CHAPTER 18.

MEANINGFUL WRITING AND PERSONAL CONNECTION: EXPLORING STUDENT AND FACULTY PERSPECTIVES

Michele Eodice
University of Oklahoma

Anne Ellen Geller
St. John's University

Neal Lerner
Northeastern University

Even with a focus on acquiring academic discourses, WAC efforts can lead to meaningful writing experiences for students if students' personal connections are valued. Writing in any discipline can include opportunities for personal connections to self, others in community, and to subjects of study. Implications for WAC include understanding both faculty and student perceptions of what is meaningful for them as writers.

Teaching writing in higher education occurs through a range of pedagogies and with varied motivations.[1] Most pervasive are those that emphasize mastery of academic discourse and disciplinary conventions (Melzer, 2014) or what Thaiss and Zawacki (2006) characterized as writing marked by "the dominance of reason over emotion or sensual perception" (p. 16). When describing their goals for writing across the curriculum initiatives, institutions routinely invoke a set of outcomes, including learning disciplinary conventions, transferring writing knowledge, and developing critical thinking skills. Writing across the curriculum often focuses on the learning of these academic discourses and reduces the scope

1 This chapter is based on a keynote for IWCA 2019 and draws on research findings specifically developed for an article in *Research in the Teaching of English*, "The Power of Personal Connection for Undergraduate Student Writers" (Eodice et al., 2019).

DOI: https://doi.org/10.37514/PER-B.2020.0360.2.18

of attention to students' needs and desires as language users. This focus on acquiring academic discourse is potentially at odds with attending to pedagogies inclusive of students' identities and experiences—recognizing what students bring with them and where they are in their own development of academic literacies (Guerra, 2015; Ivanic, 1998; Kareem, this volume; Kells, 2018; Lea & Street, 2006; Lillis & Scott, 2007). As Kells (2007) argued, "Traditional models of WAC too narrowly privilege academic discourse over other discourses and communities shaping the worlds in which our students live and work" (p. 93). While we understand the risk of positioning "academic discourse" versus "student agency"—after all, many students might be motivated to become expert in particular academic discourses—in this chapter, we focus on a particular kind of agency, one we label "personal connection," as a means for students to make meaning from their writing, drawing on personal resources and connecting to academic writing tasks that are "framed expansively" (Engle et al., 2012). Our intent is to offer faculty from any disciplinary context the means to create writing tasks that students will find meaningful.

We also see this chapter speaking to the present moment when much of the focus in WAC and WID research and practice has been on student mastery of knowledge, whether it is the "threshold concepts" (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015) that define disciplinary discourses or particular vocabulary that might lead to "teaching for transfer" (Yancey et al., 2014). Our concern in these dominant approaches is that students are positioned as mere consumers of curriculum and pedagogy, rather than active agents in their own learning. The goal of ensuring that the writing students do will be meaningful—and that all of our assigned tasks will lead to meaningful writing—might be too optimistic, but fully understanding the elements students and faculty bring to those tasks is a first key step, one built on students as knowledge makers rather than merely knowledge consumers.

In what follows, we explore the role of personal connection through the data we collected for *The Meaningful Writing Project* (Eodice et al., 2016), a multi-institutional research initiative drawing on data from 707 student surveys, 27 one-to-one interviews with those students, 160 surveys of faculty named as having taught the class in which the meaningful writing project took place, and 60 follow-up interviews with those faculty (with all interviews conducted by undergraduate researchers trained with a common interview protocol). Our motivation for research was rooted in understanding how students describe writing projects of their undergraduate years they name as meaningful and how faculty who assigned those projects describe the learning and teaching of those writing tasks. When it comes to the writing that students and faculty identify as most meaningful, looking closely at how students and faculty describe their experiences sheds light on the features of meaningful writing, revealing how these

features were activated by the writer, the instructor, the assignment, the context, or relationships, and thus provide implications for future teaching and research.

Personal connection to the writing, through individual interest, social relations, or subject matter, emerged as a primary element in both students' meaningful writing projects and the ways faculty designed those writing tasks (see Eodice et al., 2019). It was the power of these personal connections that led us to dig deeper into its significance across disciplines—learning from a range of faculty and students. The questions we address in this chapter are as follows: (a) How do students and faculty describe the role of personal connection in the making of meaningful writing? (b) What are the significant similarities and differences between student and faculty experiences of meaningful writing? (c) What are the implications of these findings for learning and teaching writing across the curriculum?

BACKGROUND OF THE MEANINGFUL WRITING PROJECT

The Meaningful Writing Project traces its start to conversations circulating within and beyond writing studies about student writing and the ways student work is so often framed in a deficit model. In addition, and perhaps even more importantly, we too often fail to hear from students themselves about the experiences they have with writing while in higher education. After receiving a Conference on College Composition and Communication Research Initiative grant, we offered a survey to all seniors at our three institutions in Spring 2012, and, as we noted above, we received 707 responses. At the center of our survey was the following prompt and related questions:

> Think of a writing project from your undergraduate career up to this point that was meaningful for you and answer the following questions:
>
> - Describe the writing project you found meaningful.
> - What made that project meaningful for you?

Our initial focus of analysis was on the latter question—the reasons students offered for what made their writing projects meaningful. Our grounded theory, qualitative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Saldaña, 2012) of these responses yielded 22 codes (see Appendix) or descriptors of reasons students found their writing meaningful. We discovered that while students write projects that they describe as meaningful in diverse contexts, genres, and majors, that meaningfulness is focused within a set of conditions that most frequently included opportunities to make a personal connection, see the potential for current or future relevance, engage in research, and learn new content.

These most frequently occurring factors reach across writing projects written from first-year to senior year, representing almost 100 different majors writing in disciplines from archeology to zoology. More specifically, while 52% of the seniors in our study reported that they wrote their meaningful writing project in their major, 52% also said they wrote it within a required course. Only 17% said their meaningful writing project had been written in an elective course, and 29% of the seniors said their meaningful writing project developed in a general education course. In other words, the possibilities for meaningful writing to happen are broad though the reasons for that meaningfulness coalesce around the four most frequently occurring factors that we name above.

THE POWER OF PERSONAL CONNECTION

One key factor—personal connection—was the most frequently occurring code across the 707 student survey responses, appearing in 36% of all responses. To triangulate student and faculty perspectives, we administered a two-question survey to instructors whom students named as having assigned the meaningful writing projects. For the first question, we were able to pull information that the student supplied describing the meaningful writing project and asked faculty the following:

> We're sending you this survey because a student named a writing project written for your course as the most meaningful of their undergraduate career. Why do think that was so?

To analyze these responses, we collaboratively applied the 22 codes that we derived from our analysis of students' descriptions of what made their writing projects meaningful. In other words, we wanted to analyze faculty responses through the lens of students' own perceptions of meaningful writing. As was true for the student survey, for faculty describing their assignments, personal connection was the most frequently occurring code (41% of all responses). This meant faculty may have been intentional enough in their assignment design to allow student personal connection.

Given this frequency and our curiosity about the kinds of personal connections students and faculty described, we decided to explore these data more fully. For the student data, we collaboratively recoded the personal connection set of responses, asking ourselves, "personal connection to what?" Our analysis revealed three primary kinds of personal connections:

- Individual, including the ways students connect to their development as writers, their sense of authorship, their vision of future writing

or identities, their need for self-expression, and their individual experiences;
- Social, including family, community, and peers;
- Subject-matter, namely students' interests in and passion for their writing topics, and their sense of the importance of those topics.

For the purposes of this chapter, we applied the same subcodes of personal connection to faculty responses, acknowledging any points of similarity and difference between the kinds of personal connections students make to their meaningful writing projects and the kinds of personal connections that faculty ascribe to those same projects. Tables 18.1 and 18.2 offer the results of this analysis from the student and faculty data sets, including examples of each subcode. It is important to note that these examples do not come from the pairing of students and faculty (i.e., a student telling us about a meaningful writing project and the faculty member who taught that class telling us why they believed the student chose that project). We offer them to give some sense of how these representative samples compared.

Table 18.1. Personal connection subcode frequencies and examples of student survey responses

Code	Response %	Example
Individual connections		
development	16%	In order to accomplish this paper, I really needed to dig deep and decide where I stand as a person. There are many approaches that could be taken on this project, I had to decide which one I agreed with morally.
authorship	12%	I got to choose what topics I was interested in, and incorporate real research with real thought and creativity.
future	8%	It directed me to a field I was very interested in and eventually to the field that I will be studying in my masters.
self-expression	7%	It was a relevant topic to our society and government today and I was able to express my personal opinion.
experience	3%	This project was meaningful because I could relate to the subject being relevant to my area of interest (marketing and supply chain management) and also my years of experience working within the retail industry as a whole.

Code	Response %	Example
Social connections		
family/ community/ others	16%	The project was meaningful to me because it was touched home for me being from the area where the wind farm was proposed to be built. I found it very interesting that a project like this had the ability to do so much good for the environment as well as the economy. This particular project could help create cleaner air quality as well as help the area save on electricity costs. At the same time it was interesting to see how the people against the project were directly affiliated with the oil and gas industries.
Subject-matter connections		
interest/ passion	18%	We were allowed to choose a topic that was interesting to us, and then motivated to elaborate on it much deeper.
topic importance	8%	[I] could pick a topic that was important to me.

Table 18.2. Personal connection subcode frequencies and examples of faculty survey responses

Code	Response %	Example
Individual connections		
develop-ment	8%	The use of writing in my curriculum has always been important to me, from the standpoint of craftsmanship as well as a tool for reflection. In my capstone course this takes on special significance as the students transition from undergraduate work to graduate education. I myself am a professional writer and author in addition to my research writing. The students gain appreciation of themselves and others as they grow through writing.
authorship	12%	The project was based on a short experiment that students designed and conducted in the laboratory portion of a cell biology class. I think they found it meaningful because: a) it was based on their own independent work (intellectual ownership); b) was in the style of a scientific manuscript (i.e., relevant to their professional goals), c) was manageable in length (5-10 pages); and d) required revision and re-submission following review by peers and by their TA (opportunity to improve).
future	0%	N/A

Code	Response %	Example
self-expression	9%	I believe the assignment the student referred to asked them to begin to define those values that are most important to them as designers. My sense is this assignment was one of the few opportunities they have to attempt to stake out their own position in contemporary architectural practice and discourse.
experience	3%	In assigning this particular project—which I have used successfully for MANY years—I attempt to personalize the experience to the student's individual perspective. It is a somewhat subjective assignment, albeit with an established, applied behavioral science foundation. Also important, it absolutely requires individual thought, so cannot be downloaded or culled from outside sources. Students learn the cumulative meaning of consumer behavior through this one assignment.
Social connections		
family/community/others	6%	The assignment asked students to make connections between their family stories and their personal identities. I think students may find value in this assignment because they are invited to define themselves against the tapestry of family background in unique ways—race, gender & class. Students interview their family members as part of their work and engage in important conversations that they otherwise might miss.
Subject-matter connections		
interest/passion	44%	Well, I'm certainly glad to hear that the student got something out of the assignment. Perhaps the appeal lay in the fact that I worked with each student to explore individual interests and develop unique research topics. I suggested two or three sources to each student, but after that essentially got out of the way and let them work. Each student presented his or her study to the class.
topic importance	15%	This course, "Capstone in Anthropology," is a class in which the students choose a research topic that relates to their interests in the discipline and spend the semester preparing a final research paper. I think it is meaningful in that students see this as a culmination of the education within their major subject, the topic is completely of their choosing, and the paper is an integral, major part of the course (not just a small part that is peripheral to the rest of the class).

One purpose of this analysis was to compare the frequency of personal connection subcodes in faculty survey responses with the frequency of those subcodes in student survey responses, essentially exploring if faculty and students might value different kinds of personal connections and believe different kinds of personal connections lead to meaningful writing. Figure 18.1 describes this comparison. For students, "individual connections" constitute 46% of all responses; for faculty, these connections add up to 32% of all responses. "Social connections" also revealed differences: we coded 16% of student responses as social in nature while only 6% of faculty responses reflected this connection. Finally, a significant difference is in the connections to subject matter or topics for writing: While 26% of student responses reflected this connection, 59% of faculty responses did; this is not surprising given that faculty prioritize their subjects as integral to their work.

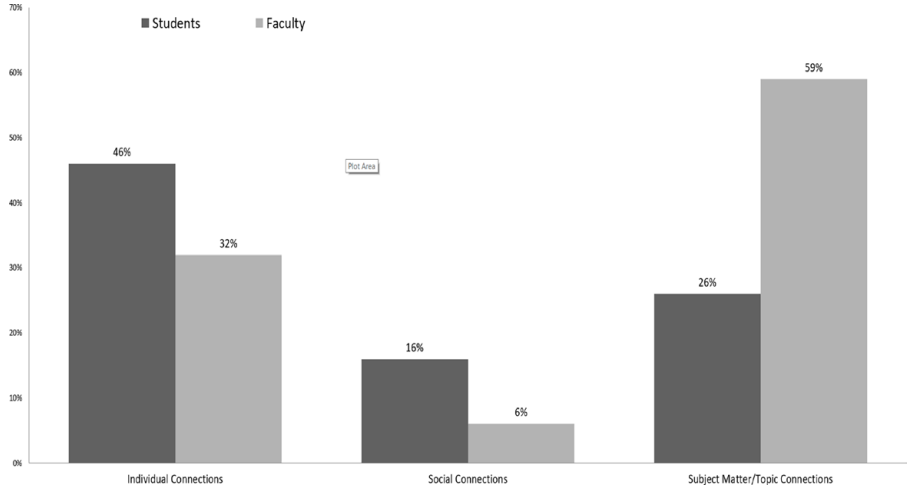

Figure 18.1. Comparison of frequency of types of personal connections by student and faculty.

We dig more deeply into these differences in Figure 18.2, which compares the frequency of specific faculty subcodes to the frequency of subcodes of personal connection in student surveys. A key difference is that faculty believe that students found their writing projects meaningful because of personal connections to subject matter interests and passions. We were not too surprised by this finding. As writing teachers ourselves and having worked with faculty across the disciplines on teaching with writing for many years, we have seen how faculty are focused on their subject matters and the ways they might invite students to write about those subjects.

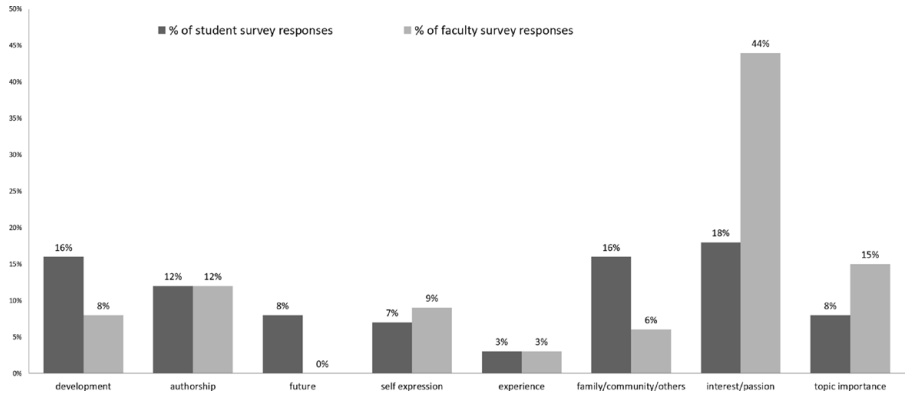

Figure 18.2. Faculty subcodes of personal connection compared to student subcodes: IC = individual connections, SC = social connections, SMC = subject matter connections.

What stands out here for us is that faculty were describing the personal connection they wanted students to make to disciplinary or course subjects. In other words, it wasn't simply what Dan Melzer (2014) described as "the purpose of more than 8 in 10 assignments," the "transactional" assignments that are "informative" rather than "persuasive"—with a teacher-examiner as the primary intended reader (pp. 21-23). Transactional assignments often sound like: "Use three examples from the course reading to explain x," or "Compare two theories we've studied this month." Instead, as one faculty member said: "I worked with each student to explore individual interests and develop unique research topics," or as another faculty said: "The second paper is solution-oriented of the student's own choosing, and again requires a theoretical explanation of why they think the solution proposed in the paper is necessary. So, the paper assignments offer students the flexibility to explore their own interests but still draw upon the material presented in class." We believe that these deliberately designed personal connections to students' interests and passions for the subject matter represent a form of "expansive framing" in the term that educational psychologist Randi Engle and colleagues (2012) used to describe learning tasks in which the following occurs:

> In an expansive framing of roles, learners are positioned as active participants in a learning context where they serve as authors of their own ideas and respondents to the ideas of others. Within this sort of learning environment, students' authored ideas are recognized and integrated into class discussions and other activities. (p. 218)

Further, Engle et al. have found that expansively framed learning tasks lead students to more successful transfer of their learning to new contexts, representing "an initial discussion of an issue that students will be actively engaging with throughout their lives" (2012, p. 217).

CHOICE/ALLOW AND REQUIRE

In addition to the 22 codes we applied to students' explanations for what made a writing project meaningful, one element we saw repeatedly in student survey responses was whether the instructor, or the assignment itself, offered opportunities for exploration (choice) or allowed for some degree of freedom in undertaking the assignment (allow), another manifestation of "expansive framing" (Engle et al., 2012). This choice/allow component was often balanced by a corresponding description of required elements. Faculty, similarly, included in their descriptions of assignments notions of choice/allow and require.

As we show in Table 18.3, for the student survey responses that we coded specifically for personal connection, elements of choice/allow and particular requirements played a greater role as compared to all other survey responses, differences that are statistically significant. Perhaps this finding is driven by students' choice of topics or subject matter for writing, but we also believe that for some students, the "expansive framing" of personal connection represents the agency to make a variety of choices in writing projects students name as meaningful.

In faculty survey responses that we coded personal connection, choice/allow and require were also common features. However, the frequency of those elements differed between student and faculty responses, as shown in Table 18.4. More specifically, faculty were much more likely than students to name an assignment as giving students choice or that it allowed students room to maneuver, as well as to describe required elements.

Table 18.3. Frequency of choice/allow and require in student survey responses coded personal connection as compared to all other responses

	Choice/Allow	**Require**	**Both**
Personal Connection responses	45%	38%	18%
All other responses	22%	33%	7%

Note: All differences statistically significant at $p < .05$.

Table 18.4. Comparison of frequency of choice/allow and require in student and faculty survey data coded personal connection

	Students	Faculty
% of responses with choice/allow	45%	70%
% of responses with require	38%	44%
% of responses with both	18%	32%

Note: All differences are statistically significant at $p < .05$.

In several survey responses, faculty attempted to describe what it means to give students freedom to explore yet offer some useful structure for students in order to help them succeed:

> I try to come up with writing assignments that are open-ended enough to allow students to explore things that interest them yet are guided enough that the students don't get lost in choice.
>
> I believe the project was meaningful to the student because it honestly attempted to allow for as much freedom and self-direction as possible while still providing parameters necessary for focus and communication.
>
> While it is very structured, [the assignment] allows the student to tap into their altruistic passions to change their world.
>
> I don't assign topics to the students but look to support topics they are passionate about. This freedom can be a huge burden to some students, but it also provides an opportunity for students to consider a topic that really interests them—one that they want to explore/know more about/question.
>
> I believe the students chose this assignment because it is for many of them the first time they become active and critical researchers in their field, the first time they are allowed to follow their own curiosity, and it allows them to genuinely begin to participate in the conversation they hope to join professionally.

That so many faculty who completed our survey understand student opportunities to choose as essential to why projects were meaningful tells us that they recognize the power and potential of student agency. Perhaps the more frequent presence of this element in the faculty responses as compared to stu-

dents' responses is indicative of our need to be transparent about our goals for writing projects and the ways we might connect the open-ended nature of the task to students' interests, passions, and experiences, or what Behizadeh (2014) described as "authentic" writing tasks. Still, these projects occurred in contexts in which requirements were also present, and those requirements were not necessarily onerous burdens to students but instead may have offered a type of scaffolding to support student learning.

FACULTY STORIES OF MEANINGFUL WRITING PROJECTS

In their interviews with faculty, our research team of undergraduates asked faculty members about the most meaningful writing project they produced when they were undergraduates. Our curiosity, in part, was driven by the possibility of a relationship between a faculty member's meaningful writing experience and the assignments students named in our survey. In teaching with writing, a powerful influence—often one we do not realize—is our own experience as writers (Thaiss & Zawacki, 2006) and the "folk theories" (Windschitl, 2004) we come to tell ourselves about writing. While in this chapter we do not trace the possible through line between students' meaningful writing projects, the tasks that led to those projects, and faculty's undergraduate meaningful writing experiences, in this section we explore how faculty members' experiences with meaningful writing as undergraduates might be similar or different than what their students told us. In a sense we're asking, "How similar and different are faculty and students when it comes to their experiences with meaningful writing?" One particular finding that follows is how far less important personal connection was to faculty's stories of their meaningful writing than in their students' accounts.

In some instances, faculty members claimed that memories of meaningful writing as an undergraduate were not so easily conjured as we heard from the St. John's professor who told his interviewer, "When I was an undergraduate, the dinosaurs walked the Earth, and we used the hammer and chisel on the cave walls. What do you mean by my writing assignment? Ha ha." In most cases, however, faculty easily related stories from their undergraduate years. To analyze these stories, we collaboratively coded faculty members' responses using the codes we developed from students' descriptions of their meaningful writing projects, once again using student perspective to make sense of this data set.

As shown in Table 18.5, the factors most frequently cited by faculty for what made their undergraduate writing projects meaningful were quite different than the factors students offered. For undergraduates the two most frequently occurring codes were *personal connection* and *app+* (application, relevancy, future, pragmatic, authentic, professional), but for faculty the two most frequently oc-

curring codes were *accomplishment* (milestone, gaining confidence) and *engagement* (with instructor/with peers) and, proportionally, more faculty than seniors reported having no meaningful writing projects while undergraduates.

Table 18.5. Most frequent codes for faculty members' meaningful writing projects

Code	Occurrence %
accomplishment	41%
engagement	33%
content learning	26%
researching to learn	24%
new	17%
personal connection	17%
app+	15%
length	15%
process	15%

When faculty described their meaningful writing projects to their interviewers, their experiences involved noteworthy accomplishments, and those accomplishments were often connected to engagement with their own faculty mentors, as the following examples describe:

> She read my final paper in the class as an example of one that she thought was good.
>
> When I wrote a paper for that class, . . . I was very pleased at the reception that I was in there with the big boys writing this paper, and understanding more of this author that I found very difficult.
>
> [The instructor] was like, "This is wonderful. You should be writing like this. You're a good writer. You should submit this." That was the first time that anybody had said something like that.
>
> That was satisfying, to get that written down, and be a part of that, and do some of the research for that, and then writing up those results.

As we speculate about the reasons for these differences between the most frequently cited factors for students and faculty, we do wonder if they say something

about a particular subgroup of professionals—teachers in higher education—and the motivations that propel someone to that destination. Perhaps those who seek academic work are more likely to have been set on that course because of mentors who shepherded their academic pursuits and because of academic accomplishment expressed in writing. Perhaps the importance of "applicability" is more urgent for seniors—immersed as they are in thinking about who they are, what they need to do and know, and how to reach those goals. Certainly, there were students in our study who saw themselves as future researchers and academics and who describe the connections between their meaningful writing projects and those goals. Many other seniors described the relationship between future goals and careers that were not connected to higher education or research. What faculty named are in fact the very *app+* factors that make up their academic careers. Whatever the speculation, putting faculty members' and students' meaningful writing projects alongside each other reminds us of the uniqueness of these experiences, as well as their shared traits. After all, less than 2% of the U.S. population currently holds a doctoral degree (Wilson, 2017).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TEACHING MEANINGFUL WRITING

We hope this chapter offers an opportunity to reflect on how our students might both meet our course goals and have experiences with meaningful writing. For some readers, that might mean the need to re-orient assignment design toward the student writer and their potential personal connections and an emphasis on expansive framing. This approach is an inclusive one, inviting and valuing the "learning incomes, i.e.,—what students bring with them when they come to school" (Guerra, 2008, p. 296) and acknowledging students as "writers who need and want to participate as active and engaged citizens in a multiplicity of intersecting communities of belonging" (Guerra, 2015, p. 150).

We also believe that writing across the curriculum leaders and researchers can begin to move WAC models away from what Lillis & Scott (2007) describe as "deficit discourses . . . in order to consider the impact of power relations on student writing; the contested nature of academic writing conventions; the centrality of identity and identification in academic writing, [and] academic writing as ideologically inscribed knowledge construction" (p. 12). Looking at teaching practices from the perspective of student writers, as we have, can inform future work in WAC and WID for students and faculty. We should ask: how are "identity and identification bound up with rhetorical and communicative practices in the academy?; to what extent and in which specific ways do prevailing conventions and practices enable and constrain meaning making?" (Lillis & Scott,

2007, p. 9). For example, in "Listening to Stories: Practicing Cultural Rhetorics Pedagogy: A Virtual Roundtable," Cedillo et al. (2018) advocate for a cultural rhetorics pedagogy that centers what both students and faculty bring to learning and writing contexts across disciplines. Learner-centric and writer-centric approaches could inform our understanding of both what it means for students to learn to communicate in (and critique) disciplinary discourses and for faculty to design learning contexts in ways that meet course goals and provide experiences students name as meaningful.

Informed by what we learned from faculty and students in our research, we offer the following recommendations to enhance the prospect of a meaningful writing project.

Explicitly offer options and choices for students in terms of content or other potential connections. Over 50% of faculty who assigned meaningful writing projects believed they offered choices and allowed options in the writing assignment. Yet only 31% of students named choice as a factor influencing their meaningful writing project. Perceptions differ for several possible reasons. It may be that faculty offered more options around topic and content, while students let the invitation for options open a channel for connections beyond content, to the realm of the personal (family, community, etc.) and their future selves. For example, in an assignment about climate change, offer options for students to imagine direct impacts on their own communities.

Create more varied ways for students to connect with content. Faculty most often named subject-area connections as factors they believed made the writing project meaningful. Students, however, named personal and social connections most often. As we design for meaningful writing, offering options in content exploration is one way to engage students, but surely, we can imagine prompts that also open the way for individual and social connections. With some fresh intentionality, we might design so students can and do make more personal and social connections with the content. This can simply take the form of letting students choose among an array of book chapters or topics, so they can explore more deeply what resonates with them.

Consider what learners might want to do—not just what you want them to do. When mentoring student writers, keep in mind your own formative writing experiences while understanding that a small percentage of our students will take that same path to the professoriate. Knowing the features of meaningful writing for faculty and students, across time and space, can inform what makes an assignment appealing, motivating, meaningful for yet unknown futures and allow faculty to mentor student writers for more futures than they had imagined for themselves. Overall, our research taught us that students have a great deal to tell us about the writing we assign; we urge faculty to ask for feedback on

an assignment—ask students to describe both the barriers and opportunities they experienced while completing a project. To offer students opportunities for agency and find the writing they do meaningful, we can be more intentional and inclusive in our assignment design.

Writing Across the Curriculum efforts are often programmatic and structured to fit institutional initiatives. Models are borrowed or born; but whatever shape the WAC effort takes it will necessarily involve faculty development because no matter how higher education contexts understand and enact WAC, and no matter how well or poorly the curriculum itself supports WAC, the individual instructor holds a key to the student experience with writing in the discipline. Any faculty development designed to strengthen the teaching of disciplinary writing can capitalize on this entry point and help faculty consider how students learn and experience more meaningful writing for themselves and their futures.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This chapter is based on a keynote address for the 2019 IWAC conference. We thank the conference planning committee for inviting the Meaningful Writing Project to take part in this way.

REFERENCES

Adler-Kassner, L., & Wardle, E. A. (Eds.). (2015). *Naming what we know: Threshold concepts of writing studies*. Utah State University Press. https://doi.org/10.7330/9780874219906

Behizadeh, N. (2014). Adolescent perspectives on authentic writing instruction. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education*, *10*(1), 27-44.

Cedillo, C. V., Del Hierro, V., Epps-Robertson, C., King, L. M., Male, J., Perryman-Clark, S., Riley-Mukavetz, A., & Vidali, A. (2018, May). Listening to stories: practicing cultural rhetorics pedagogy. *Constellations: A Cultural Rhetorics Publishing Space*. http://constell8cr.com/issue-1/listening-to-stories-practicing-cultural-rhetorics-pedagogy/

Engle, R. A., Lam, D. P., Meyer, X. S., & Nix, S. E. (2012). How does expansive framing promote transfer? Several proposed explanations and a research agenda for investigating them. *Educational Psychologist*, *47*, 215-231. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2012.695678

Eodice, M., Geller, A. E., & Lerner, N. (2016). *The meaningful writing project: Learning, teaching, and writing in higher education*. Utah State University Press. https://doi.org/10.7330/9781607325802

Eodice, M., Geller, A. E., & Lerner, N. (2019). The power of personal connection for undergraduate student writers. *Research in the Teaching of English, 53*, 320-339.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Aldine. https://doi.org/10.1097/00006199-196807000-00014

Guerra, J. C. (2008). Cultivating transcultural citizenship: A writing across communities model. *Language Arts*, *85*, 296-304.

Guerra, J. C. (2015). *Language, culture, identity and citizenship in college classrooms and communities*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315858081

Ivanič, R. (1998). *Writing and identity: The discoursal construction of identity in academic writing*. John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/swll.5

Kells, M. H. (2007). Writing across communities: Deliberation and the discursive possibilities of WAC. *Reflections*, *6*, 87-108.

Kells, M. H. (2018). Writing across communities. In J. I. Liontas & M. DelliCarpini (Eds.), *The TESOL Encyclopedia of English Language Teaching*. Wiley. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0152

Lea, M. R., & Street, B. V. (2006). The "Academic Literacies" Model: Theory and Applications. *Theory Into Practice*, *45*, 368-377. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4504_11

Lillis, T., & Scott, M. (2007). Defining academic literacies research: issues of epistemology, ideology and strategy. *Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *4*(1), 5-32. https://doi.org/10.1558/japl.v4i1.5

Melzer, D. (2014). *Assignments across the curriculum: A national study of college writing*. Utah State University Press. https://doi.org/10.7330/9780874219401

Saldaña, J. (2012). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Thaiss, C., & Zawacki, T. (2006). *Engaged writers and dynamic disciplines: Research on the academic writing life*. Boynton/Cook.

Wilson, R. (2017, April 3). Census: More Americans have college degrees than ever before. *The Hill*. https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/326995-census-more-americans-have-college-degrees-than-ever-before

Windschitl, M. (2004). Folk theories of "inquiry": How preservice teachers reproduce the discourse and practices of an atheoretical scientific method. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *41*, 481-512. https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.20010

Yancey, K. B., Robertson, L., & Taczak, K. (2014). *Writing across contexts: Transfer, composition, and sites of writing*. Utah State University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt6wrr95

APPENDIX: CODES USED TO DESCRIBE WHY STUDENTS CHOSE A PROJECT AS MEANINGFUL

- accomplishment (milestone, gaining confidence)
- affect (enjoyment, excitement, pleasant, pain, safe)
- app+ (application/relevancy/future/pragmatic/authentic/professionalization)
- audience (awareness of rhetorical situation)
- citation/documentation

- collaboration
- content learning
- creative
- deepen/fragmentary
- engagement (of professor/of students)
- failure/limitations
- length
- metacognition (thinking about writing process)
- new/new appreciation/new attitude
- personal connection (incomes & prior knowledge)
- process (describes writing or research process/sequence as meaningful)
- re-see with academic or analytical lens (from outside-of-school to in-school)
- reflection/recognition (of turning point experience)
- researching to learn (use of sources)
- time/timing/timeliness
- transfer (strategies, skills, knowledge transferred to meaningful writing project)
- writing to learn (knowledge, skills, and process)/writing to think
- writing to realize (something about oneself)/identity