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"When We Remix . . . We Remake!!!"
Reflections on Collaborative Ethnography,
The New Digital Ethic, and Test Prep
Chris Leary

SPRING 2007
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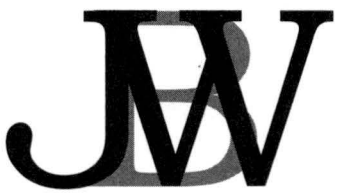

Journal of Basic Writing

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The *Journal of Basic Writing* publishes articles of theory, research, and teaching practices related to basic writing. Articles are refereed by members of the Editorial Board (see overleaf) and the Editors.

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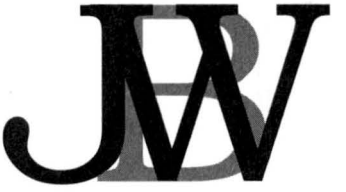

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CALL FOR ARTICLES

We welcome manuscripts of 15-25 pages, double spaced, on topics related to basic and ESL writing, broadly interpreted. Submissions should follow current MLA guidelines. Manuscripts are refereed anonymously. To assure impartial review, include name(s), affiliation(s), mailing and e-mail addresses, and a short biographical note for publication on the cover page *only*. The second page should include the title but no author identification, an abstract of about 150 words, and a list of 4-5 key words. Endnotes should be kept to a minimum. It is the author's responsibility to obtain permission for including excerpts from student writing.

We prefer that contributions be submitted as Word document attachments via e-mail to: baugust@citytech.cuny.edu. If electronic submission is not possible, mail five copies of the manuscript and abstract to:

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You will receive a confirmation of receipt; a report on the status of your submission will follow in about sixteen weeks.

All manuscripts must focus clearly on basic writing and must add substantively to the existing literature. We seek manuscripts that are original, stimulating, well-grounded in theory, and clearly related to practice. Work that reiterates what is known or work previously published will not be considered.

We invite authors to write about such matters as classroom practices in relation to basic-writing or second-language theory; cognitive and rhetorical theories and their relation to basic writing; social, psychological, and cultural implications of literacy; discourse theory; grammar, spelling, and error analysis; linguistics; computers and new technologies in basic writing; assessment and evaluation; writing center practices; teaching logs and the development of new methodologies; and cross-disciplinary studies combining basic writing with psychology, anthropology, journalism, and art. We publish observational studies as well as theoretical discussions on relationships between basic writing and reading, or the study of literature, or speech, or listening. The term "basic writer" is used with wide diversity today, sometimes referring to a student from a highly oral tradition with little experience in writing academic discourse, and sometimes referring to a student whose academic writing is fluent but otherwise deficient. To help readers, therefore, authors should describe clearly the student population which they are discussing.

We particularly encourage a *variety* of manuscripts: speculative discussions which venture fresh interpretations; essays which draw heavily on student writing as supportive evidence for new observations; research reports, written in non-technical language, which offer observations previously unknown or unsubstantiated; and collaborative writings which provocatively debate more than one side of a central controversy.

Coming in the Fall 2007 Issue of the *Journal of Basic Writing*

NEW SCHOLARS TALK BACK: THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK AND THE SHAUGHNESSY LEGACY THIRTY YEARS LATER

This article, based on a roundtable discussion at the March 2007 Conference on College Composition and Communication in New York City, examines the question of CUNY's multiple identities within the legacy of Mina Shaughnessy, who coined the term "basic writing" and founded the *Journal of Basic Writing* in 1975. Composition theory (and practice) owes much to her groundbreaking work at CUNY's City College in the 1970s against the backdrop of the University's experiment with Open Admissions. Although much has changed since then, CUNY is still associated with that rich historical moment, and with the questions Shaughnessy and others at the time confronted. These questions, which deal with the very nature of literacy and democracy, need to be reframed for our times. Contributors to this special article will include scholars from a number of CUNY's 17 undergraduate colleges:

Judith Summerfield, *University Dean for Undergraduate Education*
Crystal Benedicks, *Queensborough Community College*
Peter Gray, *Queensborough Community College*
Linda Hirsch, *Hostos Community College*
Mark McBeth, *John Jay College of Criminal Justice*
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Jessica Yood, *Lehman College*

EDITORS' COLUMN

Working in the curious genre of the editor's column, writers are seriously and deeply constrained by conventions. Editors must, of course, offer a pithy and enticing capsule of each article. They must, as well, situate the articles in a larger context, a discussion of a theme, a confluence, or occasionally an editorial whim. The issue is offered as a whole, carefully sequenced and with interconnections, substantial or fleeting, duly noted. Whether many readers actually consume the journal in that linear, beginning-to-end way is debatable. More likely, the typical reader dips, reading first the piece by a friend or acquaintance or recognized name, or perhaps choosing because the subject seems pertinent. Often enough, too, the articles are not read in the context of the issue in which they first appeared, but as single pieces obtained online or in a collection or course pack—decontextualized from the site of their first appearance, but as likely as not recontextualized into the midst of other articles on the same subject or by the same author. "When we remix," announces the title of Chris Leary's article for this issue of *JBW*, "we remake." Still, it seems at least passing worthwhile to examine those articles selected from the current crop of submissions for what they might reveal about the state of the field politically or theoretically, to capture the style of the present moment and look for predictions of the next moment.

This issue of *JBW* is redolent of subversiveness, of performance, of "passing," of veils lifted and margins transgressed, of play with texts and language, of apparent binaries that may actually be polyphonal. This speaks well for the state of the field. "Basic" in the terms embraced in these articles is not foundational but initiating, not minimal but ambitious. Challenging. The goal of all basic writing is for students to move well and truly *beyond* basic. This aspiration is often construed extremely narrowly, mainly as passing through gateway requirements to the credit-bearing or mainstream composition course (or, as several of these authors suggest, "passing" as academic insiders). In many settings, the ticket for such movement can be as simple as the production of what Hannah Ashley calls the "fiveparagraphessay" with few stigmatizing errors. Not simple at all, actually, but by definition limited and formulaic. As several of the articles in this issue explore, however, moving beyond "basic" can represent not only a sequential advance or further development in skill, but an altered or even transformed relationship to writing. And ideally, this transformation occurs not post-basic, but rather as part of the agenda for the basic writing class itself.

Hannah Ashley's powerful polyphonic piece, "The Art of Queering Voices: A Fugue," in both content and form extends the ideas expressed in "Ventriloquism 001: How to Throw Your Voice in the Academy" by Ashley and Katy Lynn

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in *JBW* 22.2 (2003). In Ashley's view, incorporating other voices into one's text is at the heart of all academic writing, but this act is potentially and ideally neither passive nor conventional. Drawing on Bakhtin and on queer theory, she advocates and illustrates how it is possible for writers—whether professionals, composition students, or basic writers—to gain the desired insider's position without relinquishing "outsider status and perspectives (to push at the constraints of academic discourse)."

The dialogic movement of Ashley's article signals a move that is in some ways central to all of the pieces in this issue. Each complicates and deconstructs an apparent binary, to discover, bring to the surface, or unveil an unseen factor or possibility. Carole Center's piece, "Representing Race in Basic Writing Scholarship," is perhaps the most traditional in its approach. Reviewing what Susanmarie Harrington has termed "student-present" articles published in *JBW* between 1995 and 2005, Center examines these same articles for the presence of race, either of the students or the teacher, and most often finds it absent. Center considers the "discursive factors" that might cause authors to veil the race of the students or teacher being discussed. Then she argues in favor of bringing race to the surface, providing an analysis of limits found in articles where it is missing and gains where it is present.

Moving beyond basic inevitably entails control of conventions, at once widely over-valued in the superficial aspects and undervalued—as Ashley helps us to see—in the capacity they provide to manipulate, stretch, test, and contest. Two articles on teaching grammar find unexpected ways to approach long-contested issues of correctness in student writing. In "Grammar Games in the Age of Anti-Remediation," Margaret Tomlinson Rustick locates the important binary not in standard/non-standard or formal/informal language, but rather in spoken and written language. Games of the kind Rustick proposes are especially useful in the multicultural and polyglot classrooms where many of us teach, and the prospect of play opens up many possibilities. Student writers gain power over their written language through open-ended play, and they come to understand that the switch from spoken language to written text is one shared by all writers. At the same time, Rustick's strategies may offer a way to extend students' oral fluency/facility to written language, as students who are extremely inventive in oral language might also play with written language. This kind of game, which serves to point up the precision demanded by readers, also links reading and writing and thus might well contribute to students' development as readers.

In a second piece focusing on grammar, "When Is a Verb? Using Functional Grammar to Teach Writing," Leif Fearn and Nancy Farnan distinguish between "grammar in writing" and "grammar for writing." Favoring a methodology that

is operational and active, i.e., "functional" rather than descriptive, they present the results of a study they conducted with tenth graders. Faced with a dual goal—improving students' writing and helping them to pass multiple-choice tests of grammar—many teachers, both at the secondary and post-secondary levels, feel compelled to teach traditional grammar. Fearn and Farnan demonstrate that if the sole goal is the ability to respond to questions about grammar, the two strategies appear to work comparably well; if, however, it is also important for the students to write better, the functional approach appears to be more effective.

Faced with a related dual task, preparing students for freshman English and also for a high-stakes test of writing, Chris Leary uses digital mixing as a model, drawing on his own identities as professor and graduate student, teacher and scholar. Adding a further blend of ethnography and test prep, he develops an exercise in collaborative composition. "'When We Remix . . . We Remake!!!'" is perhaps the most "student-present" piece *JBW* has ever published. To redirect some of his students' focus from test prep and engage them in the higher-order part of the task of writing, Leary read scholarship on composition with his students and involved them as collaborators in writing a paper for his graduate course in composition studies. Although the authorial voice is Leary's, the piece incorporates both overt student voices and their embedded responses to the readings and drafts of the graduate paper. At the same time, he extends the "remix" to the students' test prep work, so that this, too, enables them to "remake" the task and address it as fully conscious writers. The strategies Leary lists for helping the students understand and undertake the task posed by the high-stakes test make this task into something that can actually serve the broader goal (the one they think needs to be put off until they pass—or they are "fixed").

This particular mix, the Spring 2007 issue of *JBW*, appears to signal some new directions for the field, both conceptually and formally. Some time ago, we noted—without providing strong evidence—that to our knowledge no issue of *JBW* had gone to press without at least one citation of Mina Shaughnessy's work. We remarked that when an issue was published without a single citation of Shaughnessy, it would be an occasion to mention. Volume 26.1 appears to be that issue. While we don't imagine that this will be a permanent absence—indeed, our Fall issue will feature an article looking into the future from the vantage point of Shaughnessy's legacy—it perhaps is indicative of a generational shift, one that we see in our departments and institutions as well. At the same time, it is encouraging to note the excitement and engagement with which the journal's reviewers, who represent a range of vintages, have responded to these submissions. We remix; we remake.

—**Bonne August** and **Rebecca Mlynarczyk**

The Art of Queering Voices: A Fugue

Hannah Ashley

ABSTRACT: Reported discourse—as theorized by Bakhtin, bringing the voices of others into our own writing through quotation, citation and paraphrase, as well as more subtle means—is at the heart of all academic writing, including basic writing. This article, both in its texture and its analysis, demonstrates that reported discourse must be regarded, and taught, as more than a simple set of surface conventions, but differently—as a resource for student writers simultaneously to be read as insiders (to harness the power provided through academic discourse), and to maintain outsider status and perspectives (to push at the constraints of academic discourse). Several intertwining metaphors and theories will be used to illustrate these seemingly paradoxical desires, including musical composition, mental illness, and queerness. These representations help this essay find its tonic as a call for contesting coercive conventions.

KEYWORDS: composition, basic writing, Bakhtin, voicing, reported discourse, queer theory

In a fugue stretto is the device by which a second voice The ideological becoming of a human being **enters with the subject overlapping a first voice** *Toddler: Beach. Me: First school, then beach. Toddler (pauses, then thoughtfully): First beach, then school*, **rather than starting after the completion of the subject by the first voice (Naxos)** . . . is the process of selectively assimilating the words of others. (Bakhtin)

An individual with dissociative fugue suddenly and unexpectedly takes physical leave of his surroundings and sets off on a journey. . . . (Psychnet-UK)

-- the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of genders -- and therefore identity . . . 'gender trouble.' (Theory.org.uk)

Movement One: "Have To?"

Fugue has been described as a texture rather than a form. It is, in essence, a contrapuntal composition. The normal fugue opens with a subject or theme in one voice or part. A second voice answers, with the same subject transposed and sometimes slightly altered . . . while the first voice continues

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with an accompaniment that may have the character of a countersubject that will be used again as the piece progresses. Other voices enter one by one . . . . (Naxos)

> As soon as a critical interanimation of languages began to occur in the consciousness of our peasant, as soon as it became clear that . . . the ideological systems and approaches to the world that were indissolubly connected with these languages contradicted each other and in no way could live in peace and quiet with one another—then the inviolability and predetermined quality of these languages came to an end, and the necessity of actively choosing one's orientation among them began. (Bakhtin 296)

Bakhtin offers the account above of what happens when a "peasant" becomes conscious of the code shifting done among different languages in different situations—in church, with family, for government activities, in song, etc. One's thoughts, one's languages, are not one's own—an expression of self—they are imposed by the external exigencies of situation, convention, history, and politics. Bakhtin's imagined peasant engages in linguistic performances for the most part unconsciously, and so "the place of each [language is] indisputable" (296). But if and when "critical interanimation of languages" arises in the awareness of the peasant, the "predetermined quality" of these languages becomes ambiguous, the "peace and quiet" of language becomes unstable and contested, and "the necessity of actively choosing" a discourse—a self-conscious performance of "self"—ensues.

How does such interanimation occur? It is not simply noticing that one activates different language features to appear competent in different situations. Most first-year students easily identify that "you have to write different in school" than *u text w/ yr frnds*, even if these same students, especially basic writers, struggle with exactly what those differences entail on paper. What most students do not identify is *why* you "have to" (ought to? should? must?) write differently in school, nor what these exhibitions of writing might mean. When discussing these questions in my classes, students typically say that *the way we talk is slang*, that *you can't (oughtn't? shouldn't? mustn't? can't able to?) say* That's tight *to your professor*. Why? I push further. Who (or what) shouldn't you be, that you must be (perform being) one who writes an *effective* paper, not a *tight* one? Silence . . . the Bakhtinian explanation for which is that I have asked students to articulate themselves out of the interanimation paradox.

According to Bakhtin, interanimation—a self-conscious performance of self—occurs when "have to" means more to students than "ought to." Ought purports neutrality. But for basic writers, who occupy an academic counterpart to Bakhtin's peasants, have to must also convey its coercive meaning. *Effective* and *tight* flank conflicting ideological systems that cannot live in peace and quiet together. When we admit that there are likely to be consequences if we violate discursive boundaries [two women lovers camping alone are shot], and that some users of the discourse have greater investment [the wages of sin is death] in those boundaries than others [our daughters, birthed one each of our bodies and raised by two women—we are the proverbial fish without bicycles—and I am scared for our safety and theirs as I write that sentence]—it is then that we might be able to see that such boundaries are arbitrary, contingent and historical. Paradoxically only when they (we) understand the political, material, power-laden meanings attached to language choices might "have to" change to "decide to." And then we can (ought to, must) violate them. Actively choosing one's indeterminate orientation—troubling the "have to"—a necessity, a liberation. A pedagogy.

Movement Two: The Trouble—Discourse Is Unprincipled

Discourse is queer.

Devoted to both normalcy and perversion, queer theory revisions these categories as arbitrary, plastic scoops of culture, and any solidified identity pertaining to sex, gender, or desire is the result of a sustained series of temporary performances (Butler). These revisioning moves not only construct the whole of the hetero-homo continuum as legitimate, but they help to analyze and authorize more contested or ambiguous practices and identities—drag kings, fag hags, mashing, etc. That is, a queered reading of a practice such as drag endorses drag as a valid expression of gender, and also it forces the reader of the "drag text" to look for new methods and systems of understanding the meaning behind the form of that particular "text"—what the person in drag is expressing, not just about any "self" in play, but about gender in general. The slippage of gender which perhaps could not be expressed without this form. Gender itself is troubled. Reading queerly any practice outside heteronormalcy contributes to the more abstract notion that gender, sex, and desire in general are always shifting, contingent qualities; they must be performed to be at all. The self-evident teleology of *all* sex and desire is called into question from a queer theory standpoint.

Discourse is queer. This axiom is illustrated in the 2002 volume *Alt/Dis: Alternative Discourses in the Academy* (Schroeder, Fox, and Bizzell). In that volume, one contributor writes that when other discourses are brought into play with traditional Western styles of academic discourse, the heterogeneous contact "foreground[s] the shifting, contingent nature of our discourses" (Mao 122). Many contributors to *Alt/Dis* assert similar queer justifications for hybrid or alternative discourses: alt/dis pushes at traditional ways of knowing, validates often-marginalized experiences for those both in- and outside of those experiences, and provokes readers to focus on finding new meanings through unfamiliar forms. The heuristics provided by queer theory direct compositionists to examine troubling performances of academic writing, those that are unpredictable, unstable, responsive to context, heterogeneous, uncomfortable, partial, peculiar—queer. That is, alt/dis operates on discourse similarly to how queerness operates on gender and eroticism: the self-evident teleology of *all* discourse is called into question from an alt standpoint.

This idea is, perhaps, nothing new—just a queered re-viewing of discourse theory. At least some of my colleagues will already consent to the line of reasoning that "little-d *d*iscourses" are contingent and shifting representations and instantiations of "*D*iscourses" (Gee), and what this suggests is that Discourse is not fixed, and is ideological.[1]

But those same colleagues differ, fitfully, about whether and particularly how academic D/discourse can or should be prescribed, given that it can only be fleetingly (though deeply) described. Down one end of the hall, conferencing on student autoethnographies: *Any attempt to portray D/discourse as fixed is an effort to regulate those engaged in the D/discourse.* Down the other, student-led lessons on semi-colons: *Expectations, opportunities, means to ends, genre, privilege, power.* And then we switch offices.

Most of my students, further, will not consent even to the opening bars, let alone the ensuing crescendo. The students who show up in my first-year writing courses hold quite foundationalist beliefs about everything from thefiveparagraphessay to standard english: beliefs taught to them by previous English teachers, their families, their communities, beliefs both reinforced and parodied in the media, beliefs which have rarely changed by the time students show up in capstone courses their senior year. So I and my colleagues, up and down the hall, even though we present alternatives as often as we teach orthodoxies, appear to be reinforcing these foundational beliefs, at least to an extent.

Let me clarify: I am not going to advocate that students stop studying academic D/discourse(s). I am not advocating that Students' Right to Their

Own Language should trump students' right to "our" language. To do so is likely, as Delpit advises, to deny many students access to a crucial language of power. Flipping through *Alt/Dis*, I notice that all of the contributors write at least in part in variations on the dominant-in-academe, prestige discourse. Sure, they break form in many ways. But each contributor slips into Academic through linguistic features such as syntax (varied, complex), lexis (discipline-specific), and grammar (purposeful). Sometimes these features intrude through more alternative voicings of themselves, but, perusing this volume, I am not confused about whether or not I am reading the work of people in the drag of composition scholars and writing professionals. Students recognize that they too must weave themselves such an ethos in school, attempted through syntax (often stiff), vocabulary (big), and grammar (hypercorrect). Studying (and at least at times being able to convincingly perform) dominant academic discursive conventions is necessary for students.

But again: "A problem inherent in Delpit's position [is that] . . . asserting that there is *A* discourse of power erases the multiple voicings that occur even in prestigious discourses" (Tischio). Discourse is always already queer. Academics, especially in composition, sporadically contend with these episodic conditions (the way my straight brother contends with heteronormativity), but our pedagogies are even more rarely troubled enough for students to gain a sense of the queerness of discourse, including academic. Part of the work that we accomplish in our writing courses should focus on the general principle of discourse as unprincipled. An always unstable, contingent performance, reflecting and affecting relations of power. Students (and we) are always already actively choosing our indeterminate discursive orientations—the locations and inviolability of those performances are merely, in general, not in dispute.

Fugue is often thought to be malingering, because the fugue may remove the person from accountability for his actions, may absolve him of certain responsibilities, or may reduce his exposure to a hazard. . . (Psychnet-UK "Differential Diagnosis").

What classroom practices can productively, practically, assist students in studying the ideological character of language, without alleging that language and literacy are fixed, essential (even if that essentialism is a result of a hegemonic academic culture, not an ahistorical "nature" of English)? Are there discursive practices that we can point to, in the classroom, which dip into the playfulness of conspicuously queer practices, like drag, poking at fixed categories, disputing them as they are performed, rather than reifying them?

Movement Three: Who Is Responsible (for this Mess)?

Reported speech—bringing the voices of others into our own writing through quotation, citation, and paraphrase, as well as more subtle means—is, arguably, the convention most central to first-year students' classroom writing success (Ashley and Lynn, Graff and Birkenstein-Graff, Peele and Ryder, Giltrow). I have been teaching students to hear the voices marked as Other by an author: to circle embedding phrases, to list metapragmatic verbs (verbs of saying), to separate and analyze the effects of summary here and quotation there. We notice together how much of academic writing is the drawing across of the authority of others, the insertion of thoughts among thoughts.

"Where is your toothbrush?" I ask. Toddler: "I have no idea, says Mommy." How precious.

Adriana Podesta defines polyphony as "the presence and interaction of different voices, in the [author's] discourse. . . . The [author] is held responsible [by interlocutors] for the linguistic material used in the utterance. . . . The enunciator [the other speaker] is included in the utterance by the [author] who *organises* the enunciator's point of view, which *may be shared or not* by the [author]" (emphasis added). That is, language-users can overtly signal detachment from (not to be understood necessarily as disagreement nor agreement with) the legitimacy or meaning of any given statement by ascribing it to someone else (Caldas-Coulthard). The most direct and common way to do this is by utilizing "report structures," clauses which embed a statement as a quotation or a paraphrase:

- Podesta defines . . . .
- Bakhtin notes, ". . . ."
- . . . (Mao 122).

To report discourse is to present another speaker whom the interlocutor is supposed to hold accountable. To report discourse is to establish a relationship, a location, an intimacy of sorts.

Schizophrenia is characterized in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) by

> the belief or experience that . . . thoughts that are not one's own are inserted into one's mind (thought insertion); that thoughts have been removed from one's head (thought withdrawal); or that one's

> feelings, impulses, thoughts, or actions are not one's own, but are imposed by some external force (delusions of being controlled). (American Psychiatric Association)

In 1973, queerness was removed from the DSM. Schizophrenia lingers.

Far back in the last century, the Bakhtin circle recognized the partial (queer), and crucial, nature of reported discourse. According to Voloshinov, the "linear style" of reported speech keeps the boundaries strong between the author and the reported speakers. A great deal of direct quotation might be used, or, when paraphrase is used, ideas are restated in such a way as to make author and reported speaker sound alike. The purpose of using a linear style of reported speech is to "screen [the reported speech] from penetration by the author's intonations" (119). On the other end of this continuum, Voloshinov's "pictorial style" of reported speech has at its core the move toward indirection, toward playful paraphrase, "breaking down the self-contained compactness of the reported speech, to resolve it, to obliterate its boundaries" (120). The boundaries between reporting context and reported speech/discourse are flexible, permeable, sometimes difficult to ascertain. In a pictorial style, quotation tends to be used more sparingly and more acutely, and paraphrase maintains some of the particular lexical and syntactic qualities of both the author and the reported speaker. Words or phrases particular to the reported speaker might dot the speech of others. The reverse can also be true, that lexical items or speech patterns "belonging to" the author and/or narrator might intrude into the reported discourse of those being reported (Bakhtin 316).

Doctor, I've been malingering. Lingering. Exposure to hazard. Set off on a technique.

Movement Four: Paraphrase Perverted—Analyzing an Accomplished Display

An interesting type of harmonic tension can be achieved by keeping the bass note constant while allowing the chords to change above. This technique is called pedal point. . . .(Sabatella).

An Accomplished Display[2]
by MC carmen k

> I am also not speaking for my students as a teacher of color from a working-class background. I am not interested in providing

> Booker T. Washingtonian formulas for moving students *Up from Slavery*. This belongs to the historical process of choosing a black middle-class elite (chosen by whites) as the Race Leaders. These leaders direct their aims toward white supremacy and dummy-talk conservative agendas while pimping a discourse of race upliftment (you can only lift someone up when you prop yourself along the superior upper ranks). I am also not interested in a middle-class self-help ideology of taking responsibility for improving the lives of the people in my community. As Reed also reminds us, this notion is located in capitalist privatization schemes. This is not a social critique or demand. I am also not interested in providing formulas for grammarizing/skills-traditionalizing *Other People's Children because they need the explicit, direct, tough instruction* (which sounds like slavery to me). I refuse to be a chocolate or honey-dipped Miranda of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* who will give students, as the embodiment of the savage Caliban, THE language of the university. . . .
>
> As Sylvia Wynter argues, teachers are mainstream-initiating and mainstream-bearing. . . . [A]ll students of color in America need do is simply speak and write in the 'standard' and material success, economic mobility, and equity will come shining through. Now if that ain't a lie, I don't know what is. . . .
>
> Let me break it down like this. . . . (kynard 33-34)

In this excerpt from *Alt/Dis*, carmen kynard pictorially transmits, formulates and frames others' speech. How is carmen kynard's performance accomplished? She adroitly perverts the style (the "how") and content (the "what") of others' words, and organizes the enunciators' points of view. As she avails herself of the words of the "enunciators" above, she portrays them and the D/discourses they represent, and herself in relation to them.

kynard aligns herself with Reed and Wynter, replaying the "how" of their speech in strong, positive terms through embedding phrases and metapragmatics. They are given studious metapragmatic verbs; they "remind us" and "argue." By contrast, Washington, Delpit, and Shakespeare do not merit embedding phrases to introduce their ideas at all. Instead, their names or texts are freely referenced without a metapragmatic verb, or, in the case of Booker T. Washington, a nominalized form of a metapragmatic is used, the derisory "formulas." Delpit is not cited directly in-text at all, Washington only craftily, and, in a final subtle move, none of the three is given a citation in the end-of-text references list. Thus, kynard playfully utilizes

report structures to authorize one set of speakers and their points of view and to contest others. Reed and Wynter are cited conventionally, clearly and collegially, voiced as offering valuable "arguments," "reminders," or "notions." The Washington, Shakespeare, and Delpit "characters" are heard only partially, their power to speak destabilized, framed as "formula[ic]," "dummy-talk[ing]," and rigid.

kynard continues to situate herself in relation to these contrasting discourses as she gives these "characters" content ("what") to speak. Delpit is the most-nearly quoted, often a signal in academic writing of an authority being shown respect and recognition. However, kynard undercuts the reverence by multiple levels of parody. She sets up her voicing of Delpit with a linguistic twist, reversing the presuppositions in the nominalized forms by turning what many regard as neutral nouns ("grammar," "skills") back into menacing-sounding processes: "grammarizing" and "skills-traditionalizing." Then, instead of giving Delpit her props with quotation marks, kynard marks the near-quote with italics, the sarcasm of which is finalized with the parenthetical aside comparing "explicit, direct, tough instruction" to slavery ("... sounds like slavery to me"). Thus, kynard skillfully acknowledges Delpit's *voice* as powerful, yet kynard's *voicing* of Delpit is distant and sarcastic, played in counterpoint alongside other voices with which kynard wishes to align herself. For example, Wynter is voiced in a brief, uninterrupted paraphrase and given voice through discipline-specific terminology (the role of teachers in "initiating" students into the "mainstream"). Wynter and Reed ("capitalist privatization schemes") allow kynard to activate the Discourses of critical race studies and neo-Marxist critique, and through her affirmative voicing of them, she aligns herself with them.

Finally, kynard "orchestrates" these enunciators in direct counterpoint to her own voice, inserted in the text through negation of others' discourses ("I am not . . ." "I am not . . .") and stylistic rupture ("Let me break it down like this. . .").[3]

When kynard voices a conservative commonsense—"[A]ll students of color in America need do is simply speak and write in the 'standard' and material success, economic mobility, and equity will come shining through"—she not only perverts it through irony (scare quotes and mocking sunny imagery), she also creates her own speaking "I" presenting its own commonsense as counterpoint: "Now if that ain't a lie, I don't know what is. . . ."

kynard skillfully "obliterates the boundaries" between reporter and reportee; she queers voices, including her own, at least the voice(s) she tags as her own. Nevertheless, although she ruptures expected style and contradicts

powerful disciplinary voices, she sustains her relationship to her intended audience. Reported discourse is the pedal point for this open performance of insider/outsiderness, balancing harmony and tension. Her academic drag is conspicuous, enigmatic, legitimizing, troubling.

Thus, even in out of the ordinary, multi-generic writing, reported discourse often takes center stage. Reported discourse is a ubiquitous feature in almost every essay (fourteen of the fifteen) in *Alt/Dis*, a volume endeavoring to challenge "straight" portraits of academic writing. Nevertheless, although reported discourse is a dominant expectation, it has only been of late that scholarship in composition has stopped taking its imperatives for granted (e.g., Robillard, Rice, Connors, Howard).[4] It is infrequently examined as more than a surface convention; our interest is most often manifested through our obsessions with "avoiding plagiarism," rather than through examination of a normative code, open for critique. Perhaps one reason is discomfort with making explicit precisely how we allow ourselves to be regulated as academics, thereby signifying how unresisting we are concerning this particular set of normative codes and how ludicrous it seems to practice deviance.

Paradoxically (schizophrenically?) it is in the detachment afforded by reported discourse that its libratory potential can be found. *"Maw bubbles." When the appeal is ignored: "I wish deh was maw bubbles over deh."* Despite that reported discourse tends to be an essential(ized) convention, there are ways to utilize its power to push against the dominant D/discourse, as in kynard's piece.

The detachment inherent in reported discourse—it is, by definition, not meant to be read as the author's own, clearly not an expression of an authentic, enduring self—allows an author to self-consciously perform an identity, a voice, a discourse. That performance can be in earnest, or queered: performing a voice in part, or out of context, or juxtaposed alongside other voices, in order to poke fun at it, pervert it, break down the reverence for it. To teach my own students to queer voices—that is why I am composing this, on the hottest day on record in June, with my kids in daycare for only four more precious hours and the dishwasher gaping open with three smudged water glasses like teeth.

Further, if we frame the intrusion of the "first person" as another example of reported discourse, we can help students examine examples of that too, in the same way. The entrance of "I" in student papers not as expression of authentic self, but as a voice in play. Students might then be able to ask: What voice is being portrayed by the "me" here? And what about there, on the next page? And of others' texts: With what character traits am I, as the

author, choosing to invest this speaking "I"? With what D/discourses is this (reported) "I" aligned?

> All forms involving a narrator . . . signify . . . the author's freedom from a unitary and singular language. . . . such forms open up the possibility . . . of saying 'I am me' in someone else's language, and in my own language, 'I am other.' (Bakhtin 314-15)

Movement Five: Queer I

Fugue is an abrupt liberation from home and past with the "assumption of a new identity (partial or complete)" (American Psychiatric Association 273).

Movements One and Two suggest that students, like their instructors, should understand the "queer" or "unprincipled" nature of academic discourse. This understanding, according to Bakhtinian theory, is the precursor to activating multiple D/discourses within a variety of contexts—interanimation. This consciousness, though, is not enough. The stakes are high for students, and they (we) must have tools to enact interanimation which do not ask them to risk their standing at the university. This consideration should be taken especially with students who enter our institutions on the margins, as basic writers, marked as Other bodily and/or D/discursively.

Thus, Movements Three and Four demonstrate reported discourse as an effective resource for students to utilize—discursive props for academic drag. Reported discourse is already used by students and taught by teachers (though it is not usually framed as such) to help students to "pass." Passing—to be taken in earnest for an academic insider (or straight, or white, etc.)—is, perhaps, what we most frequently ask of students.

A Complicit Display
by D. W. Student

> Toni Morrison also raises an important issue that relates to the language often seen in distinguished literary works by, Edgar Allan Poe and other popular authors who are in the literary canon. Morrison describes:
>
> > Just as the formation of the nation necessitated coded language and purposeful restriction to deal with the racial disingenuousness and moral frailty at its heart, so too did the literature, whose founding

> characteristics extend into the twentieth century, reproduce the necessity for codes and restriction (6).
>
> This quote is a prime example of race and language's impact on society. Toni Morrison submits the idea that literature often contains coded language for the purpose of dual representation.

The student writer quoted above attempts to be read completely as an insider, to pass for a member of the academic community, using the linear style of reported discourse. The wordings surrounding the quotation are fairly empty of content, signaled by vague phrases: "an important issue which relates to," "a prime example," "impact on society." When these reverential phrases are taken out, we are left with embedding phrases and liftings from Morrison's essay. Halasek describes Voloshinov's linear style as follows: "the reporting discourse. . . ushers in the privileged word. . . . students are conditioned not to engage the words of others but to present them, like precious gifts, to their readers" (165-66). The decisive ushering move: the actual words and ideas of the reported speaker are not to be touched immediately, not engaged without a deferential approach. Morrison's words are "screened from penetration" by this student's "intonations." Not only does this linear style mean that the student does not speak back to Morrison, but Morrison also cannot be "made to speak" to the student. The linear boundaries work both ways, to screen the author's discourse/worldview from penetration by the reported speaker's, as well as the reverse. Discourses are presented alongside each other but remain stable, predictable, preset. Voloshinov and Bakhtin both argue that a linear style marks the dogmatic reception of authoritarian worldviews, or at best, a relativism that allows for different worldviews that are kept separate and distinct. The relation between reporter and reportee is typically one of hierarchy; either the reported speaker or the author is the authority figure.

The central purpose, for Bakhtin, of orchestrating meetings among voices is "coming to know one's own language as it is perceived in someone else's language, coming to know one's own belief system in someone else's belief system" (365). Teaching linear reported discourse means teaching students to pass, rather than to perform practices which queer, which cause discomfort and question who is a member of what, and why, and how. Sometimes sincere efforts at passing are successful and sometimes they are not, but they tend to do little to suggest that the categories of authority themselves are imposed and under dispute.

By contrast, in my analysis, kynard queers voices, using reported dis-

course to take on the mantles of authority conferred by Delpit, Shakespeare, etc., while she simultaneously dismantles them. This type of writing can serve as a model for students, if we provide the tools to read it and produce it.[5] kynard exposes "herself" as heterogeneous, multiple, particular, peculiar—queer. The introduction of a narrator, an I who is telling the story, parades radical uncertainty.

"A unitary language is not something given but is always in essence posited—at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia" (Bakhtin 270). Queerness is not androgyny, a moderation between female and male, homo and hetero, depravity and prohibition. Queerness is an exposed both/and—a rimming of practices which recognizes form but is not rationed to form.

I write my daughters' names on their lunch Tupperware, identifying them from loss among dozens of other diminutive meals; the black permanent marker always seems to fade after a few cycles through. In the next room, the baby throws toys out of her way, a bulldozer, and I hear my precociously verbal toddler at her easel, dock dock dock dock, repetitively drawing bright dots representing each member of our family, real, imagined. Sometimes there is Dad, sometimes not.

Too confessional, too sentimental. In this site, raising those innocent girls.

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Notes

1. Gee points out that even highly pervasive and institutionalized discourses—what he calls "big D Discourses"—are not determinative of particular instances of language-in-use, what he calls "little d discourses."

2. I provide an analysis of a single example of "queering voices" here. There are many other texts which might be read this way, using this operationalization of Bakhtinian theory. For example, Babb's reading of Douglass's narratives as "pay[ing] homage to vernacular forms" (375) and ideologies while engaging in the dominant conventions of white literacy practices might be built upon by looking specifically at Douglass's use of reported discourse.

Babb's reading in some ways invites such further analysis: ". . . Douglass's strategies indicate a writer skilled enough to adapt convention to honor the forms of his cultural traditions. . . . [His] skill foreshadows other writers who will use style to symbolize cultural emancipation" (375-76).

3. Podesta provides a helpful overview of various concrete manifestations of polyphony, which includes negations and stylistic ruptures.

4. For example, Rice's 2003 essay on hip hop or sampling pedagogy is one such exception. This and several other essays cited here all point, from a variety of directions, toward a necessity to continue to re-theorize reported discourse, as well as re-position it pedagogically.

5. I mean for the brief analysis in this essay to serve as an example. See Ashley and Lynn for an elaboration of these tools.

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Representing Race in Basic Writing Scholarship

Carole Center

ABSTRACT: Using Susanmarie Harrington's investigation of the presence and absence of basic writing students in articles in the Journal of Basic Writing *as a starting point, this article investigates the visibility or invisibility of race in student-present articles from 1995 to 2005. The investigation reveals that the discursive practice of colorblindness still governs the representation of race in basic writing scholarship, particularly where teacher race is concerned.*

KEYWORDS: race, basic writing scholarship, discursive practices, teacher-student relationships

In her 1999 *Journal of Basic Writing* article, "The Representation of Basic Writers in Basic Writing Scholarship, Or Who Is Quentin Pierce?," Susanmarie Harrington categorizes the topics of the articles in *JBW* volumes 1-17 to make the point that most articles focus on teaching techniques and programming while very few (only 17 among the 261 articles published in the journal through 1998) focus on student experiences and perspectives. She uses Wendy Bishop's term "student-present" to label these infrequently published articles, which she defines as characterized by "a serious attention to student voices" and as employing "methodologies [such as case study] that make students' perspectives on their writing experiences central to the analysis" (96-97). Harrington's investigation is a prime example of basic writing's ongoing self-reflective practice, which is often focused on *JBW* as one of the sites where basic writing is institutionalized (Harrington 95). Through classifying the articles since the journal's founding in 1975, Harrington finds that "there is a curious gap in the ways students are represented in basic writing scholarship" in that much of that scholarship represents students as the objects of teaching techniques and programmatic strategies and as the producers of written texts, but not as particular individuals with particular classroom experiences and particular subjectivities. The result is that "we know very little about the students who take our courses" (92).

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Harrington's findings lead me to ask what it is that we don't know about our students. What is the missing content of this "curious gap" and why does it exist? And, since I am particularly interested in the representation of race in composition studies, is racial identity one of the things that are missing? In the most recent set of student-present articles that Harrington identifies in her study (volumes 14-17 [1995-1998]), race is indeed missing, not only in articles where students aren't present but also in the student-present articles as well. Student race is represented in the descriptions of all the students in one of the six student-present articles (Linda Gray-Rosendale, "Revising the Political in Basic Writing Scholarship" [1996]), in the descriptions of some of the students in another (Jim Cody, "The Importance of Expressive Language in Preparing Basic Writers for College Writing" [1996]), and for the aggregate but not for individuals in a third (Candace Spigelman, "Taboo Topics and the Rhetoric of Silence: Discussing *Lives on the Boundary* in a Basic Writing Class" [1998]). Student race is invisible in the three other student-present articles (Gay, Miraglia, and Tinberg). Teacher race is invisible in five of the six articles: only Spigelman identifies her race. This absence of explicit identification of race seriously diminishes the value of these articles for the basic writing teachers who read them. In this article, I explore the discursive practices that prompt the authors to keep race invisible in these six articles as well as in the student-present articles published in *JBW* in the ensuing years.

Representing student and teacher race in student-present articles is beneficial, not because race is biologically real, but because it has real effects on the lives of whites (race privilege) and nonwhites (racial inequality). Race, as Krista Ratcliffe puts it, "is a fictional category possessed of all-too-realistic consequences" for individuals and for U.S. culture as a whole (13). Race, like all systemic differences that affect power relations, affects classroom relations, arguably having even more of an effect than other differences because of this country's ongoing history of unequal access to education based on race. Racism and the material realities that are the effects of racial and economic injustice continue to interfere with nonwhite students' opportunities to get into and stay in college. Race is a particularly significant identity feature for basic writing classrooms for several reasons:

- Nonwhites are placed into basic writing in disproportionate numbers. (Fox, "Race" 26; Shor 97; Gilyard 36; Agnew and McLaughlin 47)
- Basic writing status and nonwhite racial identity are often conflated. (Royster and Taylor 29; Lamos 26; Jones 73-74; Shor; Royster and Williams 79, 81)

- Since both basic writers and nonwhites are positioned as outsiders to the academy, to be both a basic writing student and nonwhite is a double whammy of marginality. (Royster and Taylor 29; Adler-Kassner, "Race" 69)

The benefits of making race visible in student-present articles focused on basic writers include the opportunity to more realistically portray the racial makeup of basic writing classes, to explore the effects of race on relationships between basic writing teachers, who are mostly white (Victor Villanueva estimates that 90 percent of college composition teachers are white ["Reading Rhetoric" 202]), and white and nonwhite students, and to explore the marginalizing effects of basic writing placement on students who are already marginalized by their race. A more general benefit is that, whether teachers are dealing with students in the classroom or reading about them in basic writing scholarship, they need to know where students are coming from. As Eric Miraglia states in a 1995 *JBW* article, basic writing teachers should "ask ourselves a myriad of 'where' questions: where our students are as students, where they are as writers, where they are as complex matrices of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation, where they are [as language users]. . . [N]one of these questions is frivolous; if answered with any richness of detail, each would provide valuable information relevant to a writing teacher's task" (48-49). While this article focuses exclusively on race, it is important to recognize that race is but one of multiple identity features that intersect in a person's subjectivity, and that, for nonwhite students, racial status and lower socioeconomic status are often intersecting features with similar effects on access to and success in college.

One drawback to representing student race in student-present articles is that if the race of the student(s) in a particular article is nonwhite, this may serve to reinforce the stereotyping of basic writers as nonwhite. However, this problem is not fixed by keeping race invisible; if basic writing scholars consistently represent student race (white and nonwhite), the tendency to construct all basic writers as nonwhite could be countered. Furthermore, it is not just *student* race that should be considered when the multiple subjectivities of the actual people in actual classrooms are discussed. As Jacqueline Jones Royster and Rebecca Greenberg Taylor argue in their 1997 *JBW* article, "Constructing Teacher Identity in the Basic Writing Classroom," making the teacher's racial identity visible is equally critical to understanding the racial dynamics of the power relations in a particular classroom because "we are all racialized, gendered, and political subjects in classroom space" (27).

The absence of race in composition scholarship has been made an issue for the discipline by a number of composition specialists, who have focused on what Catherine Prendergast, in her 1998 *College Composition and Communication* article, called the "absent presence" of race in composition studies (36). Closer to basic writing's home, Royster and Taylor, in their *JBW* article, called for basic writing teacher-researchers to "think more consciously and reflectively about the implications of difference in the classroom" (43). The absence of race in so many student-present articles supports Prendergast's assertion that "race remains undertheorized, unproblematized, and underinvestigated in composition research leaving us with no means to confront the racialized atmosphere of the university" (36). Even in basic writing, race is too often an absent presence. Thus, basic writing has yet to fully respond to Royster and Taylor's call to think about the implications of difference in the classroom.

As a white American, I approach the subject of race with humility, trying to become aware of the way that racial privilege clouds and distorts my vision. I position myself with Krista Ratcliffe, who, in *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, and Whiteness*, advocates a "rhetorical stance of humility" for whites attempting to interrogate racialized relationships, one in which whites acknowledge "I don't know what I don't know about you" (73). In analyzing the ways in which race is represented or kept invisible in student-present articles in the *Journal of Basic Writing*, I recognize and respect the authors' commitment to study students' voices and experiences. I seek to understand the discursive forces that cause some of them to screen out race when representing classroom scenes.

Racial Visibility in Student-Present Articles

Student-present articles remain scarce in the issues of the *Journal of Basic Writing* published since 1998 (volumes 18-24 [1999-2005]). Race is more visible in these articles than in the articles from volumes 14-17, but no consistent practice of representing race is evident. In the list of student-present articles below, readers can see that instead of steady progress towards racial visibility, both student-presence and representation of race seem to fluctuate. There is tremendous variability in racial representation: an article in which a particular student is described in some detail but without any mention of race may sit next to an article in which the race of the teacher and the students is carefully interrogated. Given that two issues of *JBW* are published each year with a minimum of five articles in each issue, the list

documents both the small number of student-present articles and the even smaller number of articles in which race is visible among the ten or more articles published each year:

1999	3 student-present articles: race is visible in each (Sternglass; Gruber; Counihan)
2000	No student-present articles
2001	3 student-present articles: race is visible in 1 (Ybarra) & invisible in 2 (Tabachnikov; Eves-Bowden)
2002	1 student-present article: race is visible (Stenberg)
2003	2 student-present articles: race of some subjects is visible in 1 (Ashley & Lynn) and race of all subjects visible in the other (Gray-Rosendale, Bird, & Bullock)
2004	5 student-present articles: race visible in 3 (Bernstein; Crisco; Pavia) and invisible in 2 (Maher; Chaney)
2005	1 student-present article: race of some subjects is visible (Becket)

The designation of racial visibility in this listing applies only to student race. Teacher race is much less visible, reflecting both resistance to constructing whiteness as a racial category and teacher-researchers' resistance to focusing on their own contributions to classroom racial dynamics. Of the twelve articles listed above in which student race is at least partially visible, only seven of the authors, who are either the teacher(s) in the classroom or the researcher(s) observing the classroom, identify the teacher's race: Gruber; Counihan; Ybarra; Stenberg; Gray-Rosendale, Bird, and Bullock; Ashley and Lynn; and Bernstein. Even those who do identify teacher race don't typically analyze the effects of teacher race on classroom dynamics, but rather offer

a brief statement of identity. A detailed description of the teacher's race in relation to the students' races, such as Susan Naomi Bernstein's identification of herself as "a white Anglo Jewish northerner" teaching "Latino college students in Texas" (9), is the exception, not the rule.

Discursive Practices Around Race

This failure to consistently identify race reflects both the dominant discursive practices of colorblindness and denial of racism in U.S. culture as a whole and the particular issues around racial identification that have arisen in basic writing. As a reflection of the dominant racial ideology, the continuing invisibility of race in *JBW* articles is no surprise given that the white privilege of ignoring race and constructing white selves as raceless is "doggedly unacknowledged" (Shor in Prendergast and Shor 380) and that the work of scholars in whiteness studies and critical race theory documents that racism is consistently denied. As Vershawn Ashanti Young recently wrote, both blacks and whites act in public as if race doesn't matter (695), reflecting the dominant ideology that we are in a post-Civil Rights era of racial harmony and equal opportunity. This ideology allows whites to ignore race and racism by constructing themselves as raceless, by denying the persistent negative effects of racism on the lives of nonwhites, and by taking the attitude that "race has nothing to do with me" (Frankenberg 6). When a teacher-researcher leaves out race in the description of a student or a teacher, he or she is acting in concert with this dominant ideology. Since most basic writing scholars and teachers are white, our use of this discursive practice reflects white people's investment in perpetuating a discourse of racelessness that keeps race, racism, and our own race privileges invisible: "White America . . . has had the unearned privilege to remain 'blind' to non-white America's discursive fields" (Ratcliffe 75). Students and teachers are embodied, raced presences in classrooms. We may often misread the racial texts that other bodies represent, but we do, nevertheless, read them and form assumptions based on our readings/misreadings. Our denial of this racial reading does not prevent it from happening. Instead, as Shari Stenberg argues in "Embodied Classrooms, Embodied Knowledges," our denial "only naturalizes those assumptions, cloaking them in silence and making them unspeakable" (59). Colorblindness functions by denying that race is seen and by maintaining that even if race is seen, it is impolite and/or impolitic to mention it.

Risks of Racial Identification

At the same time that the dominant ideology allows whites to ignore race, it also warns them away from making race visible by constructing that practice as risky. Studies in critical discourse analysis have found that whites believe that "[n]aming minorities . . . is morally and interactionally risky" (van Dijk et al. 174). This risk exists because the predominant discursive practice for whites is colorblindness rather than naming or discussing race, leaving whites with "few terms and even fewer protocols" for talking about race (Ratcliffe 95). The riskiness of making race visible is amplified in basic writing scholarship by the critique of the construction of the typical basic writer as nonwhite. In their attention to the politics of race, basic writing scholars, often writing in the *Journal of Basic Writing*, point out the many instances in which students who are placed in basic writing classes are constructed as nonwhite and/or different from the undergraduate norm in other areas of identity. Royster and Taylor comment that marginal writing performance is consistently conflated in composition scholarship with "issues of identity (race, class, gender, age) and issues of good character or ethos" (29). Steve Lamos, after exploring articles in the *Journal of Basic Writing* and published responses to Open Admissions at CUNY, concludes that "minority status and remedial status become one and the same" (26), with white basic writing students acknowledged, if at all, as "bystanders who happen to derive benefit from a program not intended for them" (26). William Jones declares that "*basic writer*, the term itself, was used with notable frequency, as euphemism and code for minority students" (73-74). Ira Shor indicates and indicts this conflation when he provocatively uses "Our Apartheid" as the title of his influential article arguing for eliminating basic writing programs. From Shor's point of view, conflating basic writer and nonwhite contributes to the trend of ghettoizing basic writing programs. Royster and Jean Williams in an article in one of *College Composition and Communication*'s fiftieth anniversary issues, later reprinted in NCTE's *Trends and Issues in Postsecondary English Studies* (2000), assert that "the connections we have made in the field in conflating ethnicity, otherness, and basic writing are strong and remain compelling" (79). This conflation "has become deeply embedded in the literature, despite lengthy histories that demonstrate other realities" (Royster and Williams 81).

These concerns should not deter basic writing scholars from identifying race when studying students and teachers in classrooms. Studying race does not "reify its existence" but exposes the way that race functions

as a marker that determines individuals' opportunities and privileges so as to perpetuate racial stratification (Ratcliffe 15). When race is visible in student-present articles, readers can further their understanding of the effects of race on students' and teachers' experiences in basic writing classrooms. Ironically, the attention to race and racism in basic writing scholarship, particularly to the conflation of nonwhite racial identity and basic writer status, may further promote colorblindness. Teacher-researchers who don't want to be misread as racist may protect themselves from that reading by not naming race, particularly if they are portraying a student's deficits or outsider status.

One of the student-present articles in which race is visible, Beth Counihan's "Freshgirls: Overwhelmed by Discordant Pedagogies and the Anxiety of Leaving Home" (1999), an ethnographic study of three nonwhite, female students at Lehman College, may be read as an example of what teacher-researchers are attempting to avoid when they keep race invisible. Using an irreverent tone throughout, Counihan describes these nonwhite students' school behaviors in terms that could easily be read as disrespectful, even racist. As described by Counihan, these students "clomp" (93), "saunter" (94), and "waltz" (95) into class late, eating Twinkies or potato chips as they come. Counihan emphasizes their disengagement, reporting that they do as little assigned work as possible, more interested in playing the teacher than in learning. Counihan makes no attempt to mask her own dismay at their antics, reporting, "I want to go over and twist Monique's ear" (96) when Monique mocks the teacher. Her disapproval of her research participants extends to belittling their literacy, calling their reading and writing "little literate acts" (103) and declaring that they live in "an oral/technological culture" outside of literate culture (100-101).

Taken in isolation from the rest of Counihan's discussion, in which she explores the material conditions that account for these students' estrangement from college culture and the failure of higher education to find a way to welcome them, these observations could very well lead Counihan's readers to label her a racist. Reflecting on her qualitative research on urban high school students, Deborah Appleman, a white educator, worries that her portrayals of nonwhite students have constructed them as "raced" to an unnecessary degree and may have inadvertently reinforced stereotypes of young black males as gangbangers and young black women as defiant and difficult (77). Her self-doubts are compounded when workshop participants accused her of misrepresentation and racism (75). I could easily see Counihan's work receiving the same accusatory response. Afraid of receiving similar criticism,

basic writing teacher-researchers may shy away from making race visible.

Composition has, unfortunately, a "long history of negative representations of students and their texts," as Lily Sun comments (47), and Counihan's exasperation at the failure of her student participants to fulfill her hope of chronicling their "triumphant segue into college culture despite such serious obstacles as poverty, fear, and instability" (92) leads her to portray these students negatively. In addition to expressing exasperation, however, Counihan also analyzes the material realities and feelings of not belonging that cause these students to resist a college culture from which they feel "deeply estranged" (99).

Counihan, who, along with identifying the students' race, identifies the race of the teachers whose classrooms she studied, locates the students' estrangement in the huge differences between their experiences around education and their white teachers' experiences, experiences that are linked to race and class (99). By identifying the teachers' race, she is able to contrast the experiences of a white teacher growing up "groomed for brilliance" with the experiences of his nonwhite students "often kept home from school to babysit their younger sisters and brothers" (98). The white teacher has rehearsed for college all of his life; the nonwhite students are hazarding new territory as the first in their families to attend college. Thus, by making race visible, Counihan demonstrates not only the material realities that act as barriers to college success for the students, but also the divergence in experience that prepares many whites to expect to go to college while leaving many nonwhites unprepared.

When Race Is Visible

Like Counihan's article, other student-present articles in which race is visible are valuable on a number of fronts. They discuss much "information relevant to a writing teacher's task," particularly information about the issues of authority and relationship building that are so important in student-teacher relationships across racial difference. They introduce models for successful college completion that are different than the paths that many white, traditionally aged students follow. They can help to concretize and personalize the material conditions that, as the effects of racism and economic injustice, interfere with college aspirations for many nonwhite students. As a result, they can work against denial of the negative effects of racism on nonwhite students' access to and graduation from college.

Student-present articles in which race is visible also make visible

the barriers to college success that many nonwhite students face. At the same time, these articles can provide evidence of the kinds of classroom relationships and experiences that can help nonwhite students overcome such barriers, as Marilyn Sternglass does in "Students Deserve Enough Time to Prove that They Can Succeed" (1999). Sternglass's article, based on her six-year longitudinal study of basic writers at CUNY's City College of New York, describes an African-American student, Joan, one of the focal students in the overall study (one white, four African-American, three Latino/a, and one Asian-American).

Sternglass details Joan's academic progress in a fashion that emphasizes Joan's competence and serves as an antidote to the deficit model of constructing basic writers. Sternglass's description of Joan's multiple subjectivities, including her race and class, is rich with details of the way that her social position serves as a source of many of the obstacles she faces. Because Sternglass identifies Joan's race, she is able to discuss her six-year college career in the context of the longer college careers typical of nonwhite students. Because Sternglass details the complex social forces and material conditions that affect Joan's learning, readers can trace the effect of the number of hours that Joan is working or the educational support she does or does not receive in any given semester on her school performance that semester. According to Daniela Liese, whose review of Sternglass's book *Time to Know Them* was published along with Sternglass's article in the issue, this work is "the first longitudinal study of writing and learning at a college level that takes into account not only students' academic lives but also their personal lives" (21). Sternglass amply demonstrates that race is one of "a complex network of factors" that construct the conditions that govern nonwhite students' participation in higher education (Liese 24).

Sternglass carefully details the classroom experiences and relationships that were the most helpful to Joan. Like several of the authors of student-present articles, she focuses a good deal of attention on student responses to teacher comments on their writing. Unlike some students who resist teacher authority as it is represented by their comments, Joan seeks such input and prefers writing assignments to multiple-choice exams because "she could learn from the responses of her instructors to the writing. In exams, students only found out whether they were right or wrong but not always why" (11). There is considerable evidence that nonwhite students respond differently to teacher comments than white students do. Claude Steele, for example, in his work on stereotype threat has found that an approach to commenting that combines high expectations with ability affirmation ("a strong belief

that all students can learn") counters stereotypes of nonwhites as inferior and enables nonwhite students to overcome their mistrust of teachers and engage with their assignments (126). In *Time to Know Them*, Sternglass provides multiple examples of relatively harsh comments to which nonwhite students respond positively (118, 132). When, in their student-present articles in *JBW*, teacher-researchers such as Pamela Gay, Jane Maher, and Sara Biggs Chaney offer rich analyses of students' reactions to comments without making the students' or teachers' race visible, readers are unable to make use of this research to understand how race may influence the power relations that underlie students' responses to comments.

Sternglass shows the importance of supportive and encouraging teacher-student relationships in promoting nonwhite student success by detailing the extraordinary help that Joan receives from two women teachers who function as important role models for her. Both research and anecdotal evidence suggest that nonwhite students are particularly invested in relationships with teachers (Ogbu and Simons 257; Greene 208-212; hooks 13; Fox, *Defending* 113). Based on her study of the communication between white faculty and black male students, Lisa Gonsalves concludes that "[f]aculty who work well with Black males use strategies that allow them to cultivate relationships with the students . . . by seeking their acquaintance and nurturing them as they proceed through the academy"(455). Like the male students in Gonsalves's study, Joan benefited from her relationships with specific teachers, one with high expectations and "stringent reading requirements" who impressed Joan as "warm and worldly" (11) and a second whose "comments and suggestions provided the kind of help that Joan needed in order to improve her papers" (12).

In *White Teacher*, white elementary school teacher Vivian Paley discovers that when she pictures a competent student, the student she pictures is white. I imagine that this is true for many teachers, who, like Paley, show in subtle ways that they lack faith in some of their students' abilities: "You don't introduce them to certain activities, or if you do you stop at the first sign of trouble. You avoid giving them time and attention in certain kinds of discussions" (70). By describing Joan in rich personal and academic detail, Sternglass provides an alternative image of a competent and thoughtful nonwhite student that supplements and partially supplants the normative white image.

Student-present articles in which both student and teacher race is visible undertake the work of exploring the effects of race on teachers as well as on students, constructing that relationship as a two-way dynamic. In

enacting mutual responsiveness, basic writing teachers can think not only about how to best respond to nonwhite students' needs, but also about how we can best "adjust our own needs when we encounter students who seem unfamiliar to us" (Royster and Taylor 43). As Taylor asserts in this article,

> basic writing teachers and researchers must begin instead to question our own identities, examining critically the relation between who we are and the work we make possible for our students. This work is necessary for all teachers, but for white, middle class teachers of basic writing, who may find themselves, as Royster reminds us, feeling different from those who occupy the other side of the desk, the work is especially crucial. (31)

While it is discouraging to find that representations of teacher race are not yet routine despite Royster and Taylor's call to make teacher identity a focus of interrogation, it is encouraging to find articles such as Shari Stenberg's "Learning to Change: The Development of a (Basic) Writer and Her Teacher" (2002), which, in describing Stenberg's experience with an African-American basic writing student in two successive writing classes, provides a model of a student-teacher relationship marked by a high degree of mutual responsiveness and racial visibility on both sides. Stenberg seeks a "two-way" relationship with her African-American student, Linda, in which "both subjects [herself and the student] undergo 'revision' as we learn together" (38). In this teacher-research project, Stenberg, self-identified as white, moves towards Linda by revising her initial view that Linda, a community college transfer student, is not as competent a writer as her classmates, a misreading based on Linda's "body" [her race] and "her texts"[surface error] (40). Stenberg allows Linda's writing and behavior in the class to disrupt her low expectations: "She [Linda] did not locate herself on the outside of our curriculum at all; her work as a writer and thinker, in fact, seemed to be a perfect fit for the program" (42). Stenberg reminds us that "[n]one of us live outside of dominant ideologies, including racist ones" (50), and then applies that insight to her relationship with this student. This article serves as a model of what a teacher and student can learn from each other in a fully dialogic relationship in which they are willing to confront race and the effects of race on judgments and expectations.

When Race Is Invisible

When one is interested in the racial dimension of student-teacher relationships, reading student-present articles in which race is invisible is an exercise in frustration. In contrast to the racial visibility in Sternglass's article that allowed readers to reflect on a nonwhite student's reaction to teacher comments, other student-present articles that explore students' reactions to teacher comments keep race invisible. Pamela Gay's "Dialogizing Response in the Writing Classroom: Students Answer Back" (1998), Jane Maher's "'You Probably Don't Even Know I Exist': Notes from a College Prison Program" (2004), and Sara Biggs Chaney's "Study of Teacher Error: Misreading Resistance in the Basic Writing Classroom" (2004) would be even more valuable explorations of the struggle over the teacher's authority to comment on student writing if race were visible. Unlike Joan, the students in these articles actively resist that authority. Maher reports that her student, Robin, "was furious that I had 'messed up' her essay with 'all that shit you wrote'" (96); Gay similarly finds students angry and frustrated in response to teachers' comments in her ethnographic study. Chaney becomes embroiled in a power struggle with a student who seems at first to be remarkably responsive to her teacher's suggestions, but who then plagiarizes in her final paper, an act which Chaney reads as a deliberate resistance to her pedagogy (33) and a "betrayal" of the "unspoken promise between us" (31). If the race of these students and teachers had been visible, these articles would provide rich fodder for thinking about the effect of race on the "unspoken promises" that underlie the expectations that teachers and students bring to their interactions, particularly when the teacher's authority to comment on student writing and the student's ability to resist that authority are at stake.

I was similarly frustrated when reading "Taboo Topics and the Rhetoric of Silence: Discussing *Lives on the Boundary* in a Basic Writing Class" (1998) by Candace Spigelman. Since Spigelman identifies race in the aggregate ("more than three-quarters of the eighty basic writing students I taught that semester were white, sixteen students were African-American, three were Hispanic" [44]), I felt that I "knew" that the students she focuses on are white even though she does not identify the race of individual students. Not only did I want to know for sure that these resistant students were white, but I also regretted the lost opportunity to publicly identify *some* basic writing students as white. Perhaps race is coded in Spigelman's identification of her focal student, Brian, as "from the working class Frankford section of Philadelphia" (45). For readers familiar with Philadelphia, this identification

may be a code for a white neighborhood, but for most readers, who are not familiar with Philadelphia, this identification leaves race invisible. Is she hiding his race or not specifying it because it's so obvious to her? Since so many of her students are white, is whiteness the default norm that doesn't merit identification?

The omission of race in Spigelman's description of her students' resistance to identifying with the students Mike Rose describes in *Lives on the Boundary* is particularly striking when she compares her students to the students in a study by Bridget Murphy and Roberta Pierce Trooien and mentions twice, in the space of two sentences, that Murphy and Trooien's subjects are white male students (48). While this leads me to assume that Brian and his classmates are white, there is no way I can know that for sure.

Colorblindness is particularly perplexing when it occurs in an article, such as Eric Miraglia's "A Self-Diagnostic Assessment in the Basic Writing Course" (1995), in which the author explicitly touts the value of knowing all we can about students' subjectivities, but then doesn't reveal their race. Miraglia declares in the opening paragraph of the article that knowing where students are "within the matrices of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation" provides "valuable information relevant to a writing teacher's task" (48-49). But after making this declaration, Miraglia goes on to report on a case study involving two students' self-diagnostic assessments and doesn't identify their race or sexual orientation. He does give a long biographical introduction of each student, including their work, school, and writing histories, and he does tell us that they are native speakers of English, but race is kept invisible. Similarly, Linda Adler-Kassner in "Just Writing, Basically: Basic Writers on Basic Writing" (1999) refers approvingly to Peter Mortenson's argument against using student participants anonymously in composition research without noting that she is following just such a practice by using pseudonyms and keeping her subjects' race invisible in her article. Like Miraglia, Adler-Kassner, in this analysis of interviews with two students, Tom and Susan, gives readers a wealth of biographical detail on each student, including their parents' employment status, literacy practices, and education as well as the students' school and home literacy practices, but not their race. Both students are described as "from inner-ring suburbs of Detroit" ("Just" 72) and perhaps someone from the Detroit area could read that description as a code for race. But why would Adler-Kassner choose to leave race coded when she carefully decodes Tom's report that his father worked at "Ford's," a construction that she explains indicates a blue-collar position since professional employees call the company "Ford" ("Just" 87)? The absence of race

is highlighted by the amount of detail about other aspects of these students' social positioning in these articles. In both Miraglia's and Adler-Kassner's articles, it appears that the discursive practice of colorblindness negates the authors' intentions to fully explore their students' social identities.

Dominant discursive practices are those ways of speaking and writing that dominant class members "experience as natural, normal, inevitable, and unremarkable" because they intuitively feel right (Stygall 321). The authors cited above left race out of their descriptions because it felt like the right thing to do. Conversely, putting a racial label on teachers and/or students, if even considered by these authors, felt wrong, gratuitous, perhaps even risky. In addition to keeping race invisible because it doesn't feel right to make it visible, the authors of student-present articles sometimes face special circumstances that make revealing race feel acceptable or unacceptable due to the context itself. It appears that the context of discussing ESL students is one in which making race visible seems acceptable. On the other hand, a context in which personal details about the student(s) might lead the audience to racially stereotype is one in which making race visible seems particularly unacceptable. Similarly, a context in which the author is discussing students' deficits or their status as outsiders risks the reading that the author is racially stereotyping and thus signals the need for colorblindness. Several examples of making the race of ESL students visible and keeping invisible the race of students who might be racially stereotyped can be found in these student-present articles.

The authors of articles in which students are non-native speakers of English seem to have less hesitation about revealing their race. When there is a mixture of non-native and native speakers in the same article and the authors mention the race or ethnicity of individual students only when it is relevant to students' multiple languages, then some students in the article are identified racially while others are not, creating an uncomfortable imbalance. Articles that follow this practice, which include Howard Tinberg's "Teaching in the Spaces Between: What Basic Writers Can Teach Us" (1998) and Jim Cody's "The Importance of Expressive Language in Preparing Basic Writers for College Writing" (1996), reveal that the risk of making race visible may be somehow neutralized by linguistic difference. In another example of this practice of partial colorblindness, Diana Becket in her 2005 article, "Uses of Background Experience in a Preparatory Reading and Writing Class: An Analysis of Native and Non-native Speakers of English," compares the classroom experiences of three native English-speaking students with three non-native students who are from India and are native speakers of Punjabi.

Becket identifies the race of the Indian students but not of the native speakers of English. When readers are told a large amount of information about Rahul, Vijay, and Meera's racial, linguistic, educational, and immigration backgrounds while only being informed of the educational histories of Marian, John, and Ian, the treatment of the students in this article seems unbalanced.

Colorblindness comes into play when authors seek to shield the student research participants from racial stereotyping by the article's readers. In Jim Cody's article, he discusses three students, Maika, Lydia, and Anthony. Maika is an ESL student and Cody identifies her racially as a Latina (97), following the pattern discussed above. Lydia and Anthony are native speakers of English. Cody describes Lydia as a student whose "writing changed as a result of a growing awareness of the power behind her marginality . . . [and] the political, social, and economic reasons for her marginality" (102), but does not give the specifics of her marginal social position. Perhaps Cody keeps Lydia's race invisible to protect her from his audience's projection of racial stereotypes since, in the writing excerpts that Cody includes in the article, Lydia reveals personal information that might activate stereotypes of nonwhite unwed mothers on welfare. Similarly, Cody does not identify Anthony's race when describing him as a survivor of "the pain, temptation, and danger that go with being raised in the inner city" (105). However, he does identify Anthony as an African-American later in the article when describing the increasing power of his written expression (107).

In another situation in which colorblindness comes to the fore, authors of student-present articles who employ a discourse of deficit, in which they construct students as inferior or alien to college culture, have a further reason to keep race invisible. In these student-present articles from the *Journal of Basic Writing*, there is little evidence of the construction of students, whether or not their race is visible, as inferior, supporting Adler-Kassner's contention that the field has found "a way of talking about basic writers and their abilities [that] works against the deficit model" ("Just" 76). However, those authors who do construct students as deficient or alien, such as Anmarie Eves-Bowden and Ann Tabachnikov, may keep race invisible in order to avoid the appearance of stereotyping students of a particular race as either intellectually inferior or as permanent outsiders to the academy.

In her teacher-research project, described in the article "What Basic Writers Think About Writing" (2001), Eves-Bowden interviewed seven of her basic writing students about their writing processes and abilities. While she doesn't identify the students' races and tells us that the students' names

are pseudonyms (75), she assigns first and last names that suggest whiteness (Colleen O'Brian, Jennifer Parson) while others suggest nonwhiteness (Adam Sarzefhed, Monica Cortez). According to Eves-Bowden, none of these were ESL students (75).

In her discussion of the students' self-assessments, Eves-Bowden emphasizes the students' writing problems, seeing them as less able than they see themselves. For Cortez, Eves-Bowden says, "I sense she needs help with a much wider range of problems than she acknowledges" (77), following this declaration with a list of nine of Cortez's writing weaknesses. With Sarzefhed, she hypothesizes that "either laziness or time constraints" account for his writing weakness (79). "Lazy" is a key word indicating the construction of the student as inferior. Only Jennifer Parsons is praised for her writing efforts as "a conscientious worker, steady and determined" (80). If Eves-Bowden had identified the races that may be encoded in the pseudonyms she employs, her discourse of deficit would appear to uphold racial hierarchies by constructing nonwhite students as lazy and less competent while at least one white student is constructed as a superior writer and student.

Tabachnikov, who, in "The Mommification of Writing Instruction: A Tale of Two Students" (2001) does not identify students' race, consequently runs no risk of being read as racist when she constructs her focal student as an outsider who is not yet ready "to commit to being a [college] student" (31). Colorblindness allows her to discuss an "outrageous" example of this student's immature behavior without risking an accusation that she is constructing nonwhite students as "regressing to some kind of third grade mindset" and thus behaving as outsiders to college culture (29).

Conclusion

Making race visible in scholarly writing, particularly in classroom-based research in which students and teachers are present, can help basic writing teachers to reflect on the implications of difference. Perhaps someday we can disregard race as an identity feature, but that day will only come when we have dismantled the present racist social structure. As Toni Morrison says in *Playing in the Dark*, "[t]he world does not become raceless nor will it become unracialized by assertion" (46).

In the eleven volumes of the *Journal of Basic Writing* investigated (14-24), only two of the students whose race was mentioned were identified as white, a student in Catherine Matthews Pavia's "Issues of Attitude and Access: A Case Study of Basic Writers in a Computer Classroom" and another

in Hannah Ashley and Katy Lynn's "Ventriloquism 001: How to Throw Your Voice in the Academy." This finding supports the contention that basic writer status and nonwhiteness are too often conflated, but it should not discourage basic writing teacher-researchers from representing race in their scholarly articles. Unless basic writing scholars work against prevailing discursive practices to identify both whites and nonwhites as raced bodies, they will miss opportunities to counter the assumption that all basic writers are nonwhite.

Teachers' bodies are also read as racial texts in the classroom. Whether my white body is read as one of "us" or one of "them," it is read, and the reading affects my relationships with my students. *JBW*'s readers cannot "think more consciously and reflectively about the implications of difference in the classroom" (Royster and Taylor 43) unless teacher and student race is visible. Nor can readers think more consciously and reflectively about the implications of racial sameness without articles where race is visible to help us think about whether we have different expectations and interactions with students who share our racial identities. Attention to the particularities of students' subjectivities and classroom experiences is only valid if it is coupled with an equal attention to teachers' subjectivities, including their race.

If we agree, with Royster and Taylor, that "we are all racialized, gendered, and political subjects in classroom space" (27), then we must enact that understanding by developing an ethic of representation in which authors of articles in the *Journal of Basic Writing* in particular, and basic writing scholars in general, know that it will be acceptable, even expected, that they reveal the races they see in the classroom (preferably as self-identified by the research participants). The "Guidelines for the Ethical Treatment of Students and Student Writing in Composition Studies," approved by the Executive Committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 2000, do not give a rationale for making race visible, but rather caution researchers to check their interpretations of students' spoken and written statements, especially "when the students are from a cultural, ethnic, or other group different than their own" (489). The implication of this directive is that white composition specialists should be especially wary when identifying students as nonwhite or interpreting the words of nonwhite students. Such wariness adds weight to the discursive forces that produce colorblindness. But if basic writing is to be, as Deborah Mutnick and many other basic writing teachers wish, "a location in which alliances between teachers and students could subvert the margin-center hierarchy" based on race, class, and gender (xii), then basic writing teacher-researchers cannot afford to indulge

in colorblindness, acting as if race (and other systemic differences) don't matter. Therefore, basic writing teacher-researchers need to understand and resist the discursive forces that prompt them to keep race invisible in their published work. Linda, the student in Stenberg's article, says, "I sometimes feel that society sees us as they once saw children that they should be seen and not heard. Black women are like an invisible race, our voice is not heard enough, and when we began to speak out on issues it is often misunderstood most often in a negative way" (qtd. in Stenberg 43). Such invisibility should be unacceptable in basic writing scholarship, where student identities and voices should be seen and heard in all their complexity.

Note

1. Please note that in some issues there are more student-present articles than indicated on this list. I have not included articles that focus exclusively on ESL/ELL students in my study since those students' issues are so different from the issues of native-born nonwhites, as John Ogbu has shown by distinguishing between the school experiences of voluntary and involuntary minorities (Ogbu and Simon 165). This distinction parallels a difference in composition specialists' ability to talk about student race. Composition scholars can talk about voluntary minorities (second-language writers) and their linguistic and cultural issues; they find it much more difficult to talk about the issues of involuntary minorities, who are native born but racial strangers. As Tom Fox has long argued, composition scholars, through their emphasis on dialect differences, have sought to construct nonwhite students' problems as language-based because that is something about which composition teachers can talk and deal. What can't be talked about are the barriers to access and success based on power, privilege, and racial stratification that impede nonwhite students.

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Grammar Games in the Age of Anti-Remediation

Margaret Tomlinson Rustick

ABSTRACT: Several states have now implemented policies restricting basic writers' access to four-year universities, and the students most likely to be affected are African American, Latino, and nonnative English speakers. The pressure to speed students' mastery of standard written English, along with the trend toward more explicit instruction in second language pedagogy, has resulted in a renewed interest in teaching grammar. While some of these recommendations claim that standard written English can be taught as one code among many, used for certain rhetorical situations, such approaches may not prove more inclusive when the syntactic features of academic writing are presented as relatively benign choices, nor do they adequately explain the different ways we process spoken and written texts. This article describes an approach using open-ended games to help activate the switch all writers must make, regardless of home language, when they shift from spoken word to print text.

KEYWORDS: anti-remediation policies, grammar, sentence-level instruction, literacy

In recent years, anti-remediation policies have been implemented in four-year universities across the country, from New York to California (Gilyard, Wiener, Gleason, Crouch and McNenny). While the doors to affordable higher education are not exactly closed, the gates are certainly being more carefully guarded, and basic writers are likely to find themselves—either by choice or coercion—in two-year colleges where they are expected to gain "foundational skills."[1] For policy makers, employers, and even the majority of faculty outside composition programs, foundational skills are still most often defined as proficiency in the conventions of standard written English. And, as has been the case so often in the past, those students deemed lacking necessary skills are disproportionately nonnative English speakers, African American and Latino students.[2]

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Not coincidentally, inside the field of composition there has been a renewed interest in grammar and sentence-level instruction, signaled by articles such as Sharon A, Meyers' "ReMembering the Sentence" and Bonnie Devet's "Welcoming Grammar Back into the Writing Classroom." Many of us might claim that the sentence was not forgotten and grammar was never really gone. Still, these authors speak to a void, responding to what Robert Connors calls the "erasure of the sentence" from our scholarly journals, a void that has often left teachers, especially those relatively new to the field, with little more than admonitions to teach grammar in context—whatever that might mean—and to keep error correction to a minimum. The absence of discussion about how to address sentence-level skills not only created a vacuum for teachers, it has contributed to the public backlash against basic writing programs. In her article "How We Have Failed the Basic Writing Enterprise," Lynn Quitman Troyka comments on the "draconian decision" to eliminate basic skills instruction from senior colleges in the City University of New York, arguing that anti-remediation policies, such as those enacted at CUNY, are to some extent due to our field's refusal to adequately address public sentiment about standard written English. According to Troyka, basic writing specialists "openly declared grammar didn't matter for writers. No nuances. So what if the public believes that it 'matters'? Privately, some faculty, myself included, held a more relative view. But in influential circles it became vogue for BW faculty to jump on that ill-informed bandwagon" (118). Whether or not we agree with Troyka's position, it is hard to deny that, when it comes to disputes over grammar, the battlefield has more often been littered with invective and generalization than reason or nuance.

While recent budget cuts to basic writing programs may be linked, in part, to the attitude Troyka describes, politicians have a long history of interfering in secondary school curriculum, which has done little to reduce the need for college remediation. For the past five years, I have been part of an effort to increase collaboration between university composition teachers and high school faculty from the predominantly urban secondary schools near my campus, California State University East Bay, a medium-sized state college located just south of Oakland, California.[3] In an attempt to better prepare high school graduates for college, our Chancellor's Office has sponsored various partnerships with high schools, providing much needed opportunities for faculty to share information and teaching strategies across institutional boundaries.[4] During one of our monthly meetings, an experienced college composition teacher climbed on that bandwagon Troyka describes and bluntly asserted that high school teachers should stop wasting their time

on grammar because university teachers don't care if students know it. Why then, asked a distraught high school colleague, are entering freshmen tested on grammar? In fact, our writing placement test includes a timed essay and objective questions that evaluate, among other things, students' ability to edit according to standards of conventional usage, as well as to recognize problems with sentence control and clarity. For the college teacher, students did not need explicit knowledge of, or instruction in, grammar to produce correct, effective sentences; for the high school teacher, it was the essential first step. Once the smoke had cleared and our terms had been defined (*What do you mean by "grammar"? What do you mean by "teach"?*), we were left with the inevitable question that is at the heart of the grammar debate: How do we increase students' editing skills and sentence control without traditional grammar?

As we explored that question, the teachers were intrigued by an approach I had developed that involves playing with sentence-length text, creating opportunities for students to discover the relationship between word functions and sentence boundaries without relying on grammatical terminology and rules. Personally, I wanted to avoid what I call the comma coma, the glazed stares and drooping eyelids that overcame even the most well-intentioned students every time I broached the topic of punctuation. This response was not only uncomfortable for me, but I could not convince myself that students were learning much in that state. Contrary to those who claim high schools are not teaching grammar, my college freshmen say their inattentiveness is a result of having heard it all before, and either they claim to know it, or they believe they never got it and never will. Both these assertions usually prove false, but students who have learned otherwise need some convincing. So I opt for a little sleight of hand, strengthening students' sentence-level fluency through games.

I agree with Rei Noguchi who claims it is a myth that students don't learn grammar because it is boring and complicated. Students learn other subjects they find difficult, and some of our best writers have no inclination to study grammar, leading Noguchi to conclude, "while the lack of interest in grammar is probably a contributing cause to the failure of formal grammar instruction, it is not the chief one" (5). Simply making grammar lessons more entertaining will not necessarily improve student writing. Increasing student engagement, difficult as that might be, is only part of the problem. The real challenge is changing the way we think about sentence-level issues, which requires tremendous fortitude amid growing conservatism, tighter budgets and reduced resources, and pressure to speed students' acquisition of standard written English.

Given the current climate, it hardly seems prudent to suggest students should spend their time *playing* with language. With the clock ticking, we may believe that explicit, direct instruction is the most efficient use of students' limited time. But teachers need to remember that the ability to control surface features of writing does not progress linearly; errors students seem to have mastered often reappear when they take on more complex writing tasks (Kroll and Schafer, Kutz, Corder, Mayher, Haswell, Carroll). Teachers also need to be especially careful not to adopt methods that feed into a deficit theory of error, most clearly articulated by Mike Rose, in which they assume students make mistakes simply because they don't know any better. Though some errors are due to a lack of explicit knowledge, many effective student writers cannot explain the rules while others, including nonnative speakers who have learned traditional grammar, know the rules but cannot apply them.

Recognizing the gap between students' internalized knowledge, or linguistic *competence*, and the *performance* errors that appear in their texts, many writing teachers have adopted methods that embody Stephen Krashen's "natural" approach to second-language acquisition: immersing students in the target language through extensive reading as a way to provide meaningful input, while focusing on the communicative aspects of writing rather than error correction and direct instruction in rules. However, Krashen's indirect methods also have been increasingly called into question, potentially contributing to the turn toward more explicit grammar in composition. Fueled partially by the high proportion of bilingual students known as "generation 1.5," who may be competent in spoken English but who have not yet acquired literacy skills necessary for academic success, second-language specialists have begun to reevaluate the role of direct instruction, evident in the current popularity of "focus on form."[5]

While second-language pedagogy offers important insights for composition teachers, we also need to keep in mind the differences between oral language and literacy development. Speakers of any language face challenges writing in their native language, moving between oral and written modes of communication, and we need to find ways to draw on the grammatical resources students have accumulated through spoken language without erasing the differences of print. One of the fundamental obstacles for students switching between oral and literate codes is the contrast between aural and visual communication. In order to become more adept writers, students need to exercise those mental muscles that are activated when they attend to the visual medium of printed language.

Recent neurolinguistic studies of reading help us to better understand the cognitive processes involved in comprehending print. For instance, in their research on how modality—oral vs. written—affects learners' acquisition of vocabulary, Nelson, Balass, and Perfetti describe the "episodic trace" formed in working memory when test subjects encounter new words (26). The stronger the trace, the more easily a word is recalled. Since learners were better able to recall new words presented in print than in speech, the authors conclude that reading, which involves both phonological (auditory) and orthographic (visual) information, tends to leave a stronger trace than spoken language. The difference in the intensity of the episodic trace also helps explain why we are more aware of word repetition in print than in oral language. Since written words remain longer in the working memory, readers are more aware of seeing a word again, whereas listeners recognize repeated ideas but rarely notice repetition of individual words. To become meaningful language, individual words, whether spoken or written, must be processed in grammatical "chunks." Again the intensity of the visual trace may account for some of the differences between oral and print language. Readers have more time to unconsciously examine the relationships between those elements; therefore, they can comprehend more complex and varied sentence structure than we typically use when speaking. Teachers who consider these differences in processing oral and visual messages may find alternative ways to help students develop the grammatical flexibility they need to be fluent in the literate code.

ACTIVATING THE CODE-SWITCH

Another sticking point as concerns the negotiation of grammar within meaning-based instruction has to do with code-switching. The idea of code-switching has been utilized by teachers who struggle to reconcile the goals of honoring students' home language while simultaneously teaching them the conventions of standard written English. One response to this seeming contradiction comes from those who claim to utilize descriptive rather than prescriptive grammar, though this is problematic since the ultimate goal remains increasing correctness in standard written English. Drawing on sociolinguistic principles, descriptive grammar allows students to analyze nonstandard English, highlighting the logic and integrity of various dialects, and then contrast those "codes" with standard written English (see, for example, Dunn and Lindbloom, Tchudi and Lee). This approach appeals to teachers who, like Martha Kolln, believe that learning gram-

matical vocabulary necessarily leads to greater awareness. As Kolln states in her early rebuttal of the anti-grammar movement, "When we teach our students to understand and label the various structures of the system, when we bring to conscious awareness those subconscious rules, we are, in fact, teaching grammar" ("Closing" 141).[6] Furthermore, descriptive approaches conveniently provide students and teachers with the terminology they need to discuss the rules of formal written English. Consider, for instance, the sentiment revealed in this advice to teachers in *Grammar Alive!,* a popular textbook coauthored by Martha Kolln:

> It is all well and good to believe, as the linguists tell you, that all language varieties are "created equal" grammatically. But it is a different matter altogether to confront language use in your own backyard. The important news for teachers is that linguistic research is showing increasingly that the most effective way to achieve this mission lies through the techniques of contrastive analysis and code-switching. (Haussamen et al. 10-14)

As a tool for achieving the "mission" of teaching standard written English, contrastive analysis cannot also, simultaneously, create a more inclusive environment or wholly offset the resistance students feel so long as the focus lies on identifying the differences between their home language and accepted school codes. In fact, we may unintentionally re-inscribe the distance between those students and the institution, between them and those who happen to speak prestige dialects, adding to their sense of being outsiders. These approaches are most problematic when they present academic English as a fairly benign set of conventions writers adopt in order to meet (not *comply* with) the expectations (not *demands*) of the rhetorical context. Regardless of where we stand on the issue, we cannot simply ignore the relationship between power and standard English, a concern that has been addressed by scholars such as bell hooks, Geneva Smitherman, and Lisa Delpit. For Delpit, descriptive grammar, like the process approach in general, fails to meet the needs of student writers who are not already fluent in the dominant discourse of standard English and academic culture. Smitherman and hooks, on the other hand, argue that we need to transform the discourse that denies students access rather than promoting the kind of double consciousness necessary for them to "pass" in academic contexts.

Contrastive analysis can be more productively applied when it focuses on switching between oral and literate codes, a switch all successful writers

must make and one that is challenging regardless of the dialect students speak or the contexts in which they write. To be most beneficial, this analysis must examine the connection between the forms—the surface structures—and the processes of composing and comprehending text, paying careful attention not only to words that are used but also to the mental activity involved. From a rhetorical perspective, we recognize, as Deborah Tannen and Wallace Chafe point out, that speaking and writing operate on a continuum. Purpose and relationship with the audience are more significant determiners of similarity or difference than whether one is speaking or writing. [7]

Previous attempts to describe the relationship between oral and literate language tend to fall into extremes, either emphasizing the differences, particularly the distinctive features of academic discourse, or starting with the similarities between speech and writing but falling short when it comes to offering innovative methods to help students shift from one mode to the other. For instance, based on research in oral language acquisition and comprehension, Pamela D. Dykstra concludes:

> Basic writers have already internalized the patterns of syntactic units, units which everyone strings along when talking. Now, we need to teach that writing is another way of organizing those syntactic units. Writing uses those same units but in a different structure. And if language is learned by acquiring the pattern, we need to focus on the patterns that phrases and clauses can take in a sentence. People acquire those patterns by internalizing them through experience. Therefore, our task is to instill the patterns of writing in our students' minds. That is a challenge! (140-41)

In response to this challenge and "[b]ecause basic writers are past the formative language acquisition stage when patterns are internalized unconsciously" (142), Dykstra recommends activities such as sentence-combining and imitation exercises that make students conscious of written sentence patterns through explicit instruction. While it is important for students to be more aware of structures specific to written discourse that they likely have not encountered in spoken language, it is impossible to introduce them to all the syntactic moves available to writers. Furthermore, though these kinds of lessons can increase students' stylistic repertoire, given the directive nature of most explicit instruction, students tend to see writing as a matter of correctness rather than choice, of "rigid rules" (Rose) instead of an incredibly dynamic system with virtually unlimited options. If we aug-

ment the kinds of instruction Dykstra recommends with games that invite more active, playful exploration of the contrasting ways we experience print and spoken language, students may more effectively learn to switch between literate and oral codes.

THE RULES OF GRAMMAR GAMING

It is important to understand that the primary purpose of grammar gaming is not to teach terminology or prescriptive rules, nor is it simply a way to have fun. Instead, the basic premise of grammar gaming is that students need to practice using language the way writers do. In contrast to the automatic, unconscious flow of speech, these activities require students to make deliberate but not explicitly rule-governed choices about language. Because successful writers tend to manipulate word order, many of these games involve moving words around, changing the meaning of the sentence and sometimes the grammatical function of words as a result of their position or relationship to other words. Another essential feature of these games is that they are all open-ended; there are no single correct answers. We call attention to the expectations of readers through collaboration, relying on the class to decide if something is acceptable, comprehensible, or grammatically "legal." Although these debates can make teachers uncomfortable, the conversations are crucial for students. After I have led them through an activity, whenever possible I have students produce their own examples. They may not be able to use grammatical terminology to articulate what they have learned, just as many effective writers cannot name parts of speech or recite rules, but they are often able to imitate the linguistic moves embedded in the games, which helps them develop conceptual knowledge that informs discussions of word and sentence-level issues in their writing. These general principles serve as the basis for all the games, a few of which are explained below along with more specific recommendations for teachers who may want to develop similar activities. I hope even teachers who do not choose to use grammar games will find something in these explanations that helps them think differently about the challenges facing our students.

Start with students' intuitive knowledge of grammar.

Debates about grammar often begin with a definition of terms, distinguishing the intuitive "grammar in our heads" and the explicit rules of

"school grammar," which Patrick Hartwell refers to as "grammar 1" (111). Substantially less has been said about what to do with students' intuitive grammar, how to make it explicit, or how to build on it. One vital aspect of Hartwell's influential "Grammar, Grammars, and the Teaching of Grammar," often overlooked, is the importance of metalinguistic awareness and the role of literacy in developing that ability. According to Hartwell and other researchers he cites, the more extensive a student's exposure to print literacy, the easier it is to develop metalinguistic awareness, and "the form of grammar 1 in the heads of literate adults seems profoundly affected by the acquisition of literacy" (113). To some extent, this observation accounts for students who somehow "get it," and helps to explain why some students, those fortunate enough to have built up a repository of tacit knowledge by engaging with print text, respond more quickly when introduced to formal grammar.

Although extensive reading remains the best way to acquire this tacit knowledge, teachers also need to consider how students can develop grammatical awareness by working with texts of varying length, including sentences. To draw out students' internalized grammar and make them aware of the ways meaning results from a combination of both grammatical and lexical features of words, I created a game using something similar to Chomsky's "colorless green ideas sleep furiously," a gibberish sentence Chomsky developed to demonstrate how internalized knowledge allows speakers to recognize grammatical correctness even in nonsensical expressions.[8] I write about ten unrelated words on cards (paper plates also work well and can be displayed in a chalkboard tray), including some that have multiple grammatical functions: nouns that also act as verbs ("flies" is one of my favorites), past tense verbs that could be participles, participial/gerund/present progressive verbs. To create these groups of words, I test them to be sure I can get several different grammatical, nonsensical combinations. Then I line them up in random agrammatical order, and I ask volunteers to arrange them in as many "logical" combinations as possible. Without ever talking about parts of speech, we note how the meaning changes when the words are rearranged. Interestingly, every time I have introduced this game, whether the players are basic writers or experienced English teachers, the constructions they come up with follow a similar sequence. At first, they order the words in the familiar subject-verb-object pattern of speech. Then someone moves the adjectives or switches the nouns in the subject and object positions. With patience and encouragement, they discover constructions that are increasingly "literary." Prepositions move to the beginning of the

sentence, participial phrases appear, or words originally used as verbs become gerunds. We debate these latter constructions, and the players recognize the difference between unusual word order and incorrect grammatical structures, all without naming a single part of speech. Students then create their own groups of words, seeing who can come up with a word set that produces the most combinations.

Though this activity does not result in knowledge that immediately improves test scores, students do begin to develop attitudes and insights that are essential in subsequent class conversations or individual conferences. One consequence is that students become more aware of how readers rely on the position of a word in a sentence to determine its meaning and function. Later, when I call attention to a word, one a student may have used incorrectly or perhaps an unusual structure in something we've read, students are substantially less confused when I ask them what a word is *doing* in the sentence, how it is functioning. Their ability to respond to those questions, I would argue, is evidence that they are developing metalinguistic awareness, which Hartwell claims can best be accomplished by presenting language as "literal stuff, verbal clay, to be molded and probed, shaped and reshaped, and, above all, *enjoyed*" (125, emphasis added).

Get them moving.

One of the key differences between speech and print is the quantity and type of syntactic movement available to writers, and much of this variety is a result of the different ways we process oral and written language. Because oral language disappears as we speak, we tend to use more predictable, repetitive sentence patterns, which listeners rarely notice. Nor are listeners bothered by repetitious words. To illustrate our tolerance of oral repetition, I ask my students how many times I said a particular high-frequency word, one I have repeated multiple times during a brief lecture but which, until I identify it, has gone relatively unnoticed. What happens, I then ask them, if you use the same word more than once in a sentence or several times in a single paragraph? Instantly, they recall their agonizing efforts to find a synonym for "said" or, in some cases, even alternatives for the word "the." Repeating words when one writes, students have learned, is taboo, and they believe their writing will improve if they simply know more words, a goal many try to accomplish by using a thesaurus. It seldom occurs to them to restructure or combine their sentences—a kind of revision we cannot do when speaking—instead of substituting a different word.

One game to increase students' awareness of syntactic movement that I developed in collaboration with Gabriele Weintraub, a high school colleague, is something we call "Sentence Survivor." The teacher divides the class into teams, then writes a long, compound-complex sentence, filled with adjectives and adverbs, on the board. For example, the starting sentence might be: *Barking loudly at the mailman, the big black dog scared the children playing nearby, so they ran quickly to their mother in the yellow house on the corner.* Each team takes turns erasing words in the sentence. They can remove one, two, or three words per turn: a single adjective, a determiner and a noun, an entire three-word phrase, any combination of words as long as they do not exceed the three-word limit and the remaining words form a complete sentence. The object of the game is to be the team that makes the last move, reducing the sentence to its least possible number of words, which can require some strategizing in deciding how many words to erase on a given turn.

Originally, we had students hold cards with individual words written on them, and they sat down after they were "voted off" the sentence. I modified it, using the chalkboard instead, because I found the earlier method logistically difficult to manage. However, the original approach has the benefit of increasing the amount of physical engagement, and the teams grow when the castaways join them, giving them an advantage of more brainpower as they consult on their next move. If the student holding the preposition is a notoriously good player, students may perform some remarkable linguistic gymnastics in order to get that voted off the sentence and onto their team. Regardless of the format, holding cards or erasing words on the chalkboard, invariably students make moves I had not anticipated, and I'm always amazed at the options they discover and how the meaning of the original sentence changes as the students play.

In addition to making students aware of the amount of movement possible within a sentence, games like Sentence Survivor require a great deal of deliberate attention to language. Even a fluent writer, one who has internalized a wealth of sentence patterns and who is confident in her ability to punctuate those constructions, rarely sees a flood of words automatically rush onto the page, and it is not simply a matter of waiting until the final stages to edit. Instead, successful writers weigh the options, consider the advantages of linking clauses within one sentence or separating them, and wrestle with emerging ideas as they finesse them into written form. They test word order, restructure sentences, revise as they write—all things speakers do not do. Written fluency, confused with speaking, appears to be spontaneous. In the words of our students, the writing *flows*. However,

they seem uncertain about what exactly makes writing flow, how attentive a writer must be to make this happen, and generally, to what good writers attend during the process.

In contrast to the varied sentence patterns of writing, oral sentence patterns are much more restrictive, tending to follow the subject-verb-object sequence in English. Speakers also rely on bound modifiers, such as adjectives and restrictive clauses that, if moved, cause confusion. Writers, on the other hand, make greater use of free modifiers, which can be placed in various positions within the sentence for rhythm and emphasis, as "on the other hand" in this sentence (see "Free Modifiers" for more examples). In addition, experienced, effective writers use absolute, appositive, and participial phrases at the beginning, middle, or end of sentences—all tactics speakers rarely employ. Much of our students' writing, even when grammatically correct and error-free, fails to employ these literate strategies, relying instead on the predictable sentence structures common in speech. Rather than expecting students to memorize specific patterns or learn the definition of terms like "appositive," we can help them shift from oral to written modes by involving them in the range and power of syntactic movement, calling their attention to how meaning is affected by the position of words in a sentence. Although rhetorical approaches to grammar do try to give students a basis for determining why one structure might be preferable to another, experimenting with syntactic movement may be a more fundamental—and pleasurable—way to heighten students' sense of how words affect readers. At the same time, this approach helps students discover their own sentence patterns and strengthen their linguistic muscles.

Exploit the ambiguity of language.

In virtually any context, reading calls for a kind of precision that contradicts our students' experiences with spoken language. Long, rambling sentences, the kind many of our students write, would be perfectly acceptable in speech and, in fact, have a kind of oral quality to them and lack the punctuation readers use to make sense of text. Punctuation, we know, is one means writers use to infuse print with some of the intonations, rhythms, and emphases available in speech. But students who punctuate by ear, placing commas where they pause to take a breath or believing the semi-colon indicates a longer pause than a comma, do more to reveal their peculiar breathing patterns than to help readers process print. The solution, it seems, is to teach students grammatical concepts necessary to correctly use punctuation.

When we describe the rules of punctuation only in terms of abstract grammatical constructs, we get no further than our students who try to mimic auditory intonation, and we misconstrue the importance of visual information. For instance, when I ask my students what makes a sentence a sentence, they respond with familiar and incredibly inadequate definitions: it expresses a complete thought; it has a subject and a verb (or predicate), say the more advanced grammarians among them. They frequently feel there must be some trick when I tell them my definition: a sentence is a group of words with a capital letter at the beginning and a period at the end. They begin to understand the significance of this statement when I talk about the sentence as a visual container. The elements I choose to put inside that container—the words, phrases, clauses—are together because I want my readers to see them as a single unit. Yes, there are some rules about what can or must go in there, which, if violated, may cause the grammar police to descend upon you. But ultimately, within those constraints, a writer has incredible freedom, much more freedom, in fact, than a speaker. Punctuation marks, I try to convince my students, are the keys to the handcuffs. With those keys in your pocket, you can take readers anywhere you want them to go, but you do need to consider where to place the markers readers use to negotiate meaning and avoid getting lost. Punctuation, then, becomes crucial for identifying junctures where readers can turn one way or the other, and this ambiguity underlies my Mysterious Punctuation game.

To play with punctuation as a tool for creating visual boundaries, I write a short story in which the perpetrator and the crime change depending on where the periods are placed. Since this game is easier with some knowledge of sentence boundaries and internal punctuation, which I review in mini-lessons, I use this game fairly late, after we have had other opportunities to play. I pass out copies of the unpunctuated text, and students take turns supplying the punctuation until they reach the point where they want the sentence to end. Notice, for instance, what happens in this short passage from the story:

> WHEN THE DOOR OPENED THE POLICE OFFICER STEPPED INSIDE WITHOUT ASKING THE BUTLER REACHED FOR THE CANE AND REMOVED A SMALL REVOLVER FROM THE GILDED HANDLE WHILE HE CAREFULLY FOLDED THE PIECE OF PAPER WITH THE SECRET MESSAGE HARRY WORDSMITH LISTENED TO THE TUMBLERS OF THE SAFE FALLING INTO PLACE KNOWING HE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH TIME THE POLICE OFFICER CHARGED INTO THE ROOM WAVING HIS REVOLVER

Disagreements erupt when students interpret events differently, and they revise their decisions by examining how punctuation affects the meaning of the text. As with all our games, it can get messy, but those conversations are more meaningful and instructive than I have ever seen in traditional grammar activities. I usually have students do this activity in class, orally, making their decisions on the spot and talking their way through the sentence, "speaking" the punctuation by saying the words "comma" or "dash" or "period." Other teachers, with less confident students, have had them first work individually, silently, and then share and compare their punctuated stories. In either case, for the game to work, students need to talk about the choices they have made and why a reader might expect something else. The whole-class activity can also lead to individual or group work in which students create their own punctuation mysteries, making them more aware of potentially ambiguous constructions as they try to write sentences with multiple interpretations. In addition to making students conscious of the physical, visual boundaries created by punctuation, this activity gives them new ways to discuss troublesome concepts like fragmented sentences. Rather than claiming a sentence is missing a subject or a verb, that it is a subordinate clause and therefore a fragment, students are more likely to see the confusion that arises when fragments can be attached to either the preceding sentence of the following one.

Ambiguity, many teachers would argue, is the antithesis of good writing, and our job is to eliminate it, not play with it. When it comes to language use, composition teachers are notorious for their love of clarity and precision. We have been known to litter the margins of student papers with "AWK," "Redundant," "Vague Pr Ref" and "Word Choice." Teachers who embrace the notion of facilitative rather than directive feedback find it especially difficult to comment on word and sentence-level issues in student writing, potentially adding to the misperception that we no longer care about correctness. Others may dodge the question of why we respond to language in certain ways, claiming the rhetorical context as sole authority and arbiter, potentially demonizing audiences that demand a certain stylistic propriety. I am not bothered by your errors, we tell our students, but they—our colleagues in the institution or the test graders or future employers—will be. Instead, we can do our students a greater service by helping them understand how all readers rely on visual cues to interpret print texts, and how something like a missing comma or a misspelled homophone can cause confusion. But until our students learn to see text instead of hear it, those lessons will fall on deaf ears.

CONCLUSION

One of my colleagues who read an early draft of this essay and was enthusiastic about the grammar games asked if I had done any empirical studies to prove these methods work. Although I am interested in data that would help me understand how student writing is affected by these activities, I am not convinced that empirical evidence would do much to influence teachers' attitudes about grammar instruction. While reviewing the scholarly debates surrounding grammar, beginning with Braddock, Lloyd-Jones, and Shorer's 1963 study through the current turn to form-focused instruction, I often felt as if I were reading a freshman paper on abortion or capital punishment; nobody ever seems to change their mind, and writers (re)interpret evidence or attack others on the basis of deeply entrenched beliefs rather than objective analysis. At the same time, changes do occur in the amorphous cultural scene, influencing us in subtle ways that, periodically, become observable phenomena. Without the right social, political, and economic conditions, we would not have implemented open admissions policies in the 1970s, just as those same conditions, adversely perceived, have contributed to anti-remediation policies today. In the face of such uncontrollable forces, individual biases and cultural trends, it is hard to believe anything, from empirical studies to the most fervent pleas, will do much to stem the tide that seems to be turning against basic writers and returning teachers to more traditional grammar instruction. I have little faith that my suggestions will impress staunch grammarians.

With the appearance that less directive methods have failed, teachers, especially those who are relatively new to the profession and who missed the early days of the grammar debate, may see no alternative but to teach terminology and rules through skill-and-drill exercises. Admittedly, we may have relied too heavily on reading to develop tacit awareness, never making grammatical knowledge explicit, and many of us lack the time or training to effectively build bridges between reading and writing. Teachers who subscribe to a natural approach, immersing students in reading and writing with minimal grammar instruction, hope experiential learning will help build that intuitive knowledge which students may have missed in their formative years. Those who take a more direct approach, be it through imitation exercises or rhetorical grammar, may believe their students are past the critical period, the age when language acquisition occurs naturally. For students who lack the necessary literacy background, nature has arrived too late, so, like second-language speakers whose errors have fossilized, teachers may

look to an intervention—explicit instruction, modeling, and opportunities to practice the appropriate constructions.

But what if the "switch" that allows students to move between oral and literate codes is neither missing nor suffering from faulty wiring? What if it has simply never been turned on? I don't mean to suggest that playing games will open the floodgates of previously untapped linguistic resources, or that gaming should replace all other sentence instruction. However, it does not necessarily follow that some students are simply born to be writers and those who are not must be subjected to skills and drills rather than more active approaches that encourage them to have fun with language. I do know that people who are avid readers and writers *enjoy* language. They grow up to be crossword puzzlers, Scrabble meisters, punsters, people who derive pleasure from playing with words. All our students deserve to experience that pleasure. Teachers need to understand the source of their increased concerns over error—changes in their student population, the need to do more in less time, pressures that arise as their colleagues return to more traditional grammar instruction—and we need to find productive, not reductive, ways to respond to these concerns.

Notes

1. The term "foundational skills" appears in documents such as Executive Order 665, issued by the California State University Chancellor, which states, "Campuses are encouraged to establish and enforce limits on remedial/developmental activity and to advise students who are not making adequate progress in developing foundational skills to consider enrolling in other educational institutions as appropriate."

2. Gail Stygall observes that stricter remediation policies coincided with efforts to end affirmative action, and Steve Lamos further argues that policies affecting remediation are often tied to racism. Supporters of CUNY's decision claim fears of lost minority enrollments were greatly exaggerated, pointing to the fact that under the new policies African American enrollments are down by only 2% and Latino enrollments dropped by 3%. However, describing the results of CUNY's decision, Jon Marcos notes that, from 1999 to 2004, the community colleges that are part of the CUNY system saw an 18% increase in enrollment, twice the increase their senior colleges experienced in the same time period, and "Eighty-six percent of freshmen entering the com-

munity colleges now need at least some remedial work, more than double the national average. Only 28 % graduate with a degree within five years, less than half the rate at SUNY community colleges. Almost 80 percent of CUNY's community college students are minorities, and 60 percent grew up speaking a native language other than English."

3. My university is proud of its diverse student population: 29% white, 28% Asian American and Pacific Islander, 13% Latino, 12% African American, 18% "other," a category that reflects, in part, our many multi-racial students. We are not so proud of our remediation rates, which hover around 60% for entering freshmen.

4. The meeting described in this article was part of the Collaborative Academic Preparation Initiative, which has since been replaced by the Early Assessment Program. For more on the Early Assessment Program, see the website at <http://www.calstate.edu/EAP>.

5. Michael Long distinguishes between "focus on form" and "form focused" instruction. Form focused instruction, he notes, includes traditional grammar exercises presented at a time and in a sequence determined by the instructor. In contrast, Long writes, "Focus on form refers only to those [grammar] activities that arise during, and are embedded in, meaning-based lessons; they are not scheduled in advance, but occur incidentally as a function of the interaction of learners with the subject matter or tasks that constitute the learners' and their teacher's predominant focus." In this sense, Long's focus on form is similar to teaching grammar in the context of student writing when teachers address grammatical topics at the moment they occur in student writing or reading. However, as the research of Basturkmen, Loewen, and Ellis shows, teachers who claim to employ a student-centered focus on form frequently revert to what the researchers call "preemptive" instruction, in which the teacher plans in advance what grammar topics to cover. The teacher then typically explains those topics rather than utilizing the kind of spontaneous, interactive conversation Long advocates.

6. Kolln has more recently referred to her methodology as "rhetorical grammar," as in the title of her 1996 *English Journal* article, and she has included some consideration of the effects of grammatical choices on readers. While rhetorical and generative grammars may be alternatives to formal instruction, Kolln's explanations are still dependent on teachers and students know-

ing terminology, and her commitment to the essential role of vocabulary in developing grammatical awareness appears not to have diminished.

7. In the same way that effective informal writing can "sound" like speech, oral performances that require deliberate choices, such as playing the dozens and hip hop, can result in products that Kermit E. Campbell describes as "literate art" (127).

8. This example, which has been discussed by several linguists, originally appeared in Noam Chomsky's *Syntactic Structures* (Paris: Mouton, 1957).

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When Is a Verb? Using Functional Grammar to Teach Writing

Leif Fearn and Nancy Farnan

ABSTRACT: While evidence shows that grammar study focused on identification, description, and definition (IDD) fails to enhance writing performance, the grammar most students study remains focused on the IDD tradition. We taught a functional grammar that featured what words do in sentences, rather than what words are called and how they are defined, to two sections of tenth graders while another teacher taught grammar identification-definition-description. Students completed a grammar test and submitted writing samples prior to, and following, the five-week treatment. Functional grammar students scored essentially the same as IDD students on the grammar test and in mechanical accuracy. However, they scored significantly better than IDD students in a holistic rating of writing. There can be a positive interaction between grammar instruction and writing performance if the grammar is functional and used for writing purposes.

KEYWORDS: grammar, grammar and writing, functional grammar, grammar instruction

Twenty years ago, Arthur Stern's article "When Is a Paragraph?" posed a revealing challenge to graduate-level Education students: identify the number of paragraphs into which a piece should be divided and show where the paragraph divisions should occur. Stern's students divided the 500-word essay into two, three, four, and five paragraphs, and provided credible justifications for their various paragraph arrangements, not all the same but logical, based on ideational shifts. At the same time, when Stern's English-teacher students self-reported their definitions of a paragraph, they presented a traditional view—a paragraph is a unit of discourse made of several sentences that develop a central idea around an identifiable topic sentence. In essence, their English-teacher conception of a paragraph was as a composition in miniature, based on structural design, rather than the ideational shifts that guided them in the exercise. Stern had uncovered a discrepancy between the operational understanding of the paragraph and student/teacher beliefs about it.

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This study is not about the paragraph; it is about the sentence. However, the disconnect that Stern found operating between definition—and function-based understandings of grammar is quite similar—a difference between how we understand grammar and how we teach it. We began with the premise, just as Stern might, that there is a mismatch between how we routinely *describe* something (in this case, a sentence) and approach instruction, and the operational reality of sentence grammar. We hypothesized that the operational reality is instructive to help students understand sentences and, more to the point, to write them more effectively.

Hillocks and Smith's review of the literature twenty years ago highlighted the idea that teaching grammar and grammatical structures does not enhance writing proficiency. However, we continue to teach traditional grammar definitions, and ask students to identify grammatical elements, under the guise of teaching writing. Descriptive knowledge is further entrenched in the curriculum because of its inclusion in high-stakes tests. The English language arts course of study includes, and will continue to include, grammar. Many teachers are trained for, and believe in, the grammar they teach. Tests feature it. Education policy-makers believe it belongs. It can be tested objectively. We would not claim that descriptive grammatical knowledge in itself is useless or nonproductive. However, we do argue that the ability to define and identify grammatical elements is not related to writing skills. Furthermore, contrary to Mellon's claim that grammar instruction does no harm, we would point out that time committed to descriptive and definitional grammar impedes the development of writing skills precisely because time committed to grammar is not available for writing.

We posed a question relative to grammar instruction which responds to a call by Hartwell for research questions in "more productive terms" (108). Our question focuses on how to articulate the grammar issue more productively: *Is there a way to teach grammatical structures that will satisfy high-stakes tests and teachers' needs, and at the same time, positively affect writing performance?* We looked pragmatically at what "productively" means. As we argue, the grammar we teach in school is not going away. Therefore, the research focus should be on how to satisfy the reasons for its existence, and, at the same time, help our students write better.

DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS vs. FUNCTIONS AND APPLICATIONS

Definition and Description

The verb is a useful place to begin, but we could just as well begin with nouns, adverbs, or adjectives, for the routine instructional approach is the same: identify, describe, define. For example, in 1979, Weaver states, "A verb is traditionally defined as a word that expresses action or a state of being or becoming" ("Grammar for Teachers" 111). Seventeen years later, Weaver's definition is essentially the same: "Traditionally, a verb is said to show action or a state of being" (*Teaching Grammar in Context* 258-59). The assumption is that a verb is a verb is always a verb.

Student handbooks are another good source for the descriptive tradition. Hacker tells students, "the verb in a sentence usually expresses action (*jump, think*) or being (*is, become*)" (267), and Raimes, "Verbs tell what a person, place, thing, or concept does or is, or what people, places, things, or concepts do or are: *smile, throw, think, seem, become, be*" (237). Mulderig tells readers, "verbs not only present an action or a condition, but also indicate a time frame within which that action or condition occurs—at present, in the past, in the future" (59). Gordon writes, "a verb is the momentum in the sentence. It asserts, moves, impels, reports on a condition or situation. What the verb asserts may be an action or an identity or a state of being" (18). Finally, in a grammar text for K-12 students, we have Carroll describing a verb as "a word that shows action or state of being" (87). In all the texts and handbooks we examined, the descriptive essence of "verb" changes little, save for adjustments in wording or phraseology. Carroll's description in 2001 is precisely the same, down to the word, as the one required on junior high grammar tests handed to students many years ago, for example as in the tests by Leif's junior high teacher, Miss Bessie Ott, in 1952. Miss Ott taught IDD grammar through endless diagramming exercises because she believed her instruction would make Leif and his seventh-grade classmates better writers. In 1952, she reflected what the profession knew. In 2007, we know better.

A Different View: It Is All in the Preposition

Does this all mean that we should not teach sentence parts any more? Of course not. What we know is that such instruction *for* writing wastes

students' and teachers' time, and deludes both into believing they are doing something useful. The preposition is wrong. A different perspective would have us shift the preposition to sentence parts in writing, helping us reframe our productively oriented question: *Will teaching sentence parts in writing affect students' writing performance?* We recognize students' experience of grammar as traditional, tending toward the *descriptive*, that is, as young writers have been taught definitions, and that this knowledge has not influenced students' writing. In this study, we probed the influence on students' writing when teaching focused on how sentence parts *function*.

The second reason for what we taught and studied is that grammar instruction also tends to be separate from student writing, even when we claim it is in the context of writing. Typically, students learn grammatical elements in one portion of English language arts class, experience literature in another portion, and write in still another. Just as this practice flies in the face of modern instructional theory that calls for contextualized instruction, we acknowledge that much of what occurs in classrooms flies in the face of modern instructional theory.

Thus, the idea to feature *prescriptive* rather than *descriptive* instruction. Students wrote in the grammatical functions (i.e., prescriptions), studying them rather than defining them, and searching for them in what other people wrote. We studied the influence, if any, of functional instruction *in* the writing performance of tenth graders. And as we acknowledge the educational value in knowing sentence parts, we also tested students' knowledge of traditional grammar when the instruction occurred in functional context.

A Functional Perspective: The Verb We Taught

We asked tenth graders in two class periods, *What is a verb?* The response was immediate and consistent: "It shows action or state of being."

"What is an action word?"

Student: "Running."

We wrote a sentence on the board: *A horse is running around the track* and asked the student, or anyone else who wanted to respond, "What is the verb?

Student: "Running."

We wrote another sentence on the board: *Our new running track is rubberized* and asked for the verb.

Student: "Running."

When we asked what kind of track is around the new football field,

they agreed it is rubberized. We asked how else they could describe the track. They said "new" and "red." We asked what people do on the track, and when they said kids run on it, we said that would make it a running track. They agreed. We asked what kind of word "track" is. Noun. "So what kind of word describes that noun?" we asked. They said "running." We asked if "running" could be the verb if it is a describing word for the noun "track."

They looked as though they had just been told the earth is flat. We asked what we call a word that does what "running" does in that sentence. Another student said it has to be an adjective, but the -ing at the end shows action so it has to be a verb. We asked if "running" acts like an adjective, what would be the verb? Still another student knew the answer. She said it has to be "is" because it shows a state of being.

These tenth graders were quick with the opening definition, but not because they were special; they were merely well-schooled in the definitions of sentence parts. They knew the definition of verb in the second grade and were reminded of it in every grade thereafter. By the middle of the tenth grade, they had "action and state of being" taught, reinforced, and tested for nine years. They had it cold. They didn't understand it, they couldn't use it, they couldn't apply it, and, therefore, it was of no use to them when they talked, read, wrote, or, for that matter, answered questions from someone who didn't stick to the script. But our script was functions, not definitions and descriptions. Function identifies verbs as they occur in sentences, not lists. "Running" is an adjective in the sentence because it does what adjectives do; "is" is a verb because it does what verbs do.

Some may argue that "running" is not an adjective in the sentence; rather, it is part of a hyphenated noun (*running-track*) and is, therefore, more gerund in the sentence than adjective. And all of the students in that tenth grade who grow up to be linguists or English teachers will have to grapple with that distinction. On that day, in that classroom, there were a couple dozen fifteen-year-olds who didn't understand what a verb is, or an adjective, because they depended on definitions. Rather than confuse them further with a new definition (gerund), we took all their definitions away.

We went back to our sentence and asked for words that fit between "new" and "track," and as they called out words, we wrote them in a column between "new" and "track." They suggested "fast," "red," "pretty," "bigger," "spongy," "lined."

Teachers: "Do you know what these words are?"

Student: "They're describing words. Adjectives."

Teachers: "Why?"

Student: "Because they tell about the noun."

Teachers: "Yes, maybe, but the best answer is that they are adjectives because they fit in that hole between "new" and "track." Any word you put in there will describe the track, so it will do the work of an adjective. And verbs? Think of words instead of 'is' for the sentence."

They suggested "was, will be, used to be, can be." They laughed. We agreed it is funny to think about the kinds of words that do certain work in sentences rather than to try to identify words by dictionary definitions. Our lesson on verbs allowed us to offer, "We are going to do something different here for several weeks."

METHODOLOGY

Sample

Treatment and control students attended an urban high school. In this overcrowded high school of 2,300 students, the average student scores below grade level in both reading and mathematics, and research shows that score patterns in reading and mathematics hold for writing as well (Smagorinsky 55). The school's average student tests in the lowest 10% of all high school students in the state. Year to year, an average of 65% of the school's students are classified as limited English proficient, and nearly 100% are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Forty percent of the adult residents in the larger neighborhood have not graduated from high school; 5% have graduated from college. The demographics seem to signify a complex teaching/learning situation.

For five weeks, for ten to twelve minutes twice a week, on Mondays and Wednesdays, one of the investigators (both university professors who work regularly in K-12 classrooms) conducted intentional instruction (Fearn and Farnan *Interactions* 74) of grammar *in* writing in each of two treatment classes. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the classroom teacher followed up on the Monday/Wednesday instruction with eight to ten minutes of review and writing practice in the grammatical elements. Thus, students received approximately twenty-two minutes of intentional instruction and eighteen minutes of guided practice during each of the five weeks of the treatment for approximately two hundred minutes of instruction. A similar amount of time was committed to traditional grammar instruction in a control group of tenth graders in the same school.

All three classes contained twenty-four to twenty-six tenth graders

who worked on a similar grammar unit: noun, verb, adjective, dependent clause, and independent clause. Immediately prior to the initial instructional session, we collected a cued and timed writing sample from all three classes (See Appendix A). In the same session, all students responded to test items that covered several grammatical items and structures. This test included eighteen items (See Appendix B). The pre-grammar test was administered to establish equivalency among the three groups.

The Process: Teaching Grammar *in* Writing

The instructional emphases in the two treatment classes were function and writing. Function refers to what a grammatical element *does* in a sentence. To the extent that definitions were used at all, they were functional.

Basic function instruction in the two treatment classes was limited to ten to fifteen minutes throughout the five weeks because in most instances, we did precisely what we did with verbs in the rubberized running track example, for the same reason - to replace the definitions with roles and functions. The preponderance of the treatment emphasized writing. For example, following the verb-in-rubberized-running-track opener explained earlier, we posed a thinking and writing task. *Select one of the verbs on the list and write a sentence in your mind that uses that word as a verb.* They all started scrambling for paper in their backpacks. We stopped the action. *Forget the paper and pens. Think of a sentence and write it in your mind.* We used the oral foundation of writing (Fearn and Farnan *Interactions* 79). *Now think of a sentence in which one of the words on the list appears as a verb.* We listened to several mental sentences read aloud, e.g., *The old track* ***used to have*** *dirt and cinders. The new track* ***will be great*** *to run on. Rubberized tracks* ***are*** *better.*

We posed another sentence-thinking and -writing prompt. *Think of a six-word sentence in which another of the words on the list appears as a verb* (Fearn and Farnan *Interactions* 87-95). Several hands went up to share. We waited until about half of the students indicated they had a sentence. *Write your sentence on your paper. You have one minute.* We listened to several read aloud, e.g., *Our old track* ***was*** *really bad. I* ***like*** *our new track now. The new track* ***can be*** *great.* They all read sentences. We expected to have to help someone make a revision to accomplish a sentence, but there were no nonsentences read aloud. It is rare, in our experience, that students write nonsentences when sentence-writing prompts direct students to think in an explicit manner.

We posed the next prompt in the series. *Think of an eight-word sentence*

in which one of the words on the list appears as a verb in the fifth position. When a student posed a question about two-word verbs, we assured everyone that they could consider their verb as one word for this activity. We directed them to write their sentence on paper and to read aloud. We commented occasionally. One student wrote, *"A yellow spotted bird will be in its nest."* We asked why he wrote *yellow spotted* instead of *spotted yellow*. He said because it just seemed better to say *yellow spotted*. We made a pronouncement to the class. *During the sessions when we are here teaching grammar, you may trust your instincts about what seems right. If we hear it differently, we will explain why and help you understand how we hear it.*

When our pre-service teacher candidates saw one of the videos from our sessions in those classes, several expressed indignation. *Why do you say that your instinct is the one they have to learn; is not their instinct just as valuable as yours?* We explained that a fundamental part of any language instruction is to value and capitalize on the "internal" grammar (Hartwell) that students bring with them, their sense of how language works. Of course, their sense is not always conventional. It is teachers' responsibility to help students recognize how distinctions between students' internal grammar and the attributes of convention work. Usually, those distinctions become most clear in oral language.[2]

Our instructional scenario about verbs consumed two sessions. The sentence-thinking and -writing tasks varied greatly, but they stayed focused on using verbs intentionally in sentences. Before changing the focus to nouns, we prompted writing beyond a single sentence. We used "Short Cues" (Fearn and Farnan *Interactions* 230) at least weekly throughout the treatment. An example of a Short Cue is Power Writing (Fearn *Thinking for Teaching* 124; Fearn and Farnan *Interactions* 167-69), where the focus is fluency (Fearn "Individual Development" 55-64; Guilford 444-54) and promotes automaticity (Fearn and Farnan *Interactions* 27-28). We wrote two words on the board (*mosquito - taxi*), directed each student to *select one of the two, and use it as the topic about which to write as much as you can as well as you can. Oh, and include as many verbs as you can.* At exactly one minute, we called time, directed them to count their words, and recorded their totals on a chart on the board (Fearn and Farnan *Interactions* 168). We called that *round one*. We directed *rounds two* and *three*, each time with a different pair of cue words, each time one-minute writes, and each time telling them to include as many verbs as they could. After *round two*, we asked them to count their verbs, as well. We didn't record the number of verbs; we cared only that students were thinking about verbs as they wrote.

Over the remaining four weeks, we moved very quickly through the grammatical elements. We taught noun, verb, adjective, and dependent and independent clause. We remained within the limits of what the control teacher taught in the five-week unit.

Teaching Grammar Traditionally

In another class during the same five-week period, an English teacher on the other side of the school campus taught grammar to demographically similar tenth graders. He agreed to cooperate with every aspect of the study, confident in the appropriateness of what he taught and how. He taught nouns, verbs, adjectives, and dependent and independent clauses during the five-week period of the study. His students read aloud daily and responded to his identification questions that focused on nouns, verbs, adjectives, and both dependent and independent clauses. He led his students through identification worksheets that contained sentences he wrote and others he cut from literature anthologies and pasted onto worksheets. He supplied cloze procedure worksheets that contained sentences with missing nouns, verbs, and adjectives so students could write the words they thought made the best sense into the blanks. In most class sessions, his students edited prepared sentences to make nouns and verbs agree, and completed nonsentences (dependent clauses) by adding independent clauses. They also wrote extended discourse every day, following writing process stages depicted on a wall chart. The control class used the entire forty-seven minute period for grammar instruction and process writing, partly because the writing they did took so much more time than did the treatment students' writing, and partly because the worksheet activities were so time-intensive.

Data Collection

Having established general grammar knowledge equivalency between the two treatment groups and between the treatment groups and the control group before the treatment began (See Table 4), the post-test included grammar applications as well as writing. There were seven items on the grammar applications test, each beginning with the stem: "Write a sentence..." Item one read "Write a sentence that contains exactly two nouns, one of which is modified by a prepositional phrase" (See Appendix C).

Pre- and post-writing samples were scored both analytically and with

a general impression rubric (See Appendix D). Analytic scoring quantified fluency and mechanical control (Fearn and Farnan, *Interactions* 343). General impression scoring (G-score) occurred on a six-point scale in consideration of four attributes: the writing is on-point, elaborative, organized, and textured (for example, figurative language). The six-point general impression scale is absolute; that is, a 1 is rudimentary, no matter students' grade level, ethnicity, primary language, or socioeconomic class, and a 6 is as well as the piece is likely to be written by an experienced writer.

The writing samples reflected first-draft writing. While anecdotal criticism of assessing first-draft and teacher-prompted writing was not lost on the authors, we used first-draft writing in the absence of empirical evidence of an interaction between writing quality and the source of writing prompt (Hidi and McLaren 187-97). The writing samples were also timed at five minutes, again in the absence of evidence of any interaction between writing quality and available time. In fact, a contrary conclusion relative to prompt-source and time appears more sound.[1]

We scored the writing samples analytically and independently in a double-blind procedure, having had a colleague mix the treatment and control grammar tests and writing samples. Inter-rater reliability on analytic scoring is traditionally very high, given that the analytic protocol is largely objective. In this study it was 97%.

Three trained raters conducted the general impression scoring. Inter-rater reliability on g-scoring was 96%. Finally, the seven-item grammar test was scored by the investigators. Because each item on the grammar test was clearly correct or incorrect, there was no need to cross-check the scoring process.

RESULTS

What is the effect of teaching grammar *in* writing rather than *for* writing? Results show that the effect, as measured by both writing performance and grammar application, is two-fold. Students in the treatment groups demonstrated enhanced writing performance, while students in treatment and control groups showed no difference in their knowledge of grammatical elements in the testing situation. Table 1 shows the pre- and post-writing effects using a holistic rubric in both treatment and control groups.

Table 1. Pre-Writing and Post-Writing G-scores

	Pre-Writing Scores			Post Writing Scores		
	Mean	SD	P value	Mean	SD	P Value*
Treatment Class: Period 1 N=18	2.94	.938	P < .621	3.61	1.09	**P < .002**
Control Class N=18	2.78	1.06		2.61	.698	
Treatment Class: Period 2 N=21	2.95	.805	P < .563	3.48	.928	**P < .003**
Control Class N=18	2.78	1.06		2.61	.698	

* Bold face indicates significant differences between treatment and control groups.

Treatment students in both Periods 1 and 2 wrote significantly better on the post-writing sample based on the holistic (G-score) criterion. While the instructional emphasis in the treatment classes was writing, i.e., teaching grammatical elements *in* writing, the control teacher also emphasized writing. Control students wrote extended discourse every day, always following a process writing protocol. In fact, control students wrote more each day (extended discourse) than treatment students, who wrote directed sentences each day in response to grammar-driven prompts, and additional extended discourse at least weekly, though never more than twice per week. The evidence appears to show that grammar instruction and process writing, as two distinct activities, though occurring during the same instructional period, do not positively influence the quality of writing performance as powerfully as does directed writing practice driven by grammar content. It is not the grammar instruction, then, nor the process writing; rather, the more powerful influence on student writing comes from *directed writing,* where students' attention is focused on using grammar to think about writing. This is what grammar *in* writing appears to accomplish.

Another way to look at the post-test differences is to compare the holistic scores themselves (See Table 2) and look at sample papers as exemplars (See Appendix E).

Table 2. Frequency of Post-writing Sample G Scores

G Scores	Treatment Group (Period 1)	Control Group
5	1	0
4	3	3
3	11	7
2	7	10
1	0	0

In the treatment group Period 1, fifteen writing samples were scored at 3 or above, while in the control group, only ten scored in that range, with no paper receiving the highest score of 5. In other words, five fewer papers received an average score or above in the control group, with three more papers scoring below the average possible score. Exemplary papers from treatment and control students show what the scores tend to mean in the students' writing.

Analytic scores showed remarkable post-writing sample stability among the three groups with respect to fluency and mechanical control (See Table 3), where fluency refers to the number of words written in five minutes, and mechanical control refers to average number of errors per sentence (i.e., punctuation, capitalization, spelling, tense agreements).

Table 3. Pre- and Post-writing Sample Data on Fluency and Mechanical Control

	FLUENCY PRE-TEST	FLUENCY POST-TEST	MECHANICAL CONTROL PRE-TEST	MECHANICAL CONTROL POST-TEST
Period 1 Treatment Group	75.6	93.1	1.3	1.3
Period 2 Treatment Group	64.5	88.0	1.6	1.3
Control Group	62.4	88.1	1.3	1.2

While more is not necessarily better when it comes to writing, young writers tend to become more fluent over time—with increasing practice and expertise. That is the case with these students in both treatment and control groups. Interestingly, their error rates per sentence are not only stable from pre- to post-test, they are also stable between treatment and control classes. Neither instructional procedure influenced writing fluency, positively or negatively. The tenth graders' ability to generate ideas and produce text that explicated those ideas was neither enhanced nor compromised by the mode of instruction, either traditional/descriptive or functional/grammar-driven writing instruction. Likewise, neither mode of instruction seemed to influence students' use of mechanics and the conventions of written text. Even the seeming difference in the treatment group Period 2 (1.6 errors per sentence) represents, on the average, only two additional errors in every ten sentences.

To summarize, the grammar-driven writing instruction enhanced writing performance as measured by holistic criteria, while traditional grammar instruction, separate from writing instruction, did not influence writing performance. Furthermore, the more traditional grammar instruction had no greater influence on students' error rate than did the grammar-driven writing instruction that was not directed at reducing error rate. And neither form of grammar instruction was superior with regard to students' fluency, not even in the control class where "process" writing emphasized ideational fluency during prewriting.

Part of this investigation was grammar knowledge itself. The evidence appears to show that time committed to grammar instruction need not compromise students' writing development, if grammar is taught in the context of writing, as part of writing instruction, but what about students' grammar knowledge? Table 4 shows differences in student performance on the grammar test.

Table 4. Pre- and Post-Test Scores on the Grammar Test

	Pre-Writing Scores			Post Writing Scores		
	Mean	SD	P value	Mean	SD	P Value*
Treatment Class: Period 1 N=18	3.67	2.03	P < .492	4.00	2.14	P < .324
Control Class N=18	3.17	2.28		4.72	2.19	
Treatment Class: Period 2 N=21	3.05	2.01	P < .863	4.00	2.35	P < .330
Control Class N=18	3.17	2.28		4.72	2.19	

Results show no significant differences between treatment and control students, in either of the two comparisons (treatment 1 vs. control and treatment 2 vs. control), at either pre- or post-testing. The students were equivalent when the investigation began, and they were equivalent when it was finished. The formal, more traditional, grammar instruction in the control class did not produce significantly superior grammar test performance for control students. If the ability to define, identify, and use sentence parts (parts of speech) is the objective, then grammar-driven writing and formal grammar study appear to be equally influential. Teaching grammar *in* writing had a similar effect on grammar knowledge as did the more traditional grammar *for* writing. This research suggests that there is a critical difference in the two approaches to grammar instruction. The emphasis on writing did not compromise grammar knowledge, but it did enhance overall writing performance.

In addition, in every comparison, fluency was neither enhanced nor compromised by the form of instruction. Neither was error rate reduced or increased due to the form of grammar instruction. Whether teaching grammar *in* writing or *for* writing, students in treatment and control classes performed equally well on grammar knowledge.

CONCLUSIONS

Is there a way to teach grammatical structures that will satisfy high-stakes tests and teachers' needs, and at the same time, positively affect writing performance? Evidence from this research indicates there is. Take the two purposes in turn.

High-stakes grammar tests reinforce the ability to define and identify. We may not agree that define-and-identify is grammar, but that is what students must do to perform well on today's achievement tests. Define-and-identify is also what many teachers value. But define-and-identify is just as likely what most teachers know because they have rarely seen grammar as a branch of study within linguistics and an area within linguistics that focuses on the organization and reorganization of words and inflections to construct larger meaning (Francis 223), and how that occurs, in this case, in American English.

The evidence in this investigation indicates that if students think deliberately about how sentences are constructed, and the prompt for their thinking is grammatical terminology, they learn to define and identify as well as do students who study define-and-identify in isolation. The reason why is likely more cognitive than linguistic. While it is possible to work with definitions and attributes without attending deliberately to the content and function those definitions and attributes describe and organize, it is impossible to fail to deliberately attend when the content and function are embedded in a writing task. We can do most things in school with our attention elsewhere, but few people can write while thinking of something else. It is probably the deliberate attention (Neisser 90-91), mobilized when students must focus on both verb and verbness, over and over, every time "verb" is used as a sentence-thinking and sentence-writing prompt, that promotes verb learning. For these tenth graders, it was used every day, over and over, with noun, verb, adjective, and dependent clause.

The power of functional grammar instruction is seen in treatment students' performance on the grammar test. Treatment students equaled control students' test scores, even though they did not have formal grammar instruction of the traditional type. What treatment students received was a functional "definition" ("It's a verb because it fits in the verb hole and does what verbs do"), and then they wrote scores of sentences prompted by verbs ("Write a nine-word sentence with a verb in the seventh position"). Five weeks of that was sufficiently powerful for them to perform as well as

their control peers who learned definition and identification in traditional form.

That there is no discernible difference in effect relative to grammar for the two groups documents the power of using grammar *in* writing, where grammar is used as the prompting device, rather than *for* writing on the assumption that grammar is supposed to transfer to writing. It does not transfer (Hillocks and Smith). Grammar instruction influences writing performance when grammar and writing share one instructional context. The field of *situated cognition* rests on the proposition that the context in which something is learned is fundamental to its application (Brown, Collins, and Duguid 32-42). When grammar is taught and learned in a define-and-identify context, that becomes the context in which the grammar can be applied. So we find students who can identify and define verbs but do not use verbs adroitly when they write because they did not learn verbs in sentence thinking and writing. When we see verbs used badly, or not at all, in sentence writing, we teach verbs, again, and then we teach the writing, again. The general impression (holistic) scores reflect the significance of the differences between treatment and control students' writing performance.

Teaching grammar *in* writing rather than *for* writing, over a relatively short treatment time, five weeks, resulted in both superior writing and equal grammar test scores for treatment students in a four-attribute rubric. We draw several important conclusions from these results.

- One: Writing can be the context when we teach grammar. We can use writing to teach the grammar we want to teach.
- Two: Traditional grammar instruction did not affect error rate; both groups committed about an equal number of errors when they wrote.
- Three: If the purpose of grammar instruction is to satisfy standards and prepare for high-stakes testing, we can teach sentence parts and enhance students' writing at the same time without compromising either. The instruction about adjectives, for example, focused on the function of adjectives in sentences, so students learned to understand adjectives' purpose and to use them properly when they wrote sentences. Moreover, the learning transferred to writing itself, for holistic scores were heavily affected by elaboration (i.e., modification and qualification).

Shall we teach grammar? Of course. This study does not call into question grammar instruction; it calls into question how we teach grammar. It shows how a certain kind of grammar study establishes grammar knowledge as it positively affects writing performance. If the point is writing, perhaps it is reasonable to ask why teach grammar at all? We think the reason is similar to the reason why we teach the Periodic Table of Elements in chemistry. The table is not chemistry, and knowledge of the table does not make chemists. But the table is chemistry's taxonomy, its explanation, its elemental foundation. The table provides a context for the content. Music has a taxonomy, as well, and while mastery of the taxonomy does not make musicians, it is a rare musician who functions without it. It is a rare chemist whose background does not include mastery of the taxonomy.

It is a rare writer, novice or expert, whose background does not include the taxonomy, the grammar. We do not mean that writers know the definitions. We mean that writers have to be able to rub nouns and verbs together when they write, and rub nouns and verbs together with modifiers and qualifiers to enhance meaning, so images and ideas emerge in readers' minds and souls. We mean that grammar is the terminology of syntactic concepts, the words and ideas for talking about sentences. Grammar knowledge is the elemental foundation for writing. Certainly we should teach grammar, *in* writing, so learners understand better how the language works, and *functionally*, so learners can use what they understand about language when they write.

Notes

1. There is a sizeable literature on interactions between oral language and writing (Sperling 53-86).

2. There is evidence to show young writers write well, or not well, because that is how they write, irrespective of whether or not they selected their topic or dictated their writing time (Fearn and Farnan "Writing Instruction"; "Writing on Demand").

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Appendix A
Direct Writing Assessment

Writing assessment takes two forms: analytic to inform instruction, and G-score to better inform students and the larger public. This assessment will score for both forms, and that is the reason for the following directions. The assessment must control for both task and time. Students must write to the same prompt and for the same amount of time.

There is a belief that if students are to write as well as they are able, they should select their topics and write for as long as they feel necessary. This belief, while widely held, enjoys little or no confirming evidence. In fact, students write about as well as they are able when they write, irrespective of time or prompt. They write well because they can.

Please follow these directions to ensure equivalence.

1. Everyone has a sheet of paper and a writing implement, preferably lined 8 1/2 x 11 lined paper and dark lead or ink.

2. You will write as much as you can, as well as you can, for five minutes. Think of a place where you feel comfortable, safe, at ease. It could be inside or outside, a park, a room. It could be that you feel most comfortable in the company of friends or family. This is probably a place to which you return often because it feels good. Think about that place, what is there, and why you selected it. Write as much as you can as well as you can about that place. You have five minutes. Go.

3. At exactly five minutes, students should stop and count their words. They write the word-count at the top of the paper and turn in the papers.

Appendix B
Grammar Pre-Assessment

In the following sentences, underline the **subject** once and the **verb** twice.

1. Running across the lawn, the excited puppy raced to greet his owner.
2. I would like to go to the next Olympic Games.
3. Are you going to the birthday party?
4. Ellie fell over the toys and landed on her sore shoulder.
5. After dinner, we saw a movie about the life of a brilliant mathematician.
6. In some neighborhoods, people do not know the names of their neighbors.
7. My favorite book is *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.*
8. The weatherman predicted heavy rain through the evening.

In the following sentences, underline each **adjective** once, each **adverb** twice, and put an X over each **pronoun**.

9. Running across the lawn, the excited puppy raced to greet his owner.
10. I would like to go to the next Olympic Games.
11. Are you going to the birthday party?
12. Ellie fell over the toys and landed on her sore shoulder.
13. After dinner, we saw a movie about the life of a brilliant mathematician.
14. In some neighborhoods, people do not know the names of their neighbors.
15. My favorite book is *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.*
16. The weatherman predicted heavy rain through the evening.

Appendix C
Grammar Applications

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Write a sentence that contains exactly two nouns, one of which is modified by a prepositional phrase.

2. Write a sentence that contains two pronouns, one of which is neither male or female.

3. Write a sentence that contains a verb that does not end in "ing" or "ed," and use a prepositional phrase to modify your verb.

4. Write a sentence that contains an adjective and an adverb, but the adverb is not the last word in the sentence.

5. Write a sentence in which the subject is "old shoes."

6. Write a complex sentence in which the first word is "because."

7. Write a sentence that uses "but" to connect two independent clauses.

Appendix D
G-score Rubric

This rubric generates a G-score that transcends analytic scores. The rubric features four attributes of good writing.

- The writing is on-point. The writing focuses on the prompt or the requirement.
- The writing is elaborative. There are descriptive elements and explanations such as, "It is a hot and sunny day so the sun is shining brightly in the blue sky." And "I feel the cool water on my toes."
- The writing is organized/sequenced: There is a recognizable system of organization in the paper.
- The writing contains relevant extensions (texture). The rubric gives credit for figurative statements such as, "When you look at the grass and the sun's reflection on it, the shine in your eyes is like if you saw a silver coin on the ground."

Mechanical control is not scored in this rubric unless the writing is so far out of control that the four primary attributes are severely compromised.

Score each sample on an absolute **6-point scale**. "Absolute" means "as well as the paper can be written." Fully literate writing would be scored a 6. In this rubric, good writing is scored 4-5-6; poorer writing is scored 1-2-3.

Appendix E
Sample Exemplars

These writing samples appear exactly as drafted in response to the prompt (favorite place) and in exactly five minutes from statement of the prompt to pencils down and papers collected.

Treatment, Score 5

I would like to have a house in a tropical land. I want to feel the fresh air go threw my window and blow my air to the sides. I want to go to the river and swim when it's hot. I want to heard the small birds sing when I wake up. And I want to see the beautiful green leaves that are outside. Also on special occasions I want to go outside and take a bunch of flowers to give to special someone. I want to feel free to scream and I want at night camp outside make a small fire and eat marshmallows. I want a clam place where I don't have to think about my problems. I want a place where I can relax and grow old but happy. I want my house in a tropical island. But until then I'm going to enjoy my life in the city where I am allowed to work and worry about other things.

Treatment, Score 4

I'm singing in the choir stand and I'm, singing one of the songs we sing every time we practice on Thursdays "Oh Magnify the Lord." It was the first thing that popped into my head because I love tossing. Another place that I went in my head is when I write in my poetry book journal and it doesn't matter where I'm at because I write wherever, whenever. It is so relaxing and peaceful to me. It is the best time to think, especially when it's quiet and peaceful and it makes me happy.

Treatment, Score 3

My favorite place is a place where no body can be except me, which is my closet it like a little room where there's light. I don't lave a lot of things in this closet so there's alot of space for me to sit. Well in this closet I get a lot of ideas of what to do during the weekend and I also like this place because I have my own stars to where I could look which even day I would like to even in the day. These stars are glow in the dark stars.

Treatment, Score 2

The place I'm describing is a place from Mexico is a street. around that street there is a big building all around you on the walls of the street ther's grafitti everywhere all over the walls of the buildings. Friends all over the place drawing more pictures, sketing, drinking or dancing.

Control, Score 4

The majestic blue water slaps the Shore line ever so softly. While the sun reflects perfectly of the ocean. The Sand warm, with my towle in a perfect rectangle. I am in a place of comfort and total relaxation. A bare beach except for me and the few palm trees that layed scattered in irregular spots of grass. I smell the animals salty bodies threw the gentle breezes of the water.

Control, Score 3

I like to go to my Aunts house. She lives in Los Angeles. The reason why I like going over there is because it's a nice place to think & relax. When you tire you could just lay there and no one will bother you.

Control, Score 2

My favorite place would be my old school. I went there for 3 years and one semester. I grew up there. I had to change schools. That is one of my favorite places in the whole world. I always go when I have a chance.

That school is my most favorite place in the world.

"When We Remix…We Remake!!!" Reflections on Collaborative Ethnography, The New Digital Ethic, and Test Prep

Chris Leary

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ABSTRACT: This article describes two very different projects undertaken in the same basic writing course: collaborative ethnography and ACT test prep. At first glance, it appears that the work on collaborative ethnography accomplished our goal of creating better, more self-conscious writers while the work on test prep achieved our goal of creating better written products: essays that pass the standardized test. However, that interpretation ignores the powerful interaction between these two elements of the course and how each served as the context of the other.

KEYWORDS: collaborative ethnography, digital ethic, intertextuality, queer theory, test prep

According to science-fiction novelist William Gibson, "We live at a peculiar juncture, one in which the record (an object) and the recombinant (a process) still, however briefly, coexist." Gibson's remark is oddly relevant for the basic writing courses I teach, where my training in process-oriented pedagogy finds an uneasy coexistence with standardized testing (the ACT Writing Exam, a 60-minute pencil-and-paper test that is meant to test students' ability to write a college-level essay). Inspired by composition scholars like Jeff Rice and Rebecca Moore Howard, I try to foster an environment for collaborative, dialogic, experimental writing. On the other hand, inspired largely by the urgent requests of students to "tell me how to pass" the ACT and the temptations to teach "practical," traditional strategies that my students believe will help them to pass in the academy, I teach to the test—in a way.

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This article stems from some slightly experimental reading material I used in the classroom when I was a graduate teaching assistant. I liked bringing in statements about students and their writing from internet message boards and writing instructor list-serves. "Look what they're saying about you!" I'd say to the composition students, and that is about as far as the gesture usually went. In the fall of 2006, I decided to push the practice further in the basic writing course I was teaching, asking students to read texts from the field of composition studies so that they could "eavesdrop" on the conversations that are happening about them.

This seemed like a good idea for a number of reasons:

- Texts from the field of composition tend to be chock-full of claims about writing, claims about students, notions about what writing is, useful ways of thinking about writing, and misconceptions about writing.
- I thought it might be possible, using these texts as a springboard, to teach students to become writing teachers so that they can teach themselves and each other.
- Graduate students in composition like myself can learn more about the field by talking about it with our own students and reading what students write about various topics in composition.
- Composition studies isn't any less suitable as a topic for Freshman Composition or Basic Writing than, say, gender or blogging or fashion or any of the other elements of our culture that are often studied and written about by students.
- Students will feel more comfortable questioning the instruction they receive in composition classes if they see that scholars also habitually question this instruction.

With these thoughts in mind, I chose five texts, somewhat haphazardly, from the field of composition, including Donald Murray's "Teach Writing as a Process Not a Product" and James Porter's "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community." My plan was to look at them with students in class, see if students learned anything about writing from them, and ask them to write essays in response to them.

As we looked at these texts, and as I began to consider creating a paper about the experience for the composition studies class I was taking with Rebecca Mlynarczyk at the CUNY Graduate Center, I started thinking about

some ethnographic practices that I learned about while studying anthropology as an undergraduate. Ethnographers, I recalled, often practice what is called "collaborative ethnography," in which the people being researched work side by side with professional anthropologists in creating the research project, carrying it out, and writing it up. More and more, ethnographers consider it their duty to present their texts and interpretations to the people being studied so that they can contribute to the interpretation process and the knowledge that is created in the field. With this in mind, I asked students to help me write the paper that was due in the class I was enrolled in instead of creating their own individual essays.

Anthropology's move toward collaborative ethnography is, in my mind, part of the general move toward recombinant texts that Gibson talks about in "God's Little Toys: Confessions of a Cut & Paste Artist." Gibson's article, featured in a recent issue of *Wired* magazine devoted to the concept of remix, discusses the ubiquity of remix in twenty-first-century culture. Gibson mentions "the whole metastasized library of Dean Scream remixes, genre-warping fan fiction from the universes of *Star Trek* or *Buffy* or (more satisfying by far) both at once, the JarJar-less *Phantom Edit* (sound of an audience voting with its fingers), brand-hybrid athletic shoes, gleefully transgressive logo jumping." The direction we are heading is clear, according to Gibson—documents of the future will be explicitly unstable, unfixed, open.

For this reason, musician Brian Eno claims that sampling—the selection and arrangement of previous work—is a key to agency now more than ever:

> The importance of this cannot be overstated: in an era of information overload, the art of remixing and sampling as practiced by hiphop DJs and producers points to ways of working with information on higher levels of organization, pulling together the efforts of others into a multilayered multireferential whole which is much more than the sum of its parts.

If agency lies more in selection and arrangement at higher levels of organization, we are doing a disservice to basic writers by enforcing curricula that deal primarily or exclusively with lower levels of organization—the selection and arrangement of what might be called "fine granules" of text: words and letters and phrases and punctuation and then perhaps paragraphs.

Curricula dealing with these lower levels of organization are very common in basic writing courses. They emerge from what Ann Del Principe calls "the linear narrative":

> The linear narrative of writing ability is a story of how writers learn; it goes like this: individual writers begin to write by marking letters, then words, then phrases, then sentences, and then small compositions down on paper. Once writers can write sentences and small compositions correctly, they can move on to more complex skills, such as paragraphing. Having mastered paragraphing, they can move on to writing descriptions and personal narratives. Then, slowly but surely, they can make their way to analysis and research. In this narrative, abilities are acquired sequentially, in what is believed to be a logical, building-block order. Abilities build on preceding abilities, the simpler coming first, the more complex following. (65)

One of the problems with the linear narrative is that research in composition studies does not support it (Del Principe 70-73). Armed with this knowledge, in a basic writing course I taught at CUNY's New York City College of Technology in the fall of 2006, we often "worked backwards," skirting, rushing past, or skipping the so-called pre-writing and drafting stages, zeroing in on the selection and arrangement of *coarse* granules of text, a process more often associated with revision. In order to fast-forward to what is sometimes understood as the penultimate stage of the writing process, we needed to treat the writing of those in the class and others outside the classroom as our own pre-writing, as our own drafts. In other words, we practiced the remix. Or should we call it "found writing"? Collage? Ready-made writing? Plagiarism?

By manipulating other composers' texts, students enter the conversations that those texts are a part of. As Jeff Rice writes in his discussion of remix, "Through the process of juxtaposing the samples, the student locates her own position within the various cultural, ideological, economic, racial, gendered, etc., discussions consistently taking place around her" (468). Once a student gains access to these conversations, particularly academic ones, she and her mentor may find "potential spaces" to, in the words of Harry Denny, "develop a relationship with academic writing, not by necessarily conforming (to) or resisting conventions, but by mutually exploring creative ways to experiment and play" (55).

Our interest in sampling was compatible with two very different projects we undertook: (1) collaborative ethnography and (2) ACT Writing Exam preparation. By turning to sampling and remix, my aims as an instructor—to build better writers and to research writing situations—and my students' oft-declared interest—ACT practice—merged. The split between test prep

and more innovative, more process-oriented pedagogy faded. Students' goals, instructors' goals, English department goals, and government goals harmonized. (If only it were that easy.)

Collaborative Ethnography: Including Student Voices in Composition Studies

In EG 090: Developmental Writing, in the fall of 2006, one or two days per week were devoted to collaborative ethnography, "an approach to ethnography that deliberately and explicitly emphasizes collaboration at every point in the ethnographic process, without veiling it—from project conceptualization, to fieldwork, and, especially, through the writing process" (Lassiter, *Chicago Guide* 16). Instead of building short essays on their own "from scratch," students participated in and consulted on all stages of the creation of a fifteen-page paper due in the composition studies class I was enrolled in as a doctoral student. Students (from here on referred to as "consultants") joined me in the planning, research, drafting, and arrangement of what came to be this section of this article. Our desired outcome was a work that—quoting Eno again—"pull(s) together the efforts of" each other "into a multilayered multireferential whole which is much more than the sum of its parts."

I should mention right off that, despite students' mostly successful engagement with the composition studies texts we read and responded to and their mostly enthusiastic collaboration, I was not able to relinquish control of the product to the degree that is necessary for something to be called a fully collaborative ethnography. At some point during the project, I independently decided that the text would attempt to weave together three ideas relevant to composition studies: intertextuality, collaborative ethnography, and digital composition. I don't think my consultants would have been able to budge me from this position, which I find intellectually exciting. Additionally, I may have fallen into a trap described by Eric Luke Lassiter in "Collaborative Ethnography and Public Anthropology." "Simply put," he writes, "doing collaborative ethnography—really doing it, with consultants directing the text's content—brings little prestige, power, and authority for academics who depend on prestige, power, and authority for their growing careers" (102). In other words, a thoroughly collaborative composition rewards no particular person, and I did want credit for this work as my final project for the graduate course.

In response to my concerns, Donslow Brown, a consultant, advised me

not to be "so self-conscious." In fact, most of the consultants, who agreed to have their names and their writing used in this project, disagreed with my contention that I exercised too much control over this piece, pointing out correctly that they played a large role in the construction of the text, through, among other things, class discussion, letters they wrote to James Porter in response to his article "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community," their suggestions of texts to examine intertextually, their extensive feedback in the margins of the outline that I created, and their rearrangements of the paper's sections. They also helped create the reading list necessary to be conversant in the topics we were writing about. Early on, for example, consultant Victor De La Rosa recommended that I bring in texts from the field of anthropology that explain collaborative ethnography.

Our goal as a class was to answer Nancy DeJoy's call for students to participate in and contribute to discussions happening in composition studies. DeJoy's *Process This: Undergraduate Writing in Composition Studies* applauds theorists (like her mentor James Berlin) who encourage students to participate in and contribute to their culture instead of merely consuming and adapting to it (DeJoy 51). However, she claims these theorists encourage participation in and contribution to nearly every conversation except for the ones happening in composition studies. Consequently, there is no challenge to the prevailing "top down" model, in which composition theorists develop pedagogies, heuristics, and textbooks that students are expected to consume passively (13). For example, composition students and composition teachers might use Patricia Bizzell's *Negotiating Difference* reader without engaging with the meandering theoretical path that Bizzell traveled en route to the conclusions that prompted the creation of the reader. Instead, students are required to take it on faith that, yes, literacy *is* about negotiating difference and move forward from there.

DeJoy isn't the only composition scholar who has called for the inclusion of student voices in composition studies. Writing in 1991 about public school language education, Keith Gilyard points out that students' voices are "conspicuously absent" from discussions about "this problem of being Black and attempting to cope with the instruction offered in a school controlled by those of another background" (10). "It is not being idealistic," he writes, "to expect at least some students to be able to furnish (articulate opinions) if encouraged to do so" (10). Dànielle DeVoss and James Porter, writing in 2006 about "the new ethics of digital composition," explain that "the students in our classrooms—those who have been downloading music, burning CDs, and writing within a realm in which millions of files zip freely

across open networks on a daily basis—know a lot about this realm. They can help inform our thinking and shape our understanding, if we let them" (200). Up to this point, students' voices have not been adequately included in the conversations that are happening about them in composition studies. We can learn from the discipline of anthropology, which has been quicker to deal with this issue.

Anthropologist Eric Luke Lassiter sees collaborative ethnography as important for the creation of new knowledge, but even more importantly, necessary to serve the needs of those being researched. For Ellen Cushman, collaborative ethnography is "activist ethnography" in that it "combines postmodern ethnographic techniques with notions of reciprocity and dialogue to insure reciprocal and mutually beneficial relations among scholars and those with whom knowledge is made" (824). Because "the researched" are equal partners in planning the ethnography, carrying it out, and writing it up, their interests are central to the project.

For our situation, it was important to have students making decisions on which texts would be examined in our collaborative essay. The text that students were most interested in and responded best to was a 1986 article named "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community" by James Porter. In that piece, Porter recommends that composition students create texts that are explicitly intertextual and contribute to the conversations of a larger discourse community (44). Writing letters to authors of articles read in class is one way of accomplishing this, according to Porter. After we took his advice and wrote letters to *him*, Porter replied by e-mail, thoughtfully addressing our comments and expressing his surprise and appreciation at receiving the letters over twenty years after having written the article to which we were responding. Concluding his remarks, he wrote, "All your students engaged the article seriously and thoughtfully. Overall, I was impressed with your students' writing and with the level of intellectual engagement" (Personal e-mail).

Despite Porter's praise of the students' engagement with his work, there were times when it became clear to me that, in my effort to avoid underestimating students' reading comprehension abilities, I overestimated them. During one particular meeting, I asked students to circulate the pages of my outline, responding to the outline itself and also to each other's responses (see Appendix). In the outline, I had written, "Students comprehended James Porter's text despite/because of some of the post-structural language." Brown replied in the margin (I can tell it was him by his jagged handwriting): "Not all students comprehend." Later on in the outline, next to my summary of

Mary Louise Pratt's "contact zones," Brown wrote "Layman's terms!" which I took to mean that he wanted me to tone down the academic jargon. Echoing Brown, consultant Jen Gargiulo underlined "congenial," "acrimonious," and "relatively equitable relationships," and commented sarcastically in the margins (I could tell it was her from the elegant, round cursive): "OK, so in simple form. . . ." She elaborated: "The reason no one commented on this section of the outline is because the words are difficult to understand."

The issue of the accessibility of scholarly texts is a controversial one in composition studies. After hearing Toby Fulwiler claim that the "exclusionary use of language by the discourse community" makes it difficult for freshmen to participate in and contribute to the conversations that are happening about them, Gary Olson, "mystified," wrote, "I certainly don't intend (theoretical) prose for eighteen-year olds. For a quarter of a century, I've been teaching that good writing is all about addressing a particular audience for a particular reason. Why in the world would I want undergraduates to 'enter' a piece that is explicitly about composition scholarship?" (qtd. in DeJoy 84).

For the most part, however, my consultants and I found composition studies texts to be accessible even when they were meant for scholarly audiences. As mentioned previously, students in this basic writing class responded particularly well to James Porter's 1986 article, "Intertextuality and the Discourse Community," in which Porter, informed by notions of "intertextuality," argues that all texts, not merely ones faithfully adhering to the principles of collaborative ethnography, are "team-written" (37). Consultant Johanna Nan summarized Porter's key point about intertextuality in a letter that she wrote to him: "When we borrow ideas from an article and sew them together with our ideas, it's creating a new discourse. . . . Sometimes we get some ideas from an article and put it together with our own ideas. This helps us a lot to write our essay." Consultant Shabeela Gobin puts it a little differently: "If someone is reading an article or a poem, and they like the idea the writer uses, they will take the idea and use it in their own writing. When they use the idea of course it cannot be the same thing, so they usually tend to expand the idea, or make it about what they are writing."

Porter uses the writing of Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence as an example. According to consultant Jen Gargiulo, he "considers Jefferson to be just as much 'an effective borrower of traces,' as 'a skilled writer.'" In other words, Jefferson borrowed concepts from his cultural landscape—"all men are created equal" (a quote from Ovid), "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (a common refrain in newspaper editorials

of the time)—and, as consultant Shabeela Gobin explains, "made it about what he was writing."

Our class often found it useful to delineate concepts in terms of a particularly familiar item from our cultural landscape: the cell phone. Consultant Donslow Brown explains intertextuality like this: "Ideas are put together to create new and better ones, much like features of old models of phones are put together to create a brand new, up-to-date, people-attracting phone." And consultant Dulcemaria Garcia provides a literary example of *intra*textuality: "My favorite author Gabriel Garcia Marquez wrote a book from previous stories that he had written. . . . It's from different texts that he has written himself and he made it into another novel but added another story. (I don't know the name of it in English.) Somehow it all intertwines and makes sense."

Much as James Porter examined the bits and pieces of culture sewn together to create the Declaration of Independence and those sewn together to create a popular Pepsi commercial from the 1980s, our class examined a YouTube-hosted fan video by Aamir Mansoor. The video, a popular one according to consultant Stephanie Acosta, and verified by the site's statistics which indicate 45,000 views and 172 comments, is set to Harlem-based underground hip-hop artist Immortal Technique's track titled "Bin Laden (Remix)."

Mansoor's "video compilation" sews together Immortal Technique's music and his lyrics (I call them "conspiracy theories" while Acosta and a few other consultants call them "the truth")—"Bush knocked down the towers"; "Of course Saddam Hussein had chemical weapons/We sold him that shit after Ronald Reagan's election"; the CIA's "tryin' to distract the fact they engineerin' the crack"; "This ain't no alien conspiracy theory/this shit is real/written on the dollar underneath the Masonic seal"—with, among other things, video containing 9-11 imagery, Iraq war clips from the Abu Dhabi television network, and an enlarged picture of the "Masonic" pyramid on the back of the United States dollar bill.

In pieces like Mansoor's fan video as well as this prose you are currently reading and the deeply remixed texts that are made possible by digital technology, how, we wondered, is it possible to properly give credit to authors? In "Why Napster Matters to Writing: Filesharing as a New Ethic of Digital Delivery," Dànielle DeVoss and James Porter concur that the issue of credit has become more complicated:

> There is . . . deep confusion as to what is "right" when using the words and works of another, what "counts" as writing when chunks of text—both text-as-code and text-as-content, not to mention myriad other creations, such as audio and video files—can be copied and digitally moved into a different context and a new document, and where the lines between one person's work and another's become electronically blurred through linking practices and by scripting and coding approaches. (183)

Consultant Antonio Ibanez adds, "The Internet . . . has more information being exchanged than anything else in the world. That is why most people want it to be regulated so any copyrighted materials can be protected." Here, Ibanez indicates his familiarity with "copyright maximalists" such as the Recording Industry Association of America, but in my research I have more often encountered "copyleftists"—writers (such as DeVoss and Porter) and artists (such as Immortal Technique) who want to replace the print-based ethic with a new digital ethic.

In "Rethinking Plagiarism in the Digital Age: Remixing as a Means for Economic Development?" DeVoss and Porter allow that the "new" ethic that they advocate resembles ancient rhetorical techniques such as compilatio: the process of collecting fragments from various sources and putting them together in a new whole. However, for DeVoss and Porter,

> Composing in the digital age is different—electronic copying-and-pasting, downloading, and filesharing change the dynamic of writing. With the ubiquitous use of digital writing technologies, "plagiarism" makes sense. It is a common practice (common in print culture, too), and perhaps even a literacy skill. . . . Remixing is how individual writers and communities build common values; it is how composers achieve persuasive, creative, and parodic effects.

If remixing is such a creative, community-building practice, should we really curtail it, as copyright maximalists (including some university officials) recommend, in order to ensure that the economic interests of publishing companies and the recording industry are protected? Should we, instead, as consultant Gargiulo mockingly suggests, "put quotes around every word"? Or should we, as DeVoss and Porter do, look to the United States Constitution for guidance?

Borrowing language from the Constitution, DeVoss and Porter write

in "Why Napster Matters to Writing" that "the purpose of writing is to promote, for the common good, the progress of the sciences and useful arts; to improve society; to help people live their lives; to expand their knowledge, to excite their imagination, to ease their anxieties; to help them live, grow, survive, and thrive," all of which are considerably more important than rewarding an author with "prestige, credit, wealth, and fame" (197). Speaking about the future of hip-hop, "old-school" DJ the Original Jazzy Jay makes a similar point: "It ain't about how much money I can stuff in my pockets, how many rocks I can put in my socks. It's all about educating ourselves" (Hatch-Miller). We, as a class, seemed to be somewhat tapped into this "new digital ethic." Garcia proposed to her fellow consultants that our project "is not about credit, it's about experience."

But the issue of credit is one that we could not avoid in this project. Cheniese Joseph commented during one of our meetings that "remixing is . . . a great strategy to make your paper a success. Reason being you are able to collect and gather our opinions and views on the issues and that is the essential resource for the aim of your paper." Joseph was saying that like a quilter gathering scraps of cloth for a quilt, I was gathering their thoughts and opinions to stitch them together into an essay. Her remark indicates her awareness that the essay was, in a lot of ways, "mine" and implies that I was the one who stood to benefit most from this project. She also felt strongly that our collaborative writing project was a distraction from much-needed ACT preparation. She wrote during one meeting that she "did not agree with the whole collaborating thing. Reason being I thought it would not be beneficial for me to pass the ACT exams." Throughout the time that we were working on the project, Joseph was a solid contributor, but I got the very distinct feeling that she was merely trading her cooperation in the collaborative ethnography project for the ACT coaching I offered.

Consultant Joseph Elliott was unabashedly against the ethnography idea from the start (although he did manage to coin a promising alternative term for basic writers: "up-and-coming writers"). On the first day we logged on to Google Docs & Spreadsheets (an online collaborative writing tool), Elliott wrote, "If Prof. Leary wanted our help on his homework, he should of just came right out and said it!!!" He also wrote, "Honestly, I really don't think anyone in this class will benefit from this Chris Leary project. But hey, what do I know? I failed the ACT thing too." I asked what should happen when we tried to turn all of our scattered notes and comments into an essay, and Elliott responded, "Shit, THAT'S YOUR PROBLEM." For Elliott and other students as well, our experiment in collaborative ethnography was a distraction from ACT preparation.

This is a message I receive pretty often from basic writing students: "Yes, we want an education, but that has to wait until we pass this damn test." One goal of this project has been to disturb—in the minds of students, myself, and also *JBW* readers—that education/test prep binary. Can the practice of collaborative ethnography, for example, prepare basic writers for a standardized test? Can test prep, meanwhile, prepare basic writers for more meaningful endeavors?

Test Prep: Subverting the ACT Writing Exam in Preparation for It

I actually consider our collaborative ethnography project to have been our best form of test prep. Collaborative ethnography encourages "thick description" of situations and the integration of various types of information. It necessitates engagement with other voices. It exercises conceptual arrangement. It requires the use of both intuition and logic for organization of large granules of text. Even for a test like the ACT, which asks test-takers to write a short persuasive letter to an imaginary authority figure, these processes are, in my opinion, more important than skills emphasized in test prep books such as creating effective topic sentences.

Some interesting questions emerge when we deal more directly with ACT materials—when we cave to students' requests and "teach to the test." Must we do it with an attitude of abject resignation? Or can we align test prep with more respected process-oriented teaching practices and with more recombinant practices increasingly common in digital culture? Also, is it possible to study the test—treat it like a "souvenir of clashes and encounters between margin and center" (Denny 54)—while we study *for* it?

In our basic writing course, when we dealt directly with ACT materials, fortunately, concepts and practices encountered while creating the collaborative ethnography—collaboration, dialogism, intersubjectivity, intertextuality, remix, recontextualization, among others—crept in and guided us to a "queered" version of test prep, aimed at demystification, awareness of contingency, parody, collaboration, and play. Our approach has been validated—albeit very circumstantially—in that ten out of sixteen students in this particular section of City Tech's developmental writing course passed the ACT Writing exam in the Fall of 2006. This is a very high ratio, the highest I've encountered in three years of teaching the course. Many jumped from 4 out of 12 to a passing score of 7. Those who did not pass scored a 6 and are positioned to pass following their completion of EG 092, the next level of basic writing at City Tech.

Harry Denny's article "Queering the Writing Center," which "offers queer theory as one among many critical voices that shape and analyze writing center work" (42) recommends approaches for one-to-one instruction in writing centers, but his recommendations are useful also for instructors of basic writing, especially since basic writing courses and writing centers tend to be filled with students with similar marginal status. He draws on discussions of "passing" by queer people or people of color, explaining that tutors often play the role of teaching marginalized writers how to "pass" in academic settings.

Denny's discussion of "passing" can illuminate our thinking about basic writing classes, where "passing," "pass rates," and "strategies for passing" are on everyone's mind. Students from the margins, Denny argues, already have many of the tools they need to pass. They are already equipped with "mechanisms to cope with forces of domination," and they have plenty of practice "navigating public spaces beyond the safe confines of home and community . . . yet tutors and other writing center professionals often do not tap these students' own innate and cultural literacies as resources for aiding their academic work" (49). Needless to say, basic writing instructors often don't either.

Denny's recommendations appealed to me partly because, as an instructor of basic writing, I am too often presented, and I too often present myself, with the idea that I must either help marginalized students conform to dominant discourses or help marginalized students resist them. (Or help them resist on Mondays and Thursdays and then help them conform on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.) Denny's article recommends a third way: to foster students' development of relationships with academic discourse.

What follows are a few ACT exercises that are intended to turn the gaze back at the assessment tool as well as to foster the development of a relationship with the test and with ACT-style writing, not necessarily by conforming to it or resisting it but by exploring creative ways to experiment and play with it.

Those unfamiliar with the exam should know that it presents writers with a fictional situation in their community or school and asks them to write a persuasive letter in support of one of two proposals. One prompt explains that money has been made available for the rejuvenation of a vacant lot. The writer needs to choose between turning the lot into a basketball court or a community garden.

- **ACT remixes.** All of the students' responses (to the same prompt) are placed into the same Microsoft Word document and jumbled. Students select whichever paragraphs they like and stitch them together, making necessary adjustments. Sometimes one or more of their own paragraphs will be included in their composition, sometimes not.
- **Collaborative ACT response.** As a group, we compose a response to an ACT prompt. I write what students tell me to write on the blackboard, word by word, sentence by sentence. Pulling together all of the subjectivities in the classroom, we create an ACT response that is much more than the sum of its parts.
- **The 25-paragraph ACT letter.** A mutant offshoot of the 5-paragraph ACT letter is the 5^2 paragraph letter. All of the students' responses (to the same prompt) are placed in the same Microsoft Word document. Each student creates an excessively long letter by choosing one introduction, one conclusion, and twenty-three body paragraphs. Each student arranges the paragraphs as he or she likes, making the necessary adjustments so that the paragraphs, whenever possible, "dovetail." Section headings are recommended.
- **Hypertextual ACT responses.** Students write their ACT responses in a weblog (or copy and paste their ACT remixes into a weblog) and litter them with links to relevant websites such as <http://www.mindspring. com/~communitygardens/> (Parham).
- **Selectively blacked-out ACT prompts.** This exercise is adapted from Austin Kleon's newspaper blackouts (< http://www.austinkleon.com/?cat=31>). Grab a Sharpie. Find an ACT prompt. Start crossing out words, leaving the words you like. Pretty soon you'll have a poem.
- **The prompt line-up.** As Denny explains, "For mainstream society, ways of knowing seem natural, but their very contingency becomes apparent when their assumptions come into proximity to others marked by racial, gender, class, sexual, national and other forms of difference" (47). This exercise, by putting the ACT prompt in the proximity of other prompts from different times and places, highlights its contingency. Students use writing prompts from THEA (Texas Higher Education Assessment), Qing Dynasty civil service exams (You 152), prompts for the New

> York State Regents exams, and any others we find. They rate the prompts from best to worst, arrange them by date, or splice them together into one "master prompt."

Although, again, it is impossible to draw generalizations from one semester of work with only eighteen students, my experience suggests that it is possible for basic writing students to participate in writing projects that help them, not only to pass their standardized tests, but also to engage in "creative living," defined by Nancy Welch as "fuller cultural participation, a lifelong questioning of and play with individual beliefs and cultural forms" (60). At the same time, students continue developing ways of thinking that they can capitalize on in fields like computer science, English studies, art, and design. The emergence of open-source software, collaborative ethnography, wearable technology, fan fiction, and writing centers indicates that these and other fields are moving ever further in the directions indicated by Gibson and Eno: toward unstable, unfixed, open texts.

In this environment, even test prep can be unmoored and resituated. Just as we do with texts, images, and materials, we can keep recontextualizing test prep until we like what it means and what it does.

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News and Announcements

Call for Proposals for a collection

Writing the Earth: Rhetorics and Literacies of Sustainability
Peter N. Goggin, editor

English studies is decades behind other disciplines in recognizing the importance of considering our research and teaching in light of local and global environmental exigencies. There is still a pervasive, if unacknowledged, belief that much of our work ought to focus on the triad of race/class/gender, whereas "environment" remains a category awkwardly associated with largely "white," middle class values and geographies, and thus confined to the perimeters of our conversations.
Derek Owens

Essay proposals are invited for a collection titled Writing the Earth: Rhetorics and Literacies of Sustainability. This collection invites scholars of literacy and rhetoric (in English studies and elsewhere) to pick up the gauntlet that Owens has thrown down before us and answer the challenge to put sustainability at the forefront of research and teaching in the humanities.

Although "sustainability" is generally understood as examining, reassessing, and changing current practices, policies and human endeavors to reduce the potential for harm to future generations, the concept has been constructed in multiple ways by many invested and interested parties to serve multiple agendas and purposes. The range and possibility for topics in this collection is therefore wide open, as long as they address sustainability through lenses of literacy and/or rhetorical theory. Therefore, topics might include, but are certainly not limited to: rhetorics of sustainability; rhetorics of sustainable development; environmental rhetoric; ecocriticism and ecocomposition; literacies of sustainability; discourses of sustainability; technology/media and sustainability; teaching writing and sustainability, and rhetorical places and spaces of sustainability. The focus may look broadly at a topic from a conceptual/theoretical perspective, or narrowly and pragmatically at a specific case.

Please send your 250-500 word proposal and a CV as electronic attachments in MSWord format to Peter Goggin (goggin1@asu.edu) by September 30, 2007.

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