Affect, Fear, and Openness in an Antiracist Writing Classroom

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ABSTRACT: At a time when antiracist teaching is increasingly needed, this article reports on an IRB-approved, mixed-methods study of high school seniors' affective experiences in an antiracist English language arts classroom. We find that students in this study became less scared and more confident writers. They attributed these positive changes to antiracist teaching that was designed to help them develop openness and new perspectives about race, inequality, and social justice. We argue that as students experienced openness as an affective (rather than only cognitive) disposition, they became more comfortable with the fearful affect associated with writing. We suggest that an antiracist curriculum that intentionally attends to openness and affect can confer political, social, intellectual, and emotional benefits; it can also make students less afraid of writing.

KEYWORDS: affect; antiracism; antiracist teaching; anxiety; Basic Writing; college writing; ELA; English Language Arts; fear; high school; self-efficacy

In recent addresses to the CWPA and CCCC conferences, Asao B. Inoue condemned writing programs as sites of structural racism. Noting composition's longstanding fidelity to White language standards, Inoue blamed White language supremacy for violence against BIPOC populations, immigrants, Muslims, women, indigenous people, and LGBTQIA populations. White language supremacy, he argued, is the "handmaiden to White bias

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in the world, the kind that kills Black men on the streets by the hands of the police through profiling and good ol' fashion prejudice" (359). Violence in writing classrooms, Inoue asserts, is no less real: When writing teachers teach White standards using White frameworks, White students feel comfortable and affirmed, but students of color feel judged, excluded, or imprisoned. As a result, too many students, like Maya Angelou's caged bird, write "with a fearful trill" (355). A student's fearful trill threatens not only their writing enjoyment but also their writing confidence, self-efficacy, motivation, and academic achievement (Bruning and Kauffman; Horning; Pajares et al.). Fear may especially threaten the already tenuous self-efficacy of basic writers who have interpreted their course placement as a bleak assessment of their writing ability (Bandura).

We approach the problem of writing fear by examining the relationship between *antiracist* writing teaching and students' fear of writing. This article discusses a high school writing curriculum and pedagogy designed to help students recognize, resist, and oppose racist structures and practices. While these goals sometimes seemed more important than developing writing skill, students in our study became less scared writers over the course of this academic year. We use affect theory to explore the relationship between antiracist teaching and students' decreased writing fear. We suggest that as students become comfortable dwelling in the unsettling affects that openness to new ideas requires, they also become less sensitive to affects that could diminish their writing confidence.

Building on scholarship previously published in this journal, our research benefits Basic Writing teachers in at least two ways. First, our concern for affect provides a helpful counterpart to research that focuses primarily on basic writers' abilities. Like Emily Schnee and Jamil Shakoor, we expand the Basic Writing conversation by letting students describe and interpret their experiences in a writing classroom rather than only documenting the measurable skill-related outcomes of those experiences. Second, our research contributes a valuable perspective by studying high school student writers *before* their placement in any college writing course. Kevin Roozen persuasively established the need for understanding basic writers' literacy histories. As Roozen points out, a student's performance in Basic Writing coursework is part of a "continual, unceasing interaction of extracurricular and curricular literate activities that are so profoundly interconnected that it becomes difficult to see where one ends and others begin" (27). This article provides a view of the literate landscape some students inhabit before entering our classrooms.

In the fall of 2018, we began a yearlong mixed-methods study in a high school language arts class to understand how students' writing affect and self-efficacy changed over the course of their senior year. As we planned the research, we did not anticipate we would be studying an antiracist curriculum; nevertheless, our ethnographic methods proved productive in studying this element of the teaching. By the time we entered the classroom, racism, police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement had become prominent themes in U.S. national discourse. The class's White teacher, Ms. Grow (pseudonym), felt compelled to make her teaching explicitly antiracist through the literature she assigned, the assignments she required, and the pedagogical strategies she used, though she had never done so before and had no formal training in antiracist teaching. For the first time in her ten years of teaching, she required students to engage affect-laden texts about Black experiences through the affect-laden pedagogical strategies we discuss below. Like most White instructors doing antiracist work, Ms. Grow had both good intentions and White habitus, a term coined by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, Carla Goar, and David G. Embrick that describes, among other behaviors, the tendency for White people to establish "how difference ought to be celebrated, defined, recognized, denied, or denigrated" (Burns et al. 260). Many positive things happened in Ms. Grow's classroom. And on occasion, her well-practiced habitus prevented her from recognizing how her students experienced her teaching and how her curriculum regulated their responses.

Our research used quantitative surveys to measure twenty positive and negative affects students might experience while writing. The results of those surveys showed that study participants became significantly less scared of writing over the course of the study, though the curriculum neither addressed writing fear nor provided much explicit writing instruction. Still, we theorize that the curriculum and decreased fear of writing are linked, that the antiracist curriculum itself changed writing affect. To support this claim, we use qualitative data we gathered both from students' interviews and our field notes of classroom observations. Students in our study attributed their increasing calm and confidence both to the antiracist curriculum and to the way Ms. Grow delivered that curriculum through her pedagogical performance. When Ms. Grow introduced difficult social and political issues and thus encouraged the distressing affects that occur when students open themselves to new ideas, opinions, and beliefs about race, social justice, and advocacy, she also addressed the fearful affect associated with writing.

We first provide a theoretical framework for affect, fear, and openness and show how our field's most prominent pedagogies have neglected affect.

We then describe the research site and explain our methodology as context for our findings and discussion. We describe what being scared of writing means for these students and how Ms. Grow's curriculum and pedagogy changed their affect toward writing. We explore elements of Ms. Grow's antiracist pedagogy that seemed to reduce students' fear and increase their writing confidence. Specifically, we focus on teaching activities and assignments that gave students in our study writing-related opportunities to enact openness as an affective practice, and we describe the limitations and complications of those activities. We end with suggestions for affective and antiracist teaching that can address racism and writing fear.

Theorizing Affect, Openness, and Fear

We use affect theory to analyze Ms. Grow's teaching and how her students perceived, responded to, evaluated, resonated with, and rejected the ideas, objects, and forces in her classroom. Other scholars have also used affect theory as a lens for evaluating antiracist teaching, often focusing on teachers' affective responses. Elizabeth Dutro, for example, argues that teachers often make immediate, racist judgments about students based on their affective responses to students' classroom behavior or performance. Dutro argues that delaying the "leap to certainty" (385) can open teachers to more equitable and just interpretations of what they see students doing and being. Esther O. Ohito similarly demonstrates how affect can negatively intervene in the space between a teacher's antiracist commitments and their teaching practices. Both authors call for more attention to embodied affect in antiracist teaching.

We argue that attuning to affect is especially vital in antiracist writing classrooms because writing is inherently affective. Affect emerges in dynamic relationships between bodies and other bodies, objects, ideas, energies, and forces. Writers are always unavoidably involved in such assemblages (Micciche). As things in the writing assemblage shift, move, and change, they spark affective responses in other things, unleashing additional shifts, moves, and changes (Seigworth and Gregg). Writers experience these affective shifts as ripples, swells, shocks, thoughts, beliefs, emotions, feelings, sensations, impulses, movements, dispositions, expectations, provocations—or, in Kathleen Stewart's succinct language, "something that feels like *something*" (2). These *somethings* can encourage or inhibit writing.

A writer's affective body is never static. Affect theory says that bodies are always alert to—and always moving toward or away from—objects and

intensities around them. This movement is neither entirely random nor idiosyncratic. Sara Ahmed notes that people share affective orientations—that is, they move toward and away from the same kinds of objects—because affects emerge within political, cultural, and social ecologies that establish which objects "should make us happy" ("Happy" 35). Often those happy, likeable objects are constructed through racialized and gendered frames (39).

Following Ahmed, we define fear as affects that people experience when they approach objects, people, things, ideas, or activities they believe may cause harm or injury. Fearful affects unsettle, shock, disquiet, or terrorize bodies. Many objects that writing bodies engage—technologies, texts, teachers, readers, other writers, grades, ideas, standards—induce fear because of their historical association with judgment and exclusion. For students of color, White language standards only intensify the violence of those judgments and exclusions (Inoue). Little wonder, then, that many students experience fear while writing. Fearful writing affect is both cognitive and physiological; students can be consumed by fearful, anxious thoughts and can experience visceral and somatic manifestations of those thoughts—"shudders that are felt on the skin," Ahmed calls them (*Cultural* 63). Together, these affects "shrink[ ] the [writer's] body" (70), constraining its movement, inhibiting its capacity, and undermining any sense of confidence and potential. This is true whether writing fear is generalized—extending over time and contexts—or attached to particular tasks or situations.

We define openness, a counterpart to fear, as the willingness to encounter, consider, acknowledge, and welcome unfamiliar objects and ideas. Despite its frequent association with cognition (e.g., an open mind), we argue that openness is at once rational *and* emotional, physiological, visceral. Openness is affective because it involves relationships between bodies/things/ideas that can become (both the relationships and the bodies) virtually anything. Openness can be enriching when it feels like hospitality, when it welcomes another into a relationship of "interdependence that strengthens all" (Jacobs 569). But openness can also be a "site of potential danger" (Ahmed, *Cultural* 67). Jim Corder warns that encounters with another can "send[ ] us lurching, stunned by [the other's] differentness" (19). The affect of openness, then, may resemble the affect of fear: an "impinging" or "thundering" that leaves us "flushed, feverish, quaky, shaky, angry, scared, hurt, shocked, disappointed, alarmed, outraged, even terrified" (19, 21). Especially in White-dominated spaces like writing classrooms, affects of fear and openness may overlap.

Additionally, Ahmed reminds us that the consequences of terrifying affects are not equally distributed. When White bodies experience openness as threatening, they respond by embracing structures that guarantee their own mobility and restrict the mobility of the bodies they fear. In encounters between White and Black bodies, Black bodies are doubly imperiled: they are more likely to be read as fearsome objects, and they are more likely to be "crushed by [the White body's] fear" (69). Jennifer Lin LeMesurier reveals the "absurdity" in the affect White bodies attach to Black bodies, using Childish Gambino's "This is America" music video as an example: "When [Gambino] dances, we [White bodies] are comfortable. The moment he takes hold of a gun, we cringe reflexively" (148). This kind of White openness is like the spring-loaded door of a cage trap—though it seems welcoming, it can shut unexpectedly and violently. White discomfort is its trigger. Thus, for bodies of color, openness does not guarantee happy outcomes.

Teaching Openness

An appreciation of openness as affect is missing in texts that guide the teaching of writing. For example, the Framework for Success in Postsecondary Education treats openness as a cognitive practice, or "habit of mind," that is essential to college writing success. Since its introduction in 2011, the Framework—written by college and high school faculty and endorsed by the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the National Writing Project—has become central to our field's beliefs about writing. While more recent position statements from our professional organizations explicitly address race (Baker-Bell et al.), the Framework takes a distinctly apolitical stance. According to Inoue, this seeming neutrality functions as a form of "White language supremacy" that reflects "White habits of judgment and then canonize[s] those White habits" (362). We read Inoue's critique to include the White habit of foregrounding cognition and deliberately downplaying affective and embodied epistemologies that are more common in non-White cultures. We use the Framework as an example of many writing pedagogy texts that encourage openness without addressing its affective precarity. The Framework's authors define openness this way:

> **Openness** – the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world. Openness is fostered when writers are encouraged to

- examine their own perspectives to find connections with the perspectives of others;
- practice different ways of gathering, investigating, developing, and presenting information; and
- listen to and reflect on the ideas and responses of others—both peers and instructors—to their writing. ("Framework for Success")

Even as the Framework mentions both "being and thinking," it promotes *thinking* when it encourages students to "examine their perspectives," "find connections with the perspectives of others," and "reflect on" ideas and responses they hear. Implying that openness is primarily intellectual work, the Framework does little to encourage openness as affect. There are no ideas for helping students notice and grapple with the emotions and sensations that accompany engaging other bodies, objects, or ideas. There is no suggestion that different ways of researching, writing, and presenting might include embodied practices (Arola and Wysocki). These omissions limit the Framework's power to promote new ways of "being." More importantly, the Framework's failure to acknowledge openness's affective work also elides the unequal risks White and Black students face when they adopt new and open stances. Antiracist pedagogy demands that the thinking, examining, connecting, and reflecting done in writing classrooms be race based, political, and activist, yet the Framework remains silent on these issues (Baker-Bell et al.).

The Framework's authors are not alone in slighting affect and ignoring racialized aspects of openness. Our field has long associated openness with intellectual activity (Peter Elbow's "believing" and "doubting"; Wayne Booth's "assent"). Popular first-year writing textbooks typically present openness as a rational practice. Connie Snyder Mick tells students to engage texts they disagree with in order to "locate gaps in current thinking or even change your mind on an issue" (109). The perennially popular book *They Say, I Say* advocates addressing counter arguments in order to "come across as a generous, broad-minded person" (Graff and Birkenstein 79). Andrea Lunsford et al.'s *Everyone's an Author* directs students to consider things "you know are absolutely wrong" (25) because these perspectives "will help you sharpen your own thinking, and your writing can only improve as a result" (437). Advice to pursue openness as a rational strategy is everywhere, even as emotion and affect are largely ignored.

To be clear, we don't reject cognition. Because openness is an affective phenomenon, it necessarily incorporates—includes and *embodies*—cogni-

tion. But if we narrow openness to something that happens only or even primarily in the mind, we neglect the affective dimensions of "being" open and the affective risks and rewards of openness. Without affect, openness pedagogies founder.

Although our textbooks have neglected the affects of openness, we see encouraging evidence that this is changing in our teaching. For example, Kendra N. Bryant points to the value of physical classrooms that allow "mind-body-soul connection[s]" between students and teachers (73). The "embodied learning" Bryant imagines relies on the proximity of actual bodies and their willingness to be vulnerable with each other. Barry M. Kroll advocates a similarly embodied approach to teaching openness by emphasizing its multiple dimensions: rational, kinesthetic, and contemplative. Using martial arts and meditation, Kroll provides his students opportunities for "embodied expression" as they "'feel' the movements" associated with openness (11). Bryant's and Kroll's pedagogies approach openness from extracognitive directions that "disconnect [students] from [their] drivetrain" (Berlant and Stewart 58). Students learn that affect and cognition are necessary complements in openness. The difference between traditional pedagogies and Bryant's and Kroll's is discrete versus diffuse attention. The cognitive approaches outlined above focus on rational strategies for reframing thinking. In embodied learning, students attend expansively to cognition *and* the feelings, sensations, and movements that openness inscribes on their bodies.

Aligning Bryant's and Kroll's pedagogical practices with Ahmed's theoretical perspective provides a useful schema for reimagining the Framework's explanation of openness. A revised definition would help teachers and students understand that as affects associated with openness ripple through and between bodies, they will sometimes resemble affects associated with fear. As Matthew Heard argues, asking students to practice openness to another's perspective is also asking for a painful "'shearing' of [their] most comfortable habits and feelings." If unaddressed, that affective conflation can undermine students' attempts to develop openness. In contrast, antiracist teaching that explicitly seeks to help students become comfortable with affects of openness may also help students become less sensitive to affects of fear—not just fear of new ideas, perspectives, bodies, and things, but fear of writing as well. Our research supports this claim.

Research Site: Classroom and Curriculum

We conducted this research in a public high school in a mid-size US city. The class was a regular, twelfth-grade Language Arts class not designated as Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), College Prep, or Honors. Ms. Grow, a veteran teacher and former head of the school's Language Arts department, explained that the school offers AP and IB tracks for students who are "absolutely, without question" going to college and honors/ college prep courses for kids who are likely going to college but don't want the pressure of AP/IB or are concentrating on advanced courses in other subjects. Regular classes, like the one in our study, are for the remaining students—some, but not all, college bound.

The school is in one of the city's affluent and predominately White neighborhoods. But the school's extended geographic boundaries and the district's open enrollment policy create a diverse student population: 40% of the school's students are people of color and 38% are economically disadvantaged. Three percent of the school's nearly 1,700 students are homeless ("Reports: Enrollment/Membership"). Of the approximately thirty students in Ms. Grow's class, thirteen voluntarily enrolled in our study. The participant group was slightly more diverse than the general school population: six self-identified as BIPOC students (46%), six self-identified as White (46%), and one student did not provide a racial identity. All thirteen were native English speakers even if other languages were spoken in their homes. Six had no immediate family members who had graduated from college, yet nine planned to matriculate. In other ways, the participants represented the diversity of a typical American high school. They were also straight, gay, bisexual, middle- and working-class, athletes, student body officers, thespians, dancers, extroverts, and self-proclaimed loners. In this article, we use pseudonyms for all study participants.

As White, middle-class researchers (one professor and two graduate students), we were in some ways outsiders in this classroom. For example, because Ms. Grow first introduced Amy as a professor from Brigham Young University, students later highlighted that professional role, sometimes referring to Amy as "the professor." Furthermore, none of the nine college-bound students planned to attend our university, a private religious institution in a nearby city. At other times, however, students seemed to want to identify with us. Several volunteered information about their religious commitments and practices, even though we never asked about religion. As in all ethnographic

research, we see evidence that our identities impacted the data we collected, and we acknowledge how this limits the generalizability of our findings.

Ms. Grow, a White woman, taught an antiracist curriculum that investigated inequitable structures and practices and required students to engage social issues outside the classroom. Confident and charismatic, Ms. Grow enacted both the good cop and the bad cop in the classroom. At times demanding and direct, her speech sprinkled with mild profanity, she issued brisk commands in the manner of a drill sergeant: "Everybody's eyes up here!" "If I see you touch that backpack, that phone will be mine. Forever!" "Sit your ass up!" Other times she was playful and relaxed, calling students "my ducklings" and saying, "If you have finished, then just chill. Just be."

Ms. Grow had been drawn to issues of social justice since her undergraduate days but, by her own account, had never yet prioritized it in her teaching. Still, she had become increasingly convinced that her job was to open students to new perspectives on social issues, specifically to understanding how people experience racism, prejudice, and discrimination. And she wanted her students of color to be able to communicate "what White privilege feels like to me." Centered on the topic of police brutality and themes of race and stereotypes, Ms. Grow's curriculum included two novels, *The Hate U Give* and *Dear Martin,* and the films *The Hate U Give* and the *New York Times* documentary "A Conversation with My Black Son"—all texts that address racial minorities' devastating experiences of police brutality. In the findings section below, we describe Ms. Grow's pedagogy, or how she enacted this curriculum.

Methods

Our research design combined qualitative methods common to Writing Studies (interviews, observations, and textual analysis) with quantitative methods borrowed from psychology. This mix of quantitative and qualitative data provides a nuanced understanding of students' experiences. The quantitative measurements allow us to speak precisely about affective changes; the ethnographic methods help us interpret the numbers. To obtain a holistic view of students' affect and experiences—and with IRB and school district approval—we observed the class one day a week throughout the school year and interviewed participants at the end of each academic quarter. The first semi-structured interview centered on our original research questions about affect and self-efficacy; we modified later protocols in response to participants' previous answers and our classroom observations. We also collected

assignment descriptions, rubrics, classroom handouts, all the participants' graded assignments, and freewrite journals from willing participants. We took pictures of PowerPoint slides and collaborative work that students produced in class. Interview transcripts, fieldnotes, students' texts, photographs, and curricular materials formed the data set for our qualitative analysis.

Two researchers coded each interview. To ensure coding integrity, each researcher coded a set of interviews with each of the other two researchers (e.g., Researcher A coded twenty-five interviews with Researcher B and twenty-five interviews with Researcher C). To ensure intercoder agreement, we met frequently to compare codes and to adjust our code categories, definitions, and criteria for inclusion or exclusion. In the first round of coding, we assigned category codes to interview sections related to our original research questions about self-efficacy and affect change. This round included coding for emotions, moods, sensations, objects (e.g., pens and pencils, computers and phones, bedrooms, and other workspaces), and bodies (e.g., friends, family members, coaches, bosses, and other teachers) that made up students' affective writing environments. Where possible, we assigned magnitude codes to students' descriptions of their affect (positive, negative, and neutral)—for example, when students described being excited about writing, dreading writing, or not caring about writing. Similarly, we assigned magnitude codes to their descriptions of changes in self-efficacy—decline, growth, and no change (Saldana). In later rounds of coding, we developed more nuanced codes around the experience of being scared or fearful of writing. During these rounds, we discovered a relationship between fearful affect and Ms. Grow's teaching. We then coded for curriculum and pedagogy, using descriptive codes to categorize pedagogical activities (e.g., group work, classroom writing assignments, and feedback) and curricular themes (e.g., writing instruction, reading instruction, and *perspective*[1]).

Following affect scholars in psychology, we used the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) to measure positive and negative dimensions of the affect students associated with writing. Widely accepted as a reliable and valid measurement of affect, the PANAS scale asks participants to rate twenty moods (ten positive and ten negative) using a scale that ranges from *very slightly or not at all* (1) to *extremely* (5). Positive feelings or moods include being interested, excited, and enthusiastic; negative moods include feeling hostile, guilty, and scared. High positive affect indicates a state of "high energy, full concentration, and pleasurable engagement"; low positive affect reflects "sadness or lethargy" (Watson et al. 1063). High negative affect scores indicate general distress, while low negative affect scores signify a

state of calm. The PANAS scale can measure short-term fluctuations in affect if participants rate their affect "right now," and it can measure the stability of specific affective traits when participants rate their affect "in general" or "on average." Because we were interested in students' average or general affective responses to a yearlong curriculum and pedagogy rather than in daily fluctuations of their affect, we administered the survey twice—once halfway through the academic year (early January) and once at the year's conclusion (late May). Both surveys asked participants to rate twenty mood states for the "extent you GENERALLY feel this way when writing—that is, how you feel ON AVERAGE when writing" (see Appendix A).

Findings

Most research participants became less scared and more confident as writers during the year of our study. To understand how a curriculum that emphasized teaching antiracism above teaching writing correlated with a change in students' scared affect, we used our observation fieldnotes, interview transcripts, and students' written reflections to see what students said about being scared of or while writing—even though they never used the word *scared* when talking about writing. Instead, they used synonyms or words that name affects associated with being scared such as *dread, nervous, anxious, worried, stressed,* and *antsy*. We coded these words and other negative affect descriptors and reviewed the interviews to determine the contexts in which negative affect occurred. We found that students associated generalized negative affect—frustration, dislike, boredom, apathy, disorientation, and confusion—with past and present writing. They used fearful vocabulary only in connection with future writing. Yesterday's writing was unpleasant, but tomorrow's writing is scary. This finding illustrates why fear is detrimental to writing self-efficacy and confidence, which both concern beliefs about what one can accomplish in the future.

Students used fear-based language—*nervous, worried, stress, dread*—to describe imminent and future writing assignments, tasks, or situations, such as the demands of an assigned paper (e.g., working with other people or doing research) or the possibility of an undesirable outcome (e.g., a poor grade). One student described a habitual pattern of "dreading the idea of the assignment until I just sit down and shut up and quit complaining."

For students in our study, the most significant source of anticipatory fear was the course's end-of-term project, called the Social Action Project (SAP), perhaps because Ms. Grow presented it as labor intensive, high stakes,

and public. It was a group project that required research and asked for activism in the community (see Appendix C). Ultimately, all the students confined their activism to the school, creating products that ranged from a video to show in social studies classes to posters about discrimination to hang in the hallways. The project also included an oral presentation explaining the project to the class. In its many facets, the SAP was the primary determiner of students' third quarter grade. When asked in an end-of-quarter interview to describe their initial reaction to the assignment, students responded:

- "Dread. Didn't want to do it. At all."
- "I was also really nervous because it was going to take a lot of work. . . If you're gonna present something, you have to understand it, um, and just, yeah. I was nervous 'cause it was going to be a lot of work involved."
- "I'd say nervous just 'cause of, so in, like, the majority of my group that I had never went to class, so it was just me and one other kid. . . just two people working on this whole thing."
- "It just sounded like a lot. . . [Ms. Grow] almost made it out to be, like, a big, like it was going to be this giant thing."
- "[I was] really stressed out. It was a big project."
- "There wasn't a big enough time frame for us to like—I felt the project was really quick so like tryna get it all done and, like, find people and get interviews. It's all crammed together."
- "[My feelings] went from nervousness to stress. . . I'm just like, ahh! So much to do, you know, just trying to rush things around."
- "My first thought, uh I was nervous because the first [thing Ms. Grow] said that this was gonna determine what our whole grade was for third term. Um, I definitely care about my grade."
- "It's kind of that thought of knowing that if you don't do this project then you won't pass. So that's something that, I guess, I get anxiety, I guess, is a good word, or something like that."

We found that students' fearful language—*dread, nervous, stressed, anxiety*—frequently collocated with language of size or consequentiality—"big," "giant," "so much to do," "whole thing," "whole grade," "a lot of work," "won't pass." The proximity of scared talk and consequential talk was a prominent pattern in interviews leading up to the SAP.

After students had successfully completed the SAP, in their fourth quarter interviews, we asked how confident they felt about their ability to

accomplish any high school writing task and how confident they felt about their preparation for college or employment. Eighty percent of the students expressed increased confidence in their ability to succeed in high school and college writing classrooms or in future jobs. In the same interview, students completed the second PANAS survey (described previously).

We analyzed changes in students' negative and positive affect by comparing the two PANAS surveys. We found a statistically significant decrease in the average across all negative affect terms as measured by a difference in means test (from 2.2769 to 1.7969; p=.02). Among these terms, the decrease in *scared* affect was both notable (0.8 points, from 2.3077 to 1.5593) and statistically significant (p=.04) (see fig. 1).

Combined, students' expressions of confidence and the statistical findings about fear corroborate the well-researched connection between self-efficacy, mastery experience, and affect (Bruning and Kauffman; Pajares et al.). That completing the high-stakes SAP contributed to measurable decreases in students' writing fear is perhaps an expected finding. Ms. Grow had billed the SAP as the year's most consequential assignment, and students described their relief at having it behind them. Additionally, as Christopher Minnix has suggested, students feel empowered when they participate in civic life through writing. Assignments like the SAP project that ask students to pursue activist goals by producing texts for public audiences can increase students' confidence as writers and as citizens. They learn that writing can give them influence in their communities.

However, students who felt less scared and more confident as writers also attributed their improvement to the affective and antiracist aspects of Ms. Grow's teaching. For example, Sophie, who identifies as half-black and describes herself as dyslexic and as having ADHD, explained in her final interview how her writing "fluency" had improved, along with her ability to "go deep" and "open up" in her writing. When asked what had caused the change, she answered, "I think it's Ms. Grow pretty much. 'Cause she shares lots of personal experiences, and I feel like she can be relatable in that way, and I feel like her example kind of made me more open." Sophie also credited Ms. Grow's openness with allowing her to "do better and just accept myself." Other students echoed Sophie's assessment of Ms. Grow's teaching and expressed appreciation for a curriculum that challenged them intellectually and affectively. Only Miguel, in an early interview, criticized Ms. Grow's openness, mentioning his discomfort with her intense emotion and strong language. Yet in his final interview, he walked back his criticism,
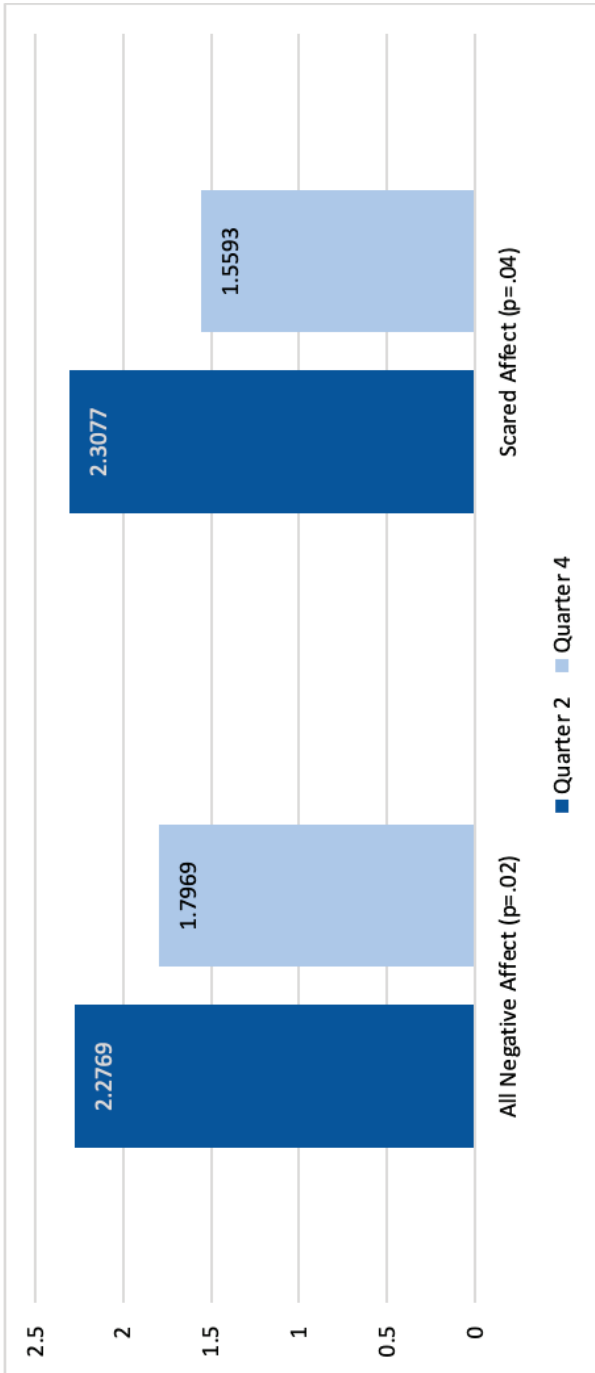
Figure 1. Negative affect changes in PANAS scale surveys

saying "it's gotten better" and that he now appreciated Ms. Grow's "a bit more sociable" classroom.

A correlation between affective antiracist teaching and writing confidence is not a new finding. Jody Polleck and Tashema Spence-Davis likewise credit their students' increased writing confidence to their antiracist curriculum that engaged students in uncomfortable conversations. While Polleck and Spence-Davis's curriculum included more explicit writing instruction and more focus on writing process than Ms. Grow's, some of their students linked increased writing confidence to the antiracist and activist elements of the curriculum rather than to the writing instruction. Even without such focused writing instruction, fear of writing decreased in Ms. Grow's students. They told us that they felt more confident as writers because they had learned to examine their biases and consider new perspectives.

Discussion

Openings for Antiracist Teaching. Our findings allow us to reiterate important features of students' writing fear in an affective framework. Again, their pattern of associating writing with future writing suggests that fear is primarily anticipatory. Located in a projected hurtful future, fear's affects nevertheless impinge on the present body (Ahmed, *Cultural*). Fear's temporal locus is yet to be, but its affective intensities are now. The students' consistent turn to materiality (time, size, magnitude) and the proximity of scared words and consequential words in their interviews confirm that affects are not just cognitive or emotional; they are also experienced in the body.

More importantly, our findings allow us to suggest *why* participants connected decreases in their writing fear to Ms. Grow's teaching. Here we contextualize our discussion by painting a picture of Ms. Grow's teaching using interviews, field notes, and course materials, and further, we explore pedagogical activities that illustrate the promises and limitations of antiracist teaching. We conclude by elaborating the SAP, a key assignment in Ms. Grow's antiracist curriculum and an object of many students' writing fear.

Curriculum and Cognitive Practice. During the first quarter interviews, when we asked students to explain what they were learning in Ms. Grow's class, they listed reading, analyzing, and annotating texts; relating texts to their own lives; appreciating "deeper" perspectives and different viewpoints; and changing their opinion on social issues. After the second quarter, students said they were learning to understand other people's experiences with racism and to summarize the things they read. In the third and fourth

quarters, students reported learning about racism and stereotypes and about how to be open to other people's opinions and viewpoints. Students liked the sustained practice in reading and interpreting texts and the course's focus on openness, but at least one student felt that "all the skills that we're using to write, we already know." While Ms. Grow provided some direct instruction about writing summaries and annotations, her students felt that the bulk of class time was devoted to reading, interpreting, and discussing texts.[2]

While we focus on the many admirable features of Ms. Grow's curriculum, we cannot ignore its relative "inattentiveness to *writing* instruction," as is sometimes the case with critical pedagogies (George 81). This is significant because when students said Ms. Grow's teaching made them less scared and more confident as writers, they were not talking about explicit writing instruction. During thirty-three hours of observation, we saw six occurrences of such instruction, four of which were lessons on annotation strategies, and one of which lasted only two minutes. In this regard, Ms. Grow's classroom resembles many high school classrooms (Applebee and Langer). Although Ms. Grow's students sporadically composed freewrite journals (discussed in the following subsection) as well as short in-class writing assignments, annotations, and formal assignments, the overall amount of required writing was low, and no assignment required multiple drafts or peer review—again in line with national trends (Scherff and Piazza).[3] Our purpose is not to criticize Ms. Grow's lack of attention to writing in her curriculum but instead to understand how such a curriculum helps students develop less fearful relationships to writing. We see compelling evidence that Ms. Grow's combination of affectively challenging content and affectively provocative teaching practices decreased students' writing fear and increased their writing confidence.

Still, we note that even while privileging affect, Ms. Grow sometimes positioned openness as a cognitive practice. She spent several weeks teaching students to "read with the grain"—a rational strategy of believing what the author says, gathering all the information and facts, and determining the main argument and subarguments. Reading with the grain, Ms. Grow taught, is "accepting that the author knows what she's talking about and just taking it in as interesting information." Ms. Grow led students through *New York Times* opinion pieces[4] claim by claim, evidence by evidence, in a rapid-fire question-answer session: "Where's the next claim?" "How the hell does [the author] know?" Students offered answers, which Ms. Grow either affirmed or corrected—"That's too vague"—followed by audible "Ahhs!" or groans from the students. Next, Ms. Grow taught students to "read against

the grain" by encouraging them to "determine relevance, question ideas and assumptions, and identify weaknesses in reasoning and evidence" (instruction she projected on a PowerPoint slide). She pointed out places where an author was inconsistent or revealed a bias: "He's pretty damn snarky about this. Holy cow!" Here, her instructional language grounded openness in cognition—the ability to identify, determine, believe, and question. Yet, Ms. Grow's exclamations also modeled an affective response to the readings and, in so doing, encouraged students to use similarly affective behavior, gestures, and expressions.

Antiracist Teaching and Affective Practices. Ms. Grow highlighted affect in three deliberate pedagogical practices: journal writing, discussions, and classroom activities. Students wrote in the journals, which Ms. Grow promised never to look at or read, about ten times during the year. Though Ms. Grow assigned journal writing sporadically, the journals communicated her concern for her students' affective lives. For example, on the day in April when Ms. Grow introduced "reading with the grain," she started class by asking students to write about "a time when you felt powerful and strong" and to describe the feeling of being powerful. Though the students' responses were diverse—weightlifting, playing roller derby, listening to music, ending a bad relationship, protesting a pipeline being built on Native American land—they all described an embodied activity that brought them into or out of relationships with other bodies and things. That is, their powerful experiences were all embodied and affect driven. Seemingly unconnected to the day's instruction about reading with the grain, this journal prompt nevertheless countered the lesson's cognitive focus. Ms. Grow ended class by sharing a personal story with the students, once again framing the day's cognitive content with activities highlighting affect to signal its merit.

In conjunction with course readings, Ms. Grow generated an affective environment by also encouraging difficult discussions about racism, a teaching practice that antiracist education scholars consider a "pedagogical imperative" (Love et al.). During these robust conversations, she encouraged students to share personal stories as she shared her own. She detailed her adolescent insecurities, her family's experiences with addiction, her unhappy first marriage and divorce, and the challenges of parenting adult children. Here, Ms. Grow excelled as a teacher—she was personable, honest, engaging, and funny. We watched students listen, laugh, absorb her narratives, sometimes challenge her ideas, and frequently respond with equal openness and vulnerability. One White female student described Ms. Grow's class as a place where "we can share struggles together. And I think that's something

really cool that I've never really seen a teacher do. . . . She always asks us to, like, talk about stuff we're really passionate about. Like, I have cried in this class from talking about something I'm extremely passionate about." Class discussions consumed a lot of instructional time, but students appeared especially involved in learning during these teaching segments.

Occasionally, discussions sprang from students' journal writing. For example, one Friday, Ms. Grow started class with a journal prompt: "What societal issue is most important to you?" After giving students time to write, Ms. Grow asked students to stand and share their experiences. This practice imparted a performative quality that focused attention on the speaker. Ginny, a White female, stood and talked passionately about transgender issues, becoming visibly upset as she spoke. Ms. Grow waited for a minute and then gently thanked her. Ginny sat, and Ms. Grow thanked her again. Though Ms. Grow was typically funny and even sarcastic, her warmth in this moment validated Ginny's vulnerability and again demonstrated Ms. Grow's own affective openness, her willingness to listen to and honor another's experience in a way that blurred the lines between bodies (Jacobs).

Finally, Ms. Grow used class activities to intentionally provoke affects that accompany and sometimes inhibit openness. For example, in November, while students were reading *The Hate U Give,* Ms. Grow had what she called a "silent debate." She gave students large sheets of paper with prompts about issues addressed in the book: color blindness, reverse discrimination, prejudice, racial profiling, implicit bias, and lethal force by the police. After writing an initial response to the prompt, students walked through the room silently and responded, in writing, to what they read of their peers' writing, now posted, without names, to the classroom's wall. These textual "conversations" allowed students to practice cognitive openness strategies—to agree with, believe, question, elaborate, or challenge what their peers said—all without verbal expression. By limiting interaction to semi-anonymous writing, Ms. Grow dampened some of the affective forces a typical classroom debate might spark. But this activity privileged other embodied affects, as students physically wrote on posters and moved through the space, encountering, avoiding, and waiting on other bodies. Because they weren't required or even allowed to talk, and because there was no assessment of their responses, the activity provided a forum for students to concentrate on their own affective reactions to others' ideas about racial inequality and the material experiences of Black and Brown bodies. Thus, the silent debate exposed both the affordances and the limits of rational, articulable dialogue as a vehicle for openness. It called students' attention to

the ways alphabetic texts provoke, press, and sometimes paralyze affective responses, even in the absence of speaking.

Together, the journals, class discussions, and class activities gave students opportunities to share their experiences and consider other people's experiences—those they read about and those they heard in class. These pedagogical activities may have correlated with writing confidence because they honored students' cultural knowledge, attitudes, and life experiences—the "incomes" they brought to the classroom (Minnix). The activities—especially the silent debate—may have also helped students become comfortable with affective dissonance. When Ms. Grow asked students to embrace, without trying to resolve, their affective responses, she was preparing them for the affective ambiguity writing provokes and demands (Dutro).

The Problem of White Habitus

Still, a few teaching moments felt affectively perilous. Michael Sterling Burns et al. remind us that White habitus can make it difficult for White teachers (and students) to recognize the inherent racism in behaviors they have mindlessly practiced and performed their entire lives. Teachers—even skilled and affect-conscious teachers like Ms. Grow—sometimes fail to fully consider how students of color may experience, perceive, interpret, or value teaching activities, especially affect-laden activities (260).

One cold January morning, Ms. Grow taught another explicitly affect-oriented lesson. She began by arguing that stereotypes and labels are an underlying cause of the social problems they were discussing. After dividing the class into small groups, she gave each group a poster paper on which they were to (1) define *stereotype*, (2) define *label*, (3) explain why we label people, and (4) write as many labels as they could. Only labels associated with sexual anatomy or acts were off limits, she told them. We watched two study participants complete this activity: Joseph, a Native American male, and Ben, a male student who did not provide a racial identity. Joseph and Ben worked with two girls who were not study participants. In our fieldnotes we captured word-by-word some of Ben and Joseph's dialogue. Because the girls were not enrolled in our research, we did not record their speech. What follows represents the group's interactions and direct conversation between Ben and Joseph.

> Ben defines stereotype as "a word or phrase directed towards a group of people," and Joseph agrees: "I like what Ben said."

One of the girls, acting as scribe, writes this on the poster. A brief discussion of the difference between stereotypes and labels follows.

> Joseph: "[Labels are] the idea that comes to mind when we think of someone."

> Ben: "How the behavior of someone is used to identify them."

The scribe writes *behavior used to identify a person*. Josh suggests the scribe add an *s* to *behavior* "because there are lots of behaviors." The scribe adds an *s*.

The group talks about why people use labels. Joseph says that labels are natural, people use them without thinking and without even noticing.

> Ben: "But sometimes people do it intentionally to hurt."

> Joseph: "It's not a natural instinct. I'm trying to think of a better way to put it." [Pauses.]

> Ben: "Habit."

> Joseph: "They're quicker, shorter, faster to think about."

The scribe writes: *The first reason we label people is because it is a habit we are used to. The second reason is because we are intentionally trying to hurt someone.*

The group starts listing labels: *beaner, fag, illegal, ratchet, ghetto, slut, pothead, player*. The scribe hesitates to write *fag*, and the group discusses whether it violates Ms. Grow's prohibition on sexual terms. They agree to include it.

> Ben: "I know there's another one, but I don't want to say it."

The scribe asks if he wants to write it instead.

Ben: "Not really."

Joseph: "The N-word?"

The scribe hesitates, and they discuss writing just *N-word.* They turn to Ms. Grow for direction. Ms. Grow encourages them to write the whole word, "to show its ugliness." On the poster, the scribe writes a rap-inflected version of the word.

When students had composed their lists, Ms. Grow asked them to silently walk around the room for fifteen minutes, asking themselves, "Who do I think of when I hear this term?" She instructed them to write groups of people (not individuals) next to the label. Here again, Ms. Grow isolated affective elements—movement, visual stimuli, silence—while highlighting affect's relational and cognitive dimensions ("Who do I think of?"). She smiled and nodded as she watched students move through the room. Her behavior suggested that she was, in Sarah Stanley's words, "tightly bound to [her] curricular map" of privileging affect and perhaps unaware of "the experiences of the people in the room" (21).

After surveying the posters, students composed an "exit ticket" describing their "thoughts and feelings" during the activity. Ms. Grow concluded the class with a brief discussion about the students' discomfort and uncertainty. Elle, a White student, said that her group had been "timid" to say labels aloud. Sophie, who identified as "half-White, half-Black," agreed that it was "uncomfortable saying things verbally." We, as researchers, wondered if the students' words fully captured their complex emotions and affective responses. Ms. Grow ended class by saying that on Facebook she had seen an attractive person referred to as a "snack." Students roared with laughter when she expressed exaggerated outrage at this "dehumanizing" term. But despite the levity, we wondered if the day's activity might have caused harm. Ms. Grow's attempt to end class on a light note suggested that she, too, felt uneasy about the lesson, something she confirmed in a later conversation with us.

Ms. Grow did not show us that day's exit tickets, but we later saw some evidence that the class discussion had too quickly dismissed the range of affect the activity provoked. For example, the formal writing assignment associated with this activity was a research paper on labels and stereotypes.

Of the nine study participants who submitted the assignment, five wrote in a detached, academic voice. But four students (two White, two students of color) included personal narratives of being stereotyped. One called it the "absolute shittiest feeling when people who have no knowledge of your being, decide to put you in one of their mental idea of groups and use some word or phrase to obviously let you know where y'all stand." During Ms. Grow's short debriefing after the labelling activity, no student had mentioned feeling degradation and humiliation during the activity. Though Ms. Grow admitted the offensiveness of labels generally, her critique failed to acknowledge the horrific differences between a label like "privileged" and labels like "fag" or the N-word. Furthermore, her decision to allow students to use racially offensive words exemplifies what Esther Ohito calls an "enactment of Whiteness"—the tendency for White teachers to address racism in ways that feel comfortable and convenient for *them* (21). We find much to admire in Ms. Grow's ability to combine "rational," intellectual strategies (define, list, categorize) with intensely affective experiences. But this teaching episode also reveals the way White habitus might blind teachers to potential hazards of affective antiracist teaching.

Antiracist Teaching and Writing Assignments: Choosing to Become Open

The journals, discussions, and class activities formed the nucleus of Ms. Grow's teaching, but the SAP project loomed over the entire year. Ms. Grow saw this assignment as the primary assessment of students' writing development and antiracist evolution. As such, she made it the entire basis of students' third quarter grades. Consequently, it also became the focus of students' fear, as discussed previously. As a nexus of antiracism and fear, the SAP deserves special attention. After they had completed the assignment, we asked students about their experiences with the SAP. Their answers reveal complex relationships between affect, openness, and decreased writing fear. We use Joseph's interviews as an example of the SAP's effect on writing fear and antiracist attitudes.

In early interviews and discussions, Joseph repeatedly articulated his belief that people succeed through effort, talent, hard work, and "mak[ing] correct decisions." His favorite past writing assignment, a junior year research paper on the American Dream, had convinced him that "it's a true thing that work, work, hard work does pay off." In his first quarter interview, Joseph evaluated Ms. Grow's curriculum through this meritocratic lens. She was

teaching about police brutality, Joseph said, in order to help students learn "how to not follow bad paths" and how to resist "if someone asks you to do something you don't want to do." Joseph seemed somewhat unconcerned about racial violence in policing, focusing instead on how Ms. Grow's curriculum resonated with his life goal to "be a good person." Using Ahmed's ideas about the relationship between fear and mobility (*Cultural* 68) to analyze these early interviews, we would say that Joseph viewed voluntary restrictions on mobility—avoiding "bad" paths and making "correct" choices—as necessary for upward mobility. If he seemed indifferent about police brutality, it was because he, as a student of color, believed bodies of color could avoid unwanted constraints on their mobility by being less restive, less bodies-to-be-feared.

Later, we saw Joseph struggle to reconcile his beliefs with the affects Ms. Grow's antiracist curriculum provoked in him. In his third quarter interview, Joseph was less sanguine about challenges Black people face, calling it "heart wrenching to know that just the smallest thing someone says to some individual or something like that can really affect their outcome of life." While doing research for the SAP, he discovered "facts" about police brutality that he called "pretty hard, and they're kind of hard to realize. . . . Some of them were very graphic." It was during this interview that the only *in vivo* use of the word *scared* occurred. Describing his group's SAP, Joseph said:

> [Police brutality's] a hard topic for people to talk about, but something that the police do it for a reason and, I mean, we don't want people to just be *scared* of police the whole time, I mean like all the time...but we wanted...people who come inside the school to know that, like, this is a topic, I mean, this is a, this is, um, I guess, a challenge that people of color do face every day. (emphasis added)

Here, Joseph displayed both his developing openness and the difficulty of adopting open stances. He first appeared to countenance "a reason" for police brutality. Yet in saying that people shouldn't fear police "the whole time," Joseph implied that there are times when people are rightfully scared of law enforcement. He ended by acknowledging that police brutality is a consistent "challenge" for people of color, but his verbal hesitations and "I guess" suggested that this was not an entirely easy stance for him to take.

Still, Joseph's openness is worth noting, given his prior attachment to you-get-what-you-deserve meritocracy. Jennifer Trainor calls these attachments "emotioned" because they are both personal and central to the

discourses, practices, emotional regulation, and affective experiences of schools. The persuasive force of emotioned beliefs is "elaborate[d] in school practices that are not about race per se," making the beliefs especially hard to challenge with antiracist pedagogies (80). Thus, it is remarkable that Joseph resisted his emotioned beliefs enough to advocate for the people of color who "do face [police brutality] every day."

Ms. Grow's affective teaching—teaching that Joseph called "heart wrenching"—seemed to help him develop openness. In his final interview, we asked Joseph to imagine a writing topic that would be "completely exciting and totally engaging." Maintaining his meritocratic beliefs, Joseph replied, "Something that I could relate to, something that has really stood out to me, like keeping morals or keeping the right ideas and thoughts in your head." But for the first time, he was equivocal about the limits of meritocracy and the realities of racism. He added, "I feel like I'm not facing a lot of things, but we actually are." Joseph's subtle change from *I* to *we* revealed a relational shift that allowed him to feel what other bodies of color experience. Rather than boldly espousing a gospel of meritocracy, Joseph now said that his goal as a writer was not getting someone to "agree or disagree" but helping other people "know" and "understand" what his writing is trying to say. He called Ms. Grow's class "very important" in changing his attitudes and helping him develop openness, which he described as his ability to "think of something completely different. . .all these possibilities and questions." Importantly, at the end of the year, Joseph said that it was this openness, the ability "to dig deep and really not just talk about just like plain old, plain old stuff," that made him a more confident writer.

We measured decreased fear in all students, and most students described increased writing confidence. But like Joseph, most students also exhibited some ambivalence regarding racism as it pertained to their own experiences. This is not surprising. Since openness is an affective disposition, it will always be in flux. Though we speak of developing openness, it is never stable enough to be accessed in every situation. Students, like all of us, will only ever be *becoming* open. An antiracist curriculum and affective pedagogy doesn't guarantee antiracist students, but it may help them more consistently and reflectively choose to become open. Even if students in our study experienced openness in nascent and uneven ways, we link Ms. Grow's students' increased confidence and decreased fear to her antiracist teaching and her emphasis on affect.

Conclusion

The students in our study became less scared and more confident as writers, and they attributed these positive changes to antiracist teaching designed to help them develop openness around issues of race, inequality, and social justice. Based on our quantitative and qualitative findings, we conclude that Ms. Grow's curriculum and pedagogy succeeded because they helped students become more comfortable with the affects of openness and the affects of fear. As a result, students felt more confident and prepared as writers. Our research suggests the promise and potential peril of affective antiracist teaching.

The promise: Teaching that foregrounds affect while also tackling difficult topics like antiracism encourages openness. Cognitive approaches to openness may be less effective because negative and positive affects that precede cognition are especially resistant to reason (Haidt). Students will experience those affects whether we address them or not. Unexplored, negative affects can work against openness, making students believe that because openness doesn't feel right, it is dangerous. Conversely, an antiracist curriculum that intentionally attends to affect can help students more mindfully evaluate their affective responses—including fearful affect associated with writing. Developing affective openness can confer political, social, intellectual, and emotional benefits; it can also make students less afraid of writing. In this regard, the outcome of Ms. Grow's class was noteworthy: a statistically significant and substantively meaningful decrease in students' writing fear measured by the PANAS scale. Helping students become more confident writers is an important outcome, and we are excited to think what might happen in a classroom that combines difficult topics and affect-oriented teaching strategies with focused writing instruction.

The peril: Despite its positive potential, affect can manifest in ways that discourage openness and damage writing confidence. Teachers who encourage affect cannot fully predict or control its effect on learning. Exploiting affective resources always introduces risk, and those risks are elevated when teachers arouse affect in connection with an antiracist curriculum. White educators, especially, should carefully consider how their habitus blinds them to the full affective ecology of their classrooms. Teachers should try to imagine how students might experience planned activities and assignments. We encourage teachers to invite students to participate in designing pedagogical activities, assignments, and learning objectives. And we ask teachers to talk frankly and reflectively with students about pedagogical missteps and

learning activities that go awry. Sarah Stanley has argued that collaboratively reflecting on positive affective moments can build a sense of community in antiracist classrooms. We add that collaboratively reflecting on negative moments can also build community and increase a sense of affective safety.

Ms. Grow's class offers a pedagogical pattern that composition teachers can thoughtfully adapt for their own classrooms. Because writing is inherently affective, everything we teach—all writing knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions—has cognitive and affective entailments. Thus, attending to affect is always part of a writing teacher's job. Furthermore, writing teachers can harness affect to pursue antiracist objectives, and this, too, our field increasingly agrees, is a fundamental part of writing instruction. Ms. Grow's teaching illustrates the challenges of affective, antiracist teaching. While writing this article, we shared two drafts with Ms. Grow as a form of member checking. In response, Ms. Grow affirmed her commitment to antiracist and affective teaching and described her continuing efforts to learn about antiracist pedagogy. She said she now better understands how her identity limits what she can assume about students' experiences in and outside her classroom.

Early in this article, we cited scholars who assert the importance of understanding basic writers' literacy experiences *before* they acquire a Basic Writing label. Our research convinces us that this approach must include understanding students' affective histories with writing and specifically how they have experienced fear and openness while writing. Antiracist teaching that pays attention to affect—past and present—has the potential to create more inclusive and equitable attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, and no less importantly, antiracist teaching that pays attention to affect may improve writing confidence. When composition teachers address urgent contemporary problems with both rational and overtly affective teaching, students grow as thinkers, writers, and people.

Notes

1. *Perspective* is an *in vivo* code.
2. Because Ms. Grow only had one set of books for all her classes to share, students read both novels during class time.
3. Of the five students who contributed their journals to our study, the most prolific writer filled just five 6 x 9-inch pages. Appendix B summarizes page lengths of Ms. Grow's graded assignments.

4. Opinion pieces dealt with a variety of subjects unrelated to the antiracist curriculum—for example, cell phone use and the virtues of boredom.

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Appendix A: PANAS Survey Instrument

This scale consists of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each word and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you GENERALLY feel this way when you are writing—that is, how you feel ON AVERAGE when you are writing.

	Very slightly or not at all	A little	Moderately	Quite a bit	Extremely
Interested					
Distressed					
Excited					
Upset					
Strong					
Guilty					
Scared					
Hostile					
Enthusiastic					
Proud					
Irritable					
Alert					
Ashamed					
Inspired					
Nervous					
Determined					
Attentive					
Jittery					
Active					
Afraid					

Appendix B: Major Graded Witing Assignments (with Page Lengths) in Ms. Grow's Language Arts Class

Assignment	Average Length	Description
Short answer responses	2 paragraphs	Response to Kate Chopin's "The Story of an Hour"
Personal essay	1 paragraph	In-class essay responding to prompt, "What is your greatest regret?"
SAP research paper	1.25 double-spaced pages	Research-based paper responding to prompt, "What's in a label?"
SAP activist element	Various	Posters and video to educate student body about social justice issues
Reflection paper	1 page	Short answers to eight questions about students' experiences with the SAP
Reading responses (3)	1 page each	Summary and response to article of the week
Reading commentary	2.09 double-spaced pages	Analysis of and commentary on *The Hate U Give*

Appendix C: Research-Based Social Action Project (Abridged for Space)

UNIT'S ESSENTIAL QUESTION

What responsibilities do individuals have, whether teenagers or adults, of impacting society for the better within our individual communities?

ASSIGNMENT

Martin Luther King Jr. stated that "The time is always right to do what is right." If we do not do something to stand up and do what is right by those who suffer simply due to who they are as a person, we are inadvertently part of the problem. **The goal of this unit is to counteract a social injustice that is occurring. Your task is to 1) conduct research and 2) construct a social action project in order to create a positive impact on a community or an individual who is experiencing some form of injustice related to discrimination, racism, etc.**

GRADING

Your grade will be comprised of four different components, with each element weighted the same on the grade scale:

- The research (and artifacts of your research) of your theme/topic – 25%
- The group presentation of your theme/topic – 25%
- The direct action you take to make a difference to your community or to an individual (broken down into 3 levels) – 25%
- Your individual portfolio which contains your essay, research artifacts, and self-grade reflection – 25%

This research-based action project will determine the majority of your grade for third term. All four elements of the project must be completed in order to obtain a minimal passing grade for the project. Specific information will be given to you at a later time concerning the requirements of each element of the project and how they are broken down for an overall grade.

DIRECTIONS FOR SELF-REFLECTIVE ESSAY

1. What was the topic/theme for your group? Describe your social action project in detail—what did you and your group do?

2. Describe your group's process for this assignment, including the pre, during, and post steps that were taken to ensure success. How did you divide up the work? How was the execution of the project?

3. Tell me about one problem your group encountered while working on this project. Was it ever resolved? If so, how? If not, why?

4. How do you feel about your social action project? What parts of it do you particularly like? Why?

5. What would you change if you had a chance to do this over again?

6. What did you learn about yourself as you worked on this project?

7. Provide feedback on individuals within your group. For each person, respond briefly to the following:
    Did they contribute ideas?
    Were they civil and respectful to everyone involved?
    Did they fulfill their responsibilities to the group?

8. What grade would you give yourself, based upon your work ethic, performance, and reliability?