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Messages to and from Third Space: Communication between the Writing Studio and Classroom Teachers

> "*Studio articulation of thirdspace is built on communication.*"
> *(Grego and Thompson,* Teaching *200)*

THE WRITING STUDIO MODEL FOR TEACHING BASIC WRITERS WAS developed in 1992 by Nancy Thompson and Rhonda Grego. A supplemental instruction approach, Studio programs set up workshops as a means of increasing students' understanding of academic conventions. At the University of South Carolina, these groups worked on assignments from the students' First-year Composition courses. Students were usually grouped across classrooms. Each group was led by an experienced graduate student, usually one who believed in the Studio philosophy and who participated in action research on the site with other staff members. During my last three years of graduate school, I had the privilege of working at the University of South Carolina's Writing Studio. I served as its last Assistant Director.

Studio philosophy "moves beyond the usual text-focused needs of student writing to explore ways in which writing programs can address the psychic needs of students and teachers" by giving students a safe place to voice their feelings (Grego and Thompson, "Writing" 75). Thompson and Grego argue students who lack "language to express their struggles as part of the intellectual scene of the academy" use emotions like "anger, frustration, the desire for success, [and] silence" to express themselves ("Repositioning" 71). If these emotions, particularly the anger and resignation many Studio participants feel, go unvoiced or unnoticed, these students can be struck "with one approach and one set of expectations for themselves and for the writing instruction they will receive." Those expectations are rarely positive ("Writing" 71). Once voiced, the facilitator can use the Studio space to "[work] to do justice to the complexity of [the students'] problems and bring the 101 instructor into these deliberations," thus "[helping students] reposition themselves as productive learners and developing writers" (72).[1]

1. For a discussion of how this view of developmental writers has existed historically, see Mike Rose's "The Language of Exclusion" and Hull et al.

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The University of South Carolina's Studio was a remarkably successful program; from 1992 to 2001, at least eighty percent of students who regularly attended group meetings passed their First-year Composition courses, which either matched or slightly exceeded the passing rates of all students in the program ("Results"). Peter Elbow praised the Studio model as a "seemingly utopian approach" that has been "used with success" (90). Unfortunately, budget cuts forced Studio to merge with the Writing Center in the fall of 2002. Differences in program philosophy and required staffing by people not committed to the Studio lessened its effectiveness. Nancy and I decided to shut down the Studio at the end of that semester.[2] Fortunately, similar programs exist or are being planned at several other institutions, including Midlands Technical College, the University of California-Chico, the University of Arizona, and Miami University Middletown, making Studio one of the major national models for teaching basic writers (Lalicker). In April 2005, John Tassoni started a listserv to discuss theory and practice of the Studio model, and a Special Interest Group dedicated to the approach began meeting at The Conference on College Composition and Communication in 2007. These communities show the influence the model still possesses.

While I have not worked in a Studio since graduate school, I still believe strongly in its power to improve both a student's skill at and attitude toward writing. Part of this power comes from the unique space that Studio programs can occupy in academic hierarchies. Thompson and Grego state Studio is "a site within the institution which generates both the possibility and the willingness for reciprocal learning on the part of the institution, teachers, and students" ("Writing" 68). They use Third Space, a concept from cultural criticism, to describe this zone's characteristics. Edward Soja, drawing on bell hooks, defines Third Space as "a space of radical openness, a context from which to build communities of resistance and renewal" across traditional boundaries (84). For developmental writing students, these boundaries include elements that prevent them from becoming effective college writers, such as their background, skills, and attitudes. Gutierrez, Rymes, and Larson say that Third Space in classrooms is a "[context] in which various cultures, discourses, and knowledges are made available to all classroom participants, and thus become resources for mediating learning" (467).[3] By allowing participants to draw on this range of information, Studio Third Space increases the chance students will become flexible writers, aware of the range of choices available in any situation.

2. For a detailed history of the University of South Carolina's Writing Studio, see *Teaching/Writing in Thirdspaces: The Studio Approach*. The book's last chapter describes the Studio's last year in more detail than my current space allows.

3. Third Space does not seem to be the same thing as Robert Brooke's idea of underlife. Underlife, to him, involves how people "show that their identities are different from or more complex than the identities assigned to them by organizational structures" (230). While Third Space allows for this showing of multi-faceted identities, it exists outside of traditional spaces that can force people into enacting a particular identity.

The University of South Carolina's Studio group leaders communicated from Third Space using Dialogue Sheets. Originally photocopied forms before we switched to email, Dialogue Sheets summarized the student's work in a session. In the process, they "[passed] information about the students' life circumstances, writing/learning processes, and written products . . . that can help an instructor understand the difficulties the student might be having, as well as strengths . . . less likely to emerge as clearly in the larger class" than in Studio groups (Grego and Thompson, "Writing" 74).[4] After the summary, Dialogue Sheets generally ended with some version of this statement: "we hope to maintain a dialogue with you in order to improve the quality of student education we can offer. Please help us coordinate our efforts in the Studio with yours in class by responding—however briefly—either in writing or email." Through this request, Dialogue Sheets "invite 101 teachers to share in [an] . . . emerging critical consciousness of the complexities of student writers and their work" (Grego and Thompson, "Repositioning" 80). Essentially, "Dialogue Sheets [are] mediators: between Studio and English 101, between Studio leader and 101 instructor, between the student and the academy" ("Writing" 74). This essay analyzes some of these efforts at mediation, and the other messages they inspire, to show how The University of South Carolina's Studio used them to try to create a space that could benefit students.

Methodology

For this project, I gathered all available communication between Studio group leaders and classroom instructors written during fall 2000 and fall 2001. These communications were divided into three genres: Dialogue Sheets, instructor's responses to Dialogue Sheets, and group leader responses outside of Dialogue Sheets. This classification allowed me to study different approaches to communication into and out of Studio, as well as to trace chains of conversation between the group leader and instructor. Because I wanted to emphasize connections between Studio and the classroom, I selected for closer analysis only those Dialogue Sheets for which I had a copy of the instructor's response or in which the group leader explicitly referred to an instructor's response. This created a sample of ninety-six Dialogue Sheets (out of an initial pool of 335), eighty-six instructor responses, and twenty-eight group leader responses.

This focused sample included at least one Dialogue Sheet from all Studio group leaders during 2000 and 2001, except myself. Though I have a complete set of my Dialogue Sheets and most instructor responses to them, I excluded them so that the analysis would not skew towards elements I emphasized. I did include two responses I wrote about my own

4. In this essay, "instructor" refers to the classroom teacher. "Group leader" refers to the Studio staff member.

classroom students, who worked with other group leaders. Because of the inclusion of every other group leader, the analysis hints at the particular kinds of content emphasized by the entire staff as we created our Studio's space.

The set of group leader responses I found does not include all group leaders. I cannot tell whether this absence means some group leaders did not respond to instructors, that the responses were misfiled, or that some instructors did not write back. My sample also does not account for any communication outside of Studio records, such as hallway conversations. As a result, it is difficult to tell exactly how frequently this next level of communication occurred or whether the group leader or classroom instructor caused the break.

Despite the variety in these communications, they present only one side of the conversations in Studio, those between group leaders and instructors. Students, to my knowledge, were never given the opportunity to respond to Dialogue Sheets or instructor comments.[5] The student feedback surveys for fall 2001 did not include questions on the Dialogue Sheets. Unsurprisingly, no students discussed them in questions asking for a summary of a typical session and suggestions for improving Studio. Should my corpus have included these kinds of communication, the complexity of this space would have been further illuminated.

I coded the samples based on content, developing categories inductively through repeated readings of the documents, with modifications made as appropriate. The categories include requests for information, more detail on an assignment's goals, and discussions of student attitude. Each sample could, and usually did, contain multiple kinds of content. This focus on content means that the same content can appear in Dialogue Sheets, instructor responses, and group leader responses, though it may be used differently by each writer.

The next section of this essay discusses the most frequently seen varieties of content in Dialogue Sheets, classroom instructor responses, and group leader responses. While each genre contains some content the others do not, all show ways group leaders tried to create a space meant to help students grow as writers. This essay concludes by focusing on an extended exchange between an instructor and group leader that supported an at-risk student.

Analysis

The most frequently seen kind of content for both Dialogue Sheets (fifty-one examples) and instructor responses (thirty-two examples) conveyed information about the student's progress toward completing an assignment. In Dialogue Sheets, this information almost exclusively described students' actions during their session, both as the students worked on

5. Other Studio programs, such as Miami Middletown, do allow students to review or add to a report before it is sent to the instructor (Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson 83).

their own assignments and as they helped other group members.[6] The two samples below display this combined focus:

> [Taylor] had with him today the draft of his image analysis paper with your comments on it.[7] He put it under the [document camera] so we could all see it, and he read it aloud, along with your comments on the one paragraph he picked out for us to work on. He said he needed an introduction, needed to take a stand, and needed to make it clearer throughout. Though there was more than we could do in our 15 minutes, we did help him figure out how to describe the ad better as a more complete set-up for the analysis and critique. Your comments asking questions about the ad were a very good beginning point for us. I think by doing that he could see a stand he could take. We talked about the picture, its colors, the big lettering, the smaller lettering, and the bottle of whiskey—and how he could show the relationship among all of these elements.
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> * * * *
>
> Albert brought the assignment sheet for his rhetorical analysis to Studio yesterday, and we reviewed with him the several argumentative appeals as well as the introductory paragraph to Updike's essay on Mickey Mouse. Although Albert ultimately decided he was not very interested in Updike's essay, he did seem to comprehend the various appeals and listened closely to a fellow group member. That member pointed out an appeal to values where Albert had seen mostly facts and reasons. Albert returned the favor by making numerous suggestions and remarks on his groupmate's topic of public prayer.

The frequency of this type of content demonstrates the primary focus of Studio space. In it, the group leader is tasked to "[explicate] assignments not only in terms located within the assignment itself . . . but also by simultaneously opening up the external pentadic analysis of such assignment in the field-discipline of composition and rhetoric . . ., in terms of the history of the course at the institution, in terms of what the leader knows about the disciplinary background of the students' teachers, in terms of the history of such courses overall, and . . . in terms of his or her own experiences as a writer who has negotiated similar assignments or teachers" (Grego and Thompson, *Teaching* 95). These samples demonstrate these kinds of links, with both the group leader and other group members acting as the "we" named in the summaries.

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6. Three Dialogue Sheets discussed student needs as the group leader saw them, without prompting from the instructor.

7. All student, instructor, and group leader names in this essay are pseudonyms.

Taylor's group applied its knowledge of ad analysis essays—a common assignment in South Carolina's First-Year Composition program—to help Taylor create his essay. Taylor contributes his awareness of what he should work on. The instructor is also given a voice here, through the inclusion of his or her comments and through the group leader's validation of those comments. All of these elements should work together to help Taylor create a better essay. Similarly, Albert's peers point out other avenues for his analysis, as well as correcting his misunderstanding of terminology. He contributes his own experiences to help enrich his peer's argument. Helping each other gives students the opportunity to see how the concepts they learn in one class apply to others, an essential element of learning. Yet, creating a space for this transfer is hard "even inside the most pedagogically progressive classroom, since understanding contexts requires seeing the wide array of diverse and competing assignments, choices, and constraints, and listening to other students' and teachers' stories. In short, understanding 'place' requires a 'space' from which to view it that is both inside and outside its boundaries" (Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson 70). Studios are ideal for creating this kind of space.

"the opportunity to see how the concepts they learn in one class apply to others"

While much of the Dialogue Sheet's information in this category focused on the session, the type of information in instructor responses about students' work drew on classroom experience. The most common content in this category described the students' progress, or lack thereof, in class, usually in general terms. One instructor said that a student "does make useful contributions in class and . . . has made useful comments on his peer critique memos." Student progress on a specific assignment, such as saying the class had started discussing a new assignment or stating another "needed major help on his Rhetoric[al] Analysis paper," was the next most common type of content in this category, followed by student feedback on their experiences in Studio. This kind of information could be used to enrich the Studio space by including an additional level of information, as we saw in the earlier example with Taylor. His instructor's comments are integrated into the group's effort. Information on the students' classroom experiences also helps limit misunderstanding. Studio group leaders and members possessed a wide range of writing experiences, but they could not read minds. They could accidentally make suggestions that do not improve the draft or meet the instructor's expectations. They needed guidance from the classroom instructor to offer effective help.

The second and third most common kinds of content specific to Dialogue Sheets are

administrative. Twenty-one Dialogue Sheets contained general requests for information, primarily about whether a serially absent student was still required to attend Studio. Administrative needs of the Studio, such as reports that a student missed a session or questions about how Studio participation factored into the student's classroom grade, appeared twenty times. Administrative issues also appeared in instructor responses. Sixteen dealt with attendance; usually, the classroom instructor promised to remind a student about attending Studio. Instructors wanted to verify how often a student attended sessions or if Studio would meet before a holiday break. The most common type of content in responses to instructor responses, eleven, acknowledged and answered these questions.[8]

These communications, while necessary to maintain Studio's records, helped solidify the connection between Studio and the classroom. Studio's placement in Third Space positions it outside traditional academic structures. In an ideal world, this separation would offer students some freedom from traditional concerns like grades.[9] This separation, however, meant South Carolina's Studio could not use grades as a motivator. We depended on instructors to motivate students to attend Studio. Some instructors used quiz grades, while others factored Studio attendance into class participation. Other instructors used no grade motivator at all. This variation allowed Studio to mostly remain a safe space for students, since the group leader in charge of it lacked the power to directly punish students. Of course, reporting non-attendance can lead to penalties for the student. This, and similar, issues show that "Studio space is frankly not utopian at all." (Tassoni and Lewiecki-Wilson 88). It may just displace the punishment outside the group.

Another type of coordination between the Studio and the classroom appears in the fourth most common kind of content in Dialogue Sheets: emotional reactions group leaders observed that may affect a student's success in the course or Studio group. References to student attitude appeared in nine dialogues.[10] One group leader reported that "Evan seemed very uninterested [in the session] . . . and mostly repeated that he 'hates English.' I think he may be a little burned out and ready for a break." While this example shows a student's negative reaction, other Dialogue Sheets described positive emotions, such as when a student was happy he or she earned an "A" on an assignment.

These types of statements reflect the emphasis Studio philosophy places on expressing and examining emotional responses. They are definitely part of our classrooms; as Susan McLeod notes, "one does not have to watch freshmen at work to know that writing is an emo-

8. This category also appears in four dialogues and two instructor responses.

9. Students who participated in South Carolina's Studio could earn a Pass with Distinction, Pass, or Fail, primarily based on attendance. The instructor determined how this "grade" factored into the course.

10. A reference to student attitude also appeared in one instructor response.

tional as well as cognitive activity" (426).[11] Often, though, the academy rejects emotions as an appropriate mode of communication (Grego and Thompson, "Repositioning" 64). Sharing them in a classroom space can be risky. Many teachers would respond negatively to being told a student hates their course, and some, regretfully, would punish the student instead of determining what is actually causing the anger. In these cases, group leaders can translate these feelings because they "stand on a border that allows them to look one way into the mind-set of undergraduate students . . . or the other way into the added perspective and experience of an instructor or even a more advanced undergraduate" (Grego and Thompson, *Teaching* 131). They can see signs of burnout they themselves felt and point them out as a cause, not a personal conflict with instructors.

"teachers would respond negatively to being told a student hates their course"

Studio group leaders could attempt to provide a similar kind of emotional support when they described problems students faced completing an assignment.[12] One group leader reported that "Joan seemed to have some difficulties with this assignment but managed to make a few analytical observations." Another stated the group "let Gisele know that we could not tell from her [rhetorical analysis] essay what claim the author of her article had made." Students can quickly become frustrated with an assignment they do not understand, and this frustration can be hidden behind silence. As a result, teachers may not realize there has been a gap in communication. Studio space allows an instructor to hear, through an intermediary, how a student misinterpreted an assignment, with a lesser possibility of perceiving criticism of the instructor's teaching ability. The instructor then has a chance to respond through the group leader.

Many of the instructors in this sample took advantage of this opportunity. Twelve responses to Dialogue Sheets specified deadlines. Instructors clarified an assignment's goals in five cases. For example, an instructor who assigned a multi-genre collaborative paper used a response to explain how the different parts of the assignment, including the section a studio participant showed his group, should fit together. Five responses to group leader requests referred to questions or comments raised by group leaders about a specific student's

11. For a more recent example of how emotions can influence student writing, see Sally Chandler's "Fear, Teaching Composition, and Students' Discursive Choices: Re-thinking Connections between Emotions and College Student Writing."

12. These kinds of comments came both from Dialogue Sheets (4) and instructors (3).

work. In them, instructors reported things like a student's "proposal paper turned out well!" or that another "could make a concrete definition of the aims of medical science and show various ways that cloning conflicts with this [definition]." Some group leaders replied to these reports by outlining plans for the next session. One said he would "ask William about his new topic [which the group leader described] on Wednesday. Hopefully, we can get him moving in the right direction." That same group leader, talking about another student, said that "hopefully, in future sessions we'll discuss the necessity of substantial revision a little more."

Another sample of Studio space possibly offering emotional support appears in one of the most common kinds of content in Dialogue Sheets (thirteen examples): emphasis on student improvement. Early in my research, I expected this information would mostly appear in the student's final Dialogue Sheet. It reflected on the student's work throughout the year, making it a logical place to emphasize the students' strengths. However, closer analysis revealed this kind of content was provided during all four months of the semester, with the largest concentration in October. October was the first full month students participated in Studio, so perhaps group leaders saw more progress at a faster rate then. By informing instructors of this improvement, the group leader gives the instructor a chance to further encourage the student in class.

An Extended Conversation

Most of this essay has analyzed Dialogue Sheets and responses as isolated artifacts. However, Thompson and Grego hoped that Dialogue Sheets would begin a written conversation that extended throughout the semester, with ideas and issues recurring ("Writing" 74). My analysis suggests these conversations did sometimes occur, although I cannot definitively state how often or why they did not develop in some cases. When these conversations did occur, they had the potential to create a strong support network for students. To demonstrate this idea, I will focus on one chain. It was built by Kim, a Studio group leader for three years, and Betsy, an experienced graduate teaching assistant, as they worked with Scott, a student in Betsy's class. These exchanges show how group leaders and instructors can work together to help a struggling student.

Before presenting my analysis, I admit I knew both Kim and Betsy well. Kim had been on the Studio staff as long as me, and we frequently discussed the program's benefits. Conversations about teaching with Betsy led me to believe she was devoted to helping students. My experiences with them may have influenced my interpretation of their documents, though I have tried to limit claims to what can be supported by their texts.

The first move in this conversation, a Dialogue Sheet dated September 29, reports on

Scott's second Studio session. Most of it describes the group's work on Scott's essay analyzing the audience of the Declaration of Independence. Towards the end of the dialogue, Kim reports that "[Scott] admitted that he had written the essay in only a few minutes, and said that he wanted to rewrite it and turn in back in after he revised." Betsy's response—"This is not an essay that ordinarily can be revised. . . . But in Scott's case, I do want him to revise it."— clarifies her plans for Scott. In that same response, Betsy says, "I think he just needs extra time and attention and am a little worried about him, but I think we are doing all we can, and I believe he'll improve." By raising concerns about Scott's ability to pass the course, even though she cannot provide any specific evidence beyond her instincts, Betsy lets Kim know she should keep an eye on him. Studio's space allows for this kind of observation and intervention.

Kim refers to Betsy's goals for the Declaration of Independence assignment at the end of the next Dialogue Sheet, saying she will remind Scott to submit the revision. This comment concludes a report that Scott did not bring work from Betsy's class. However, he was still an active participant in Studio: "We did . . . discuss an essay he was working on in University 101. . . . Scott also participated in discussing other students' work." While Scott did not fulfill his obligations to Betsy's course, he still acted in a way that could help him grow as a writer and, as a result, succeed in her class. Betsy's response shows she accepts Kim's judgment: "I'm sorry he didn't have his Engl. [sic] work with him, but I'm glad he was an active participant."

Betsy's earlier concerns about Scott become more specific when Kim ends a Dialogue Sheet dated October 27 with a standard request: "Please continue to keep me updated about [Scott's] progress in your class." Betsy's response is one of the lengthier documents in the entire corpus:

> Scott is woefully behind on his papers. . . . He has turned in papers 2 and 3, but they are not complete, and I am going to have to give them back to him to revise before I can grade them.
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> I am having some serious doubts about whether he can pass this class. I have not said this to him, of course, because he hasn't turned in enough writing for me to say that officially. He cannot seem to get it together. . . . I told him I was willing to give him more time on deadlines because I knew he was working hard (benefit of the doubt psychology here) but that he needed to get moving on his work. . . . I think he has a learning disability—or some kind of problem with language because he is often unable to articulate an idea on paper or verbally. In class, when he tries to contribute, he sometimes says things that are on topic and understandable. But other times, I do not understand what he is saying or how it relates to what we're

talking about. Does this happen in sessions with you? There's always a certain amount of those kinds of remarks anyway—but this is a consistent pattern with him. Do you think he has a learning disability of some kind? If so, what should we do? It is a delicate issue.

Through outlining the problems Scott is having in class, Betsy makes concrete the concerns she raised in her response to the September 29th Dialogue Sheet and that Kim's later Dialogue Sheet, which describes his not bringing an English assignment to Studio, reinforced. She asks Kim for verification or more evidence, which Kim provides in the next Dialogue Sheet:

> I suspected Scott was behind. He couldn't seem to remember whether he had written papers two and three & what you said about them if he had. . . . Regarding the possible learning disability you mentioned, I'm not really sure. In Studio, it's not so much that he says things that are incomprehensible, but that he seems to be tremendously forgetful—perhaps that in itself has to do with a disability of some kind. For instance, this week he said that he did not have anything to work on. Then, with only ten minutes left to go, he remembered that he did, after all, have a disk with his 4th essay along. . . . I'm not really sure what to do with him (other than what we are doing, that is), especially if he does have a disability. Do you think I should talk with [the Writing Center director] about it?

Kim's response deals with the specific concerns Betsy raises by providing a different perspective based on Kim's experiences working with Scott. His difficulties could be more indicative of poor planning skills than a language-based learning disability, though the possibility remains in the discussion. To provide another form of help, she arranges to put Betsy in contact with a knowledgeable advisor. Studio, through its placement across spaces, allows making this connection easier.

"its placement across spaces, allows making this connection easier"

While I could not find the correspondence to or from the Writing Center director, Kim refers to it in a Dialogue Sheet dated November 6: "As you have probably surmised from [the Writing Center director's] email, I brought our concerns about Scott to her attention. Let me know if he does in fact become part of the Academic Skills program. . . . He also said that he was afraid to ask you about his second and third papers—I suggested that he do so anyway so that he could get back on the right track." This comment may be meant to encourage Betsy to continue reaching out to Scott, even though he is scared to ask her for help in the classroom. Studio, as discussed earlier, is designed as a space where emo-

tions, including fear of failure, can be voiced without censure. By making these fears, possibly not mentioned in class, obvious to Betsy without casting blame, Kim gives Betsy a chance to deal with them.

While Kim tries to reassure Scott, she seems unable to overcome his fears. He did not attend his last two Studio sessions. Betsy reports that Scott's classroom attendance became erratic. Despite his disappearance, Kim continues to ask about Scott's progress in class and offering more help.

Scott's story has a semi-happy ending. Betsy arranged for him to withdraw from her class without penalty, as long as he worked with the Academic Skills program. While he did not complete Betsy's class, Kim's final Dialogue Sheet on Scott emphasizes the positive steps, how ever small, he made in order to earn a Pass in Studio: "When he showed, he participated fully, although he often seemed hesitant about working on his own writing." When Betsy asked permission to relay this "grade" to Scott, "because it would boost his ego," Kim agrees and restates that "I enjoyed working with him." As this last statement and Kim's other actions show, Studio remains a supportive space for Scott.

This chain of dialogues and responses allowed the possibility for an at-risk student to continue gaining support even after he seems to have given up. In my experience, at-risk students frequently respond to the difficulties in the classroom by disappearing and refusing to contact the instructor, just like Scott at the semester's end. The instructor is forced to fail them. Given the level of concern Betsy shows, she seems to want to avoid this outcome. While she thinks she knows how to help him, she wants to gather enough evidence to make an accurate decision. Kim's Dialogue Sheets and other written communications provide it. If Betsy were a less experienced teacher, Kim's recommendations for support services could be essential. Inexperienced teachers may not know they exist or understand how to refer students to them.

"dialogues and responses allowed the possibility for an at-risk student to continue gaining support even after he seems to have given up"

In addition, Kim continually points out Scott's strengths, such as his willingness to help other group members. This information shows Scott is not necessarily a student with a bad attitude. This view may not be borne out in his classroom actions, where he demonstrates block-

ing behaviors like not submitting work. In other situations, such as with a less experienced or understanding teacher, this information from the Studio group leader could create a more complete view of the student. In this case, both instructor and group leader want to help Scott, and these conversations give them a chance to support him as well as each other.

Admittedly, Scott must retake the course. His path to graduation is delayed. I feel, however, he has a better chance of graduating because Kim and Betsy were able to work together to get him the help he needed, a connection Studio space could facilitate. Instead of failure here, he only faces a temporary delay.

Conclusion

The chain of conversation I just analyzed demonstrates some of the ways that communication out of and into The University of South Carolina Studio's Third Space could create unique opportunities for supporting students. In an earlier version, this essay closed by calling for more of this kind of communication in other supplemental instruction environments. While I still believe it can be useful, I do not have the data to argue it always benefits students. That belief assumes an idealistic view of behavior, where instructors and group leaders act in the best interest of students without applying inappropriate coercion. It also assumes classroom instructors and group leaders will be professional enough to respond to the cause of negative emotions without using them as a rationale for punishing a student. Most importantly, my data does not include unfiltered student voices, which could show whether these efforts were actually seen as helpful. Other researchers, looking at other sites, would need to determine whether the utopian attitude implied in this essay is appropriate for these kind of communications.

Arguing for increased communication between classroom instructors and supplemental instructors at all sites also violates one of Studio's basic tenets. Thompson and Grego "developed 'Studio' as a writing program model that provides a highly adaptable approach" (Teaching 7). It specifies principles, not procedures. Because Third Space can be influenced by the spaces around it, Studio programs at other schools may need to make different decisions about how to connect, or not connect, their space to traditional academic structures. In places where grades may be extremely punitive, no communication may be appropriate in order to keep the space safe. Instructors who are sensitive to criticism should probably not be informed a student hates their course. Perhaps all this research can really show is how we at the University of South Carolina attempted to shape our Studio space through communicating with people outside of it, using strategies that other programs can consider.[13]

13. An earlier version of this essay was presented at the Fifth Thomas R. Watson Conference and appeared in the conference proceedings. I would like to thank the editors of those proceedings for their feedback and for their permission to republish. I would also like to thank the editors and anonymous reviewers of *Open Words* for their feedback.

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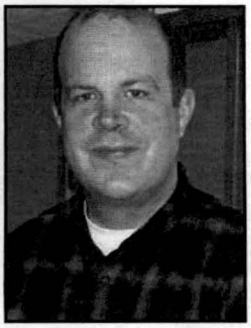

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