demand for them, limited funds, and how to best support the extant, steady change regarding the way faculty assign and support writing in their courses.

Appendix A - Writing Intensive Course Definition
Campus General Education Revision

What is a "Writing Intensive" Course?

Writing Intensive courses meet the following criteria:

- Assign writing of at least 3000 words (approximately 12 pages) over multiple assignments and/or multiple submissions (revisions) of specific assignments (both formal and informal). Note that word count accrues across multiple submissions of an assignment. Assignments can be revised multiple times, with each revision contributing to the total word count.
- Provide students with feedback about their writing, via instructor and/or peer review, and allow at least one opportunity to submit revisions based on feedback

- Assess writing assignments as a major portion of course grade (at least 25-30%)

How do Writing Intensive courses fit into the new General Education Curriculum?

- Students will be required to take 2 WI-designated courses beyond the two core composition courses (CO 1 and CO 2)
- One WI-designated course must at the upper-division level.
- Writing Intensive courses may be integrated into courses within students' majors or other General Education Requirements

Appendix B - Writing Fellow Job Description and Call for Applications

Call Sent to Faculty Email List Each Semester

Writing Fellow Course Support

Writing Fellows are upper-division undergraduates or graduate students who provide supplemental instructional support to students enrolled in Writing Intensive courses.

Writing Fellows are paid $11/hour for up to 90 hours of work and can earn up to $1000 for the semester.

You and/or your department may select a particular student to work as your course Writing Fellow.

The Writing across the Curriculum Director will help prepare the student you designate to serve in the Writing Fellow role.

Writing Fellows do not grade papers, but instead support students' writing process and assignments in a variety of ways, to include:

1. Attend designated class sessions to facilitate class discussions about disciplinary writing practices and support in-class writing activities;
2. Meet with students outside of normal class time to work with them on the course assignments (in person and/or via Blackboard);
3. Work with you to make assignment expectations explicit and match students' needs with support;
4. Generate genre guides, feedback rubrics, and other resources to help students complete course writing;
5. Provide written comments on drafts of students' writing projects;
6. Coordinate with librarians to provide research support for students, as appropriate;
7. Other tasks as identified in collaboration with the Writing Fellow, Writing across the Curriculum Director, and faculty member.

Application for Writing Fellow Course Support

To apply for a Writing Fellow for Fall 2016, respond to the questions below. (You may compose your responses in the body of an email message or attach them as a document file.)

1. Faculty member's name, academic title, and department:
2. Course department, number, and title:
3. Estimated enrollment in this course (Note that priority is given to larger courses)
4. Is this a required course for students in a particular major or program? If so, what major/program?
5. Has the course been designated as "Writing Intensive" as part of the General Education?
6. Which writing assignment(s) will the Writing Fellow will support in the course?
7. How do you envision a Writing Fellow supporting students as they complete these particular assignments? Explain how the Writing Fellow will interact with students:
8. Writing Fellow partnerships work best when students are required to work with the writing fellow (via meetings and/or draft submissions) and are held accountable for this in their course grade. In what ways will you modify your syllabus and grading to accommodate the Writing Fellow's role? Attach a syllabus or other documents for reference.
9. When are you available to meet with the Writing Fellow and the Writing across the Curriculum Director, before the semester begins begins, to collaborate about the Fellow's role in your course?
10. Do you have a student in mind who might work as your Writing Fellow? If so, who is the student? (Writing Fellow partnerships are most successful with students from the major/discipline.)

Appendix C - Interview Guide

Interview protocol

- You've been assigning writing as part of your course (X) for awhile now. How many years/semesters? Tell me about your experience with student writing over the years.
- In what ways has your approach to assigning student writing shifted over the years?
- What accounts for that change?

- In your X years of teaching, how do you find that students learn best? (Student learning seems kind of mysterious sometimes. In your experience, how do college students best learn? What is our role, as faculty, in that learning?)

- How do students learn to write?
- What is "good" student writing?
- What did you learn (about student writing) by working with the writing fellow? (Did the writing fellow provide insight or perspective about student writing that was new to you?)
- In what ways, if any, did working with the writing fellow prompt a change in the feedback that you give students about their writing?
- What elements of working with the writing fellow were burdensome? Unhelpful?
- Has work with the writing fellow influenced the way you run any of your other courses?

Appendix D - Process Tracing Prompt

Present faculty member with his/her "before" and "after" artifacts, including assignment prompt, grading rubric, and/or syllabus, if available

1. Walk me through the revisions you made to your assignment (and/or supporting documents). What changes did you make? Why?
2. To what do you attribute these changes?
3. How has this particular assignment evolved during your work with the writing fellow? To what extent are these changes the result of working with the writing fellow?

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