

# A Review of *Pedagogical Perspectives on Cognition and Writing*

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*Pedagogical Perspectives on Cognition and Writing* (2021) follows three years after its predecessor, *Contemporary Perspectives on Cognition and Writing* (2018), with both collections edited by Patricia Portonova, J. Michael Rifenburg, and Duane Roen. The change in title reflects a change in focus; whereas *Contemporary Perspectives* dedicates more of its time to theory, with pedagogical applications present but not quite so foregrounded, *Pedagogical Perspectives* uses theory primarily as a springboard for discussing those pedagogical applications. The emphasis on bringing together different perspectives, however, remains the same. The editors have collected an array of different takes on the connections between thinking and writing, showing that cognitive writing studies is a truly interdisciplinary affair with questions that can only be properly answered through bringing together different theoretical, empirical, and/or pedagogical approaches. As a result, readers coming from a number of different disciplines will find points of entry into the conversations in these chapters.

Many of the book's chapters, though not all, deal in some way with the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* and its habits of mind. Developed in 2011 through the joint efforts of the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the National Writing Project (NWP), the *Framework* describes eight habits of mind that its authors considered essential for postsecondary writing work: curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition.

The book is broken down into four sections. The first section is dedicated to theory, and the latter three sections revolve around pedagogical engagement at three different kinds of instructional sites: the classroom, the program, and the writing center.

The first section, "Cognitive Theory and Writing Pedagogy," presents an interesting mix of interdisciplinary work, bringing together theories and scholarship from rhetoric, writing studies, library and information sciences, and psycholinguistics. The second section concerns "Classroom-Level Engagement." As in the previous section, the chapters here present a diverse range of approaches and topics, covering threshold concepts, genre studies, applied trauma theory, and metacognitive reflection in online learning spaces. The third section, focused on "Program-Level Engagement," is the most intertwined with the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing* and its habits of mind. Rather than limit the section's scope, however, this deep involvement with the *Framework* instead serves to expand the *Framework's* applications beyond the typical college writing classroom and into high school and pre-college summer programs, as well. The fourth and final

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section concerns “Writing Center Engagement.” These chapters cover the effects of directly instructing writing center consultants in the *Framework’s* habits of mind, the necessity of writing centers for developing the individual student agency that allows for the acquisition of the *Framework’s* habits, and the central role of writing centers in shaping students’ emotional dispositions toward writing.

The *Framework’s* habits of mind have collectively been a locus of attention for much of cognitive writing studies in the decade following the *Framework’s* publishing. This collection’s focus on the *Framework* therefore reflects a general trend in the surrounding literature, but it also pushes that trend further by showing the wide range of disciplines, approaches, and issues to which the *Framework* is relevant.

Some chapters seek to connect the *Framework’s* habits of mind to new concepts from other disciplines. Thomas Skeen (“Cognitive Psychology and the *Framework for Success*: Teaching Genre as a Design Problem”) brings both psychology and rhetorical studies to bear on the *Framework*, considering its habits of mind in the context of Joseph Petraglia’s concept of ill-structured problems, and proposing the teaching of genre as a means of helping students wrestle with such problems (108).

Others put the *Framework* to practical work. Christine Cucciarre (“The Space Between: A Statewide Effort Using the *Framework for Success* to Bridge High School and College Writing”) recounts a story of using the *Framework* as a site of common ground in negotiations between the expectations of college writing instructors and the practical concerns of often overwhelmed high school teachers in Delaware’s efforts to increase the college readiness of its students.

Still others seek to challenge or extend the *Framework* in various ways. Melvin E. Beavers, Subrina Bogan, Harold Brown, Caleb James, and Sherry Rankins-Robertson (“Pedagogical Practices of the Habits of Mind”) reflect on their experiences teaching the *Framework’s* habits at a summer program attended by mostly Black students, and they use those reflections to propose new habits of mind that they see as particularly important for minority students.

Because of its focus on the *Framework*, this collection will be most immediately useful for readers who are directly involved in the delivery of college-level writing education, be they administrators or professors, tenure-track or even contingent faculty (and indeed, the last of these will appreciate the chapter from Beavers et al., most of whom were contingent faculty at the time of writing, and who reflect on their experiences of trying to publish from such a position). One of the collection’s chief strengths is that it functions as something of a retrospective on the *Framework*, reviewing the ways in which scholars, roughly ten years later, have advanced it theoretically, applied and/or challenged it pedagogically, and put it into contact with new concepts and disciplines.

Administrators of writing centers and writing programs will likely be interested to see a collection of this scope acknowledging the indispensability of writing centers. There are compelling arguments in the book’s fourth section to suggest that writing centers are not just useful for the teaching of good writing-related cognition, but actually better suited to the task than the classroom. William Macauley’s chapter makes the strongest claims in this regard, as the title of his chapter, “The *Framework* Will Not Hold Without a Center,” makes plain.

From a research perspective, this collection should prove very useful for anyone interested in delving into cognitive writing studies for the first time, or else in keeping up on some of the more recent trends in the field. The chapters pull together a number of threads of literature that have developed over the past decade or so, including research into the brain science behind writing, studies on metacognition and its pedagogical implications, theories of multimodal writing, and more. The only caveat to remember, for both the initiate graduate student and the established scholar, is that, despite

how often it appears in this collection, the *Framework* is not the only focal point for cognitive writing studies research, today—nor do the editors or contributors of this collection wish to give that impression. Were there more space for it, it would have been interesting to see, as an additional perspective on cognition and writing, a chapter paying greater attention to research on dispositions. There is overlap between the literature on dispositions and the literature on the *Framework's* habits, and this collection does show a little of that overlap. But dispositions research has its own distinct concepts, and the only one that features prominently in this collection is self-efficacy (in Macauley's chapter), and, even then, largely for its connection to the *Framework's* habits of mind. That said, the collection remains usefully diverse in scope and application, and it will still be an invaluable resource to interested researchers.

The collection, as its title implies, gives considerable attention to the practical applications of pedagogical theory. Several chapters include, either in appendices or in their bodies, the writing prompts or other teaching tools discussed by the chapter's author(s). When compared with the previous collection, *Contemporary Perspectives*, this collection has a bit more in it for readers who are roughly familiar with cognitive writing studies theory and who are looking to apply it pedagogically, and a bit less for those who are primarily looking for discussion of the theory itself. While a few of the chapters are more strictly theoretical (again, the first section is dedicated to theory), the majority are aimed at turning theory into practice. On the whole, *Pedagogical Perspectives* is less concerned with understanding the particular cognitive phenomena at play in and of themselves, and more concerned with the practical results of pedagogies built with those cognitive phenomena in mind. The collection will therefore be of more use to the practically minded reader than to the theoretically minded one, but it will still be of considerable use to both.

The collection's major significance—and this is its greatest strength—is that it functions as an interdisciplinary hub centered on cognitive writing studies. The perspectives promised by the title are wide-ranging. Those with a background in rhetorical studies will want to read Peter H. Khost, Wendy Ryden, and David Hyman's chapter ("Readiness Redefined: Toward a Pedagogy of Here and Now"), which argues that attention to the rhetorical present moment can help reform the future-focused concept of college readiness into something more embodied and situationally responsive (23). Readers coming from library and information sciences will find the chapter by Barbara J. D'Angelo and Barry M. Maid ("Metacognition: Crossing the Information and Writing Thresholds") quite interesting for the connections it establishes between the *Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education* and writing studies using the topic of threshold concepts. And anyone with more knowledge of cognitive science or neuropsychology will find connections with a number of chapters. The editors and contributors have successfully set up a congregating point for anyone who is (or perhaps should be) interested in the connections between thinking and writing, whether or not they find themselves in the typical English department.

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