OPEN WORDS: ACCESS AND ENGLISH STUDIES
Volume 9, Number 2 (Spring 2016)

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Open Words: Access and English Studies is dedicated to publishing articles focusing on political, professional, and pedagogical issues related to teaching composition, rhetoric, reading, creative writing, ESL, and literature to open-admissions and "nonmainstream" student populations. We seek original scholarship in areas such as instructional strategies, cultural studies, critical theory, classroom materials, technological innovation, institutional critique, student services, program development, etc., that assist educators, administrators, and student support personnel who work with students in pedagogically difficult settings. Articles should consider the particularities of context—issues, for example, surrounding the identifier of "open access," intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability, regional and cultural differences, and the range of competencies students bring with them to classrooms—in conjunction with the goal of English studies to empower students' critical and creative endeavors. We value works pertinent to specialists yet accessible to non-specialists, and we encourage submissions that take into account what interactions with students teach us about the broader, democratic goals of open-access education and English studies.

Open Words is an established journal, which began in 2007, and has produced at least one issue a year since then with the support of Pearson. John Tassoni and Bill Thelin served as the previous senior editors. In 2016, the journal was handed over to Sue Hum, who brought on two additional co-editors, Kristina Gutierrez and Yndalecio Isaac Hinojosa. The work of producing an annual issue—reviewing submissions, identifying reviewers, sending manuscripts out for peer review, working closely with authors on revisions, creating proofs, and making copyedit corrections—is handled by the three senior editors. The first issue under their editorial leadership was published on March 13, 2017.

In 2019, the new editorial team transitioned the journal away from Pearson and to the WAC Clearinghouse for ongoing support and as the venue for publication. The open-access approach of the WAC Clearinghouse aligned with the philosophy of Open Words as an open-access journal with goals to cultivate a robust and dynamic body of scholarship on issues of access in higher education institutions and within communities. By addressing issues related to class, this journal has been historically a part of the CCC Working Class, Culture, and Pedagogy Working Group with a target audience that includes scholar-teachers and practitioners in rhetoric and composition, education, and affiliated disciplines who want to read critical discussions about issues of access. The scholarship published by Open Words complements the scholarship highlighting issues of access in other Clearinghouse journals, such as *The Journal of Basic Writing* and *The WAC Journal.*

Available on the web at wac.colostate.edu/openwords.

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Editor's Introduction: The Need for Critical Pedagogy

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It is typical in journal introductions for the editors to find commonality among the articles they have placed together in any given volume—a thread that unites what otherwise might appear to be disparate issues in our field. I must confess that I struggled to uncover a theme among the four articles in this issue. The title for this introduction has changed numerous times, and I deleted a previous draft called "Our Outsides Are Inside" in its entirety, something I rarely do, as I thought my words about our differing professional identities seemed too trite. Every attempt felt forced. One particular thread I abandoned covered three of the articles fairly well but did not fit the fourth one unless I really twisted what the author meant. The focus of another attempt I made could have applied to just about any group of articles for any journal, so I stopped writing so as not to be too generic.

So I asked myself, "Why adhere to convention?" *Open Words* in many respects has disregarded convention in some of the articles we have published. At its inception, we did not want to be just another journal. We felt a need for the instructors of open-admissions students and other marginalized populations to have a voice in academia. *Open Words* would be the forum for discussions that might be deemed unpopular in some corners, maybe not theoretical enough for some or perhaps catering to the needs of practitioners over those of professors. We wanted an attitude. I think over ten years, we have achieved that. I decided, then, to write about an issue that has bothered me for years concerning critical pedagogy and open-admissions students, an issue that the four articles made me think about even if the direct connection is weak. I do not want to ignore the particulars of the articles you will read in these pages, but I felt like setting a tone that, ultimately, will unite what you read in ways better than my previous feeble attempts.

Too often, critical pedagogy has been mischaracterized as the imposition of a political ideology onto students. I will not review the literature here, as I am more interested in the lore that has surfaced over the years—the seemingly common sense concerns instructors introduce when the subject is discussed, whether in hallways or conference panels or graduate seminars. Instructors will state that students need to

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learn the basics of writing first before we start having them write on political topics. Instructors also feel they are in the classroom to teach writing, not to preach about politics. Further, instructors worry that exposing students to the overwhelming obstacles in front of them, those obstacles that reveal themselves in political discussions concerning ideology and economics, will discourage the students from learning to write and achieving their goals. Yes, I have heard these complaints over and over again. Let me assert here, then, that critical pedagogy is not about forcing politics on students. It is not pro and con debates on current social issues. It is not about criticizing conservatives and Republicans. Rather, critical pedagogy authorizes students to explore the ideologies surrounding them, especially as those ideologies influence, often unknowingly, decisions they make and the culture around them. It embeds the personal into the social. It helps students examine and re-examine the ordinary in society, sometimes to show just how extraordinary it is. But the teaching is handled with an ethic of care, one that sees students as knowledge-makers, not as passive recipients of teaching.

I want to differentiate here between political recognition and political imposition. The former is simply unveiling the ideology underlying discourses our students enter into, merging the personal with the social, ethnic, and economic culture surrounding them. The latter should be avoided and is not part of critical pedagogy. I admit that confusion can occur when making assignments and responding to student papers, especially if the instructor is young and enthusiastic. Lines obviously have been crossed when instructors try to help students wrestle with perspectives with which they are not familiar. But such negative intervention happens in many reading and writing classes. Asking for more detail in a personal narrative, for example, can lead the student to adding descriptions or scenes that have been fabricated, producing a false discourse to please the teacher. I need not mention the many students who simply copy an instructor's interpretation in papers written for literature classes. Our well-intentioned interventions sometimes put our students in difficult positions. That's not unique to critical pedagogy. And it is not unique to at-risk students, either.

Many critics of critical pedagogy question some of the classroom practices associated with it. In critical pedagogy, students should be the co-creators of assignments. The instructor's authority should be shared responsibly with students, whether it be for producing grading contracts, legitimizing nonstandard dialects, or allowing for true student leadership in dialogues. The students' interests and concerns should be frontloaded and the instructor's backloaded (not ignored, as some critics claim). Many of these practices are not dissimilar to calls in the early years of our field for "student-centered curriculum," but too many of those attempts began and ended with sitting in a circle, letting students write about personal experiences, and workshopping papers. Critical pedagogues believe students need to gain control of their education in more demanding ways. These methods produce the very empowerment so many instructors talk about.

Yet, lore tells us that far too many students are not ready for that type of responsibility, that they will sabotage their own education. I cannot recall how many instructors have told me that these ideas are not practical for contemporary students, that they are too immature and need to learn self-discipline before they earn this type of responsibility. My response is "When?" When will this maturity magically occur if they are never given the opportunity to experiment with responsibility? An instructor is not relinquishing power, nor is she or he freeing students to do what they want. Rather, a critical pedagogue demands more of students in this pedagogy. Will students try to undermine the classroom? They sometimes will. But again, that happens to differing extents in just about every classroom. Instructors always complain about students not following instructions, having attendance problems, missing deadlines, not listening in class, being unprepared (especially when reading is required), or resisting learning. Critical pedagogy does not cure these problems for students. But when critical pedagogues invest students in the classroom, the students do have more incentive to improve studenting habits.

Graduate students tell me that some professors urge them not to adopt a critical pedagogy. The reasons vary, but I will focus here on two that have been repeated to me during my stay at my current institution. Apparently, lore informs our field that critical pedagogy is masculinist. I have a difficult time understanding this, as the typical view of the professor lecturing to students and they imbibing on his or her wisdom is a masculinist conception of teaching. The practices I outlined above are more in keeping with a feminist approach to the classroom. I would hope that those labeling critical pedagogy as masculinist are not associating politics with men and the personal or familial with women. Such gender stereotypes would offend me. Such separations of the personal from the political have been critiqued thoroughly in feminist literature. When I have asked for clarification from graduate students, the responses I have received back surprised me. Apparently, graduate students in my department have been told that young women lack the cultural capital to enact a critical pedagogy. I have never heard such nonsense, but it has gone unchallenged, finding its way into some conference presentations I have heard. Such is the way of lore.

Where would I begin to unravel the sexist notions behind such critiques? Authority in the classroom is determined by presence. Yes, such matters as age, garb, height, race, demeanor, and appearance impact how students might perceive an instructor. Certainly, women in our society are judged more by their looks than men, and I am not arguing here that female graduate students do not contend with additional challenges due to the complications that the prevalent misogyny and sexism in our country introduce into the classroom. But graduate students, whether male, female, or transgender, face the imposter syndrome, especially the first time that they teach. They fear that their lack of rhetorical knowledge regarding writing and their inexperience in leading a classroom might be exposed, subjecting them to ridicule. I ask, why pretend to knowledge and experience that they do not have? Rather, why not share authority

right away, letting students choose collective topics to write about, making their collective problems with and critiques of society topics of classroom discourse, and exploring with them the nuances of rhetoric and productive ways to complete writing tasks? I call this the co-creation of knowledge in a non-hierarchical pedagogy. As with all pedagogies, problems occur in implementing it. Things do not always go as planned. In a volume my co-editor John Tassoni and I edited, we referred to this as "blundering" when applied to critical pedagogy. We argued that much can be gained through examining the forces that impact teaching when mistakes unfold. Perhaps they are not even mistakes but different ways of learning. In any case, incidents that impede student learning happen in any pedagogy. The risk that a student might challenge the authority of a young woman new to teaching is the same whether she is teaching traditionally or radically. The only difference is that in a critical pedagogy, the graduate student is being honest. The imposter syndrome fades when an instructor shares the power in the classroom. Hell, she and the students could even make the topic of authority an assignment if it becomes an issue worthy of their study.

Perhaps most unnerving for me—and most relevant to this journal—is the mindset that critical pedagogy harms working-class and otherwise at-risk student populations, that it is over their heads and discourages them from writing. From the discourse I have heard, some of it very prevalent on the WPA-L listserv, I gather that lore suggests that these student populations should engage in the writing of narratives to the exclusion of civic-minded discourses, that the substance of their writing should go unchallenged in deference to pragmatic concerns of presentation and order. Some truth exists in the belief that working-class students need to have their experiences validated in what is otherwise a very strange environment for them of academia. Yet, I see this differently. Education has not served the interests of marginalized populations. We know through studies that K-12 curriculum and delivery leave many at-risk students unprepared for college. Perhaps writing narratives that center on lessons they've learned or other matters does comfort these students in their transition to college. But is comfort our goal? It seems to me we further their lack of preparedness by not merging personal concerns with societal and cultural concerns—the type of concerns on which their other general education courses will focus. Further, I cannot see a reason to give students more of the same type of teaching that has marginalized them. Yes, they might not have written personal experience essays before. Perhaps that is different for them. But through unilateral curriculum and syllabi, we domesticate them, not educate them. They do not have a chance to invest themselves in their education.

I have found that critical pedagogy is crucial for the at-risk student populations we teach. I have experimented with critical pedagogy with Honors students and graduate students. They tend to already be invested in their learning, so some of the practices are unnecessary. At-risk populations are not invested. They come to college campuses hoping to improve their life chances. Often, their goals are fuzzy. We do

them little good if we do not combine their individual hopes for success with societal critique. We have a chance to empower their learning if we grant them authority to make decisions and to see what helps them learn and what hinders it. We cannot solve all of the problems they have. These students work too much. Some of them indulge in unhealthy lifestyles to mediate the misery they experience in a culture that deprives them of opportunities. Some have to take care of children or elderly relatives. Most do not like school. But we have a chance to reach them if we start doing education differently.

A critical pedagogue must be an informed pedagogue. As I think about this issue, I see so much in this issue of *Open Words* that might facilitate understandings that would go into a critical pedagogy. In an engaging collaboration, Paul Butler and his graduate students look into the ways knowledge is created in Composition Studies, using and critiquing Stephen North's classifications to reach important understandings about tensions within the field (our editorial work with this article prompted me again to think of North's conception of "lore," which inspired my use of it in this introduction). Sherrie Gradin's "Can You See Me Now? Rural Queer Archives and a Call to Action" blends her personal experience and observations with the queer scholarship in composition, focusing on the visibility/invisibility of queer discourse, especially in rural settings. Rebecca Hallman's contribution to this issue examines writing-center terminology and its impact on the mission and identity of the writing center. Finally, Cristina Migliaccio's article on translingualism examines the writing environments working-class students encounter in school, looking for ways that digital environments can enable critical discourse for this population. In all, these authors extend conversations in the field, enriching our perspectives and giving critical pedagogues some things to ponder.

This introduction would not be complete if I did not bid farewell for John and I to our readership. After ten years at the helm, we felt *Open Words* would be strengthened with new leadership. We will be turning over control to a new editorial team, starting with the next issue. John and I will still be involved with *Open Words* in some capacity, probably as editorial board members, but our goal is to ensure the vibrancy of the project, which will best be served with fresh eyes to guide it. John and I have enjoyed our time as co-editors. We hope we have impacted the professional conversation about the teaching of at-risk students.

—William Thelin

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Remixing the House of Lore: Theory, Practice, and the New Graduate Scholar

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Introduction: Why North? Why Now? Remixing the Legacy of *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*

Paul: Since its publication in 1987, Stephen M. North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field (MKC)* has acquired an unlikely disciplinary identity: as a lightning rod for controversy and debate surrounding, among other things, the methodological communities the author creates and his concept of "lore." In a 1988 book review, David Bartholomae calls *MKC* "the imperialist's vision of the native," or teacher, one both "odious" and "untrue," and he critiques what he says is North's reduction of the field to "class war, with 'practitioners' as the working class, 'scholars' as the alienated intellectual class, and 'researchers' as the rising bourgeoisie" (224). In *The*

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Harvard Educational Review, William Irmscher problematizes the same theory-practice dichotomy when he claims that "[w]hat [North] does not say is that practitioners can get along without the researcher in the daily task of teaching, but the researcher is less likely to be able to get along without the practitioner" (515).

The relationship—and tension—between theory and practice, researcher and practitioner, come into focus in *MKC* through North's concept of "lore," which he defines as "the accumulated body of traditions, practices, and beliefs in terms of which Practitioners understand how writing is done, learned, and taught" (22). How does North's metaphor of a "House of Lore," which Irmscher calls a "sprawling old manse" built on individual and communal knowledge (513), square with the knowledge created by theory and research in a once-emerging discipline? Asked differently, how does the role of "Practitioner," and his or her contribution to the making of knowledge, fit with the other methodological communities in North's taxonomy, such as historian, ethnographer, critic, clinician, and experimentalist, among others?

That question is central to the tension underlying North's book, and it is a question that has endured in the years since its publication. In fact, it is perhaps the main question Patricia Harkin asks in "The Postdisciplinary Politics of Lore," one of her three articles responding to *MKC*. Labeling practitioner lore "postdisciplinary," meaning that because lore is not "disciplinary," per se, it "adapts" and its "strategies do travel to other [nondisciplinary] situations," Harkin goes on to state, "Lore, then, *is* theory" (134; emphasis added). For Harkin, that is to say, lore is theory in at least some circumstances, including "[w]hen, through a process of informed intuition, practitioners do what works" (134). In his review of North's book, James Raymond sounds a concordant note, arguing that "practice, even practice expressed in a textbook, can be a theoretical statement" (94). Similarly, in trying to discover the role of lore in teachers' knowledge, Louise Wetherbee Phelps asks, "What, then, does practice offer theory" (883)? Her answer, complicating North's notion of lore in important ways, is that "*practitioners provide theory with interpretation, criticism, testing, adaptive strategies, refinement*" (884; emphasis hers).

The way in which practice and theory are interanimated in composition studies today is also taken up in Lance Massey and Richard C. Gebhardt's 2011 *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*, described by the editors as "a collection that uses North's book as a framing context within which to explore the methodological, theoretical, and institutional currents of composition's recent evolution and to anticipate future developments for the field" (1). In "The Epistemic Paradoxes of 'Lore': From *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* to the Present (Almost)," an important article from Massey and Gebhardt's volume, Richard Fulkerson helps illuminate the theory-lore relationship by showing the ways in which the two are interconnected through narrative and observation, shared qualities, he argues, of both practitioner lore and research-driven ethnography:

> Although contemporary empirical research, being qualitative, resists

> making either value judgment or procedural recommendation, it shares with lore the fundamentally narrative and observational grounding for its work. That is, both lorists and ethnographers mostly tell stories. (60)

Clearly, those *stories*, as well as the apparent dichotomy between practice and theory, impressed the graduate students in a recent seminar I taught on research in the field of composition studies. The class examined not only past but *current* discussions of North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, including the Massey and Gebhardt collection. Ironically, despite the importance of MKC to new scholars entering the discipline, North makes little mention of graduate students, a "community" at the very heart of the study of writing theory and practice, both then and now. What's more, even Massey and Gebhardt's recent *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition*, which revisits and updates North's ideas, also excludes the voices and stories of graduate students entering the field.

In both instances, that omission is significant, a claim Irmscher seems to acknowledge when he writes that aspects of North's text are invaluable to "graduate students interested in composition as a specialization" (515). Graduate students occupy a liminal status in rhetoric and composition. Before entering doctoral programs, many have taught as adjunct instructors or high school teachers, tutored in writing centers, or worked as professional writers or editors. Now, through their studies, they are inculcated in the *theory* of the discipline—reading, writing, and translating knowledge—even as they bring North's practitioner *lore* to their own classrooms, always aware, as Harkin points out, that "[w]e should not accept lore uncritically" (135). Thus their perspective on North's book is unique, for they have often created their own lore, or seen it enacted by others; at the same time, they have read about and discussed theories in seminars in which the notion of lore is sometimes ignored or regarded with suspicion or disdain. The result is a unique way of looking at theory and practice together, of "remixing," if you will, the House of Lore in ways that yield a critical new understanding of methodology.

I have seen this new understanding at work in graduate students' observations of composition classrooms—their written accounts of observing fellow classroom teachers as an assignment in my Teaching College Composition course. In those observations, the theory and practice, research and lore, come together, and graduate scholars are able to see the ideas they have read about at work—how they play out practically in college classrooms. They wonder why a theory of teaching writing seems to succeed in one classroom, but not another. They observe a teaching practice at work and ask if there is theory, or research, to support it. Thus they discover that theory and lore, North's "Practitioner" and "Clinician"—or "Critic," "Historian" or "Philosopher"—are inextricably linked. One informs the other, cannot exist without the other. Theory and practice, scholarship and lore, are joined together in important methodological ways.

What is fascinating about the roles graduate students occupy is that they are

developing, in Harkin's words, "strategies that use the power of lore, that have a reasonable chance of earning the academy's institutionalized respect" (135). They begin with North's categories—Practitioner-Experimentalist, say, or Historian—but then collapse them, expand them, reconceptualize them, introducing their own narratives—new ways of thinking about the field that make new knowledge for composition in the twenty-first century. They are working within and outside the boundaries North imposes, each of them mixing the methods of practitioners, on the one hand, and scholar, researcher, theorist, on the other. What is the result? The constant upheaval shows that knowledge is, indeed, always being made, and the making of knowledge goes in several different directions: it moves across theory and practice, across institutional lines, into the technological realm that encompasses diverse sites of investigation. These new scholar-practitioner-lorists have refused to be categorized or classified, moving into the very heart of disciplinary practice, breaking new ground in composition studies.

As practitioners, they recognize the value of the lore they create, the narratives they implicitly write, along with their students, their colleagues, their teachers, and their mentors. They see it as lore redrawn, retheorized, remixed, through the knowledge they gain every day not only inside but outside the classroom. The lore comes from hours poring over papers at the local coffeehouse, from the individual or group conferences they hold with their students, informed by Janet Emig, Mina Shaughnessy, David Bartholomae, George Hillocks, Richard Straub, and, of course, Stephen North. The ideas move backward and forward, in and out of the theory-practice they are developing as they research, write, teach, read, and think.

In *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*, Massey and Gebhardt speculate about how North's text will be approached upon its fiftieth anniversary (roughly twenty years hence), saying they expect to see less change in the field at that time "unless another book comes on the scene to attract and/or irritate scholars the way *MKC* did" (9). The editors question whether North's book will still be part of the scholarly and professional conversation in the year 2037—"included in graduate syllabi and works-cited lists, for instance"—and they respond, "We expect it to be, both as a representative of an ambitious effort to develop a view of the composition scholarship of its day and as a part of—and stimulus to—the growth of our field over the decades that followed" (9). As Massey and Gebhardt's important collection shows, and as North's reception among my graduate students demonstrates, *MKC* has had a critical influence on the field, and the continuing relevance of the text shows no sign of abating in the next two decades.

My students' reading of North's book also shows me, as scholar and practitioner, the value of refusing to accept any imposed taxonomies or prescribed ideas. Theory and practice, scholarship and lore, are dynamic and evolving, informing each other in ways that create unexpected forms of knowledge in the world. The graduate students' individual responses to North's text, and to the scholarly reception

it received, are featured below in their own stories of how they mix—and remix—theory and practice, scholarship and lore, the role of practitioner and historian or experimentalist or critic, to "make knowledge" in every aspect of their research and teaching. That knowledge, in its many iterations, suggests the future of the field—and it is an exciting future for all of us.

The Value of Context: Remixing North's Practitioner and Historian in a Scholarly Identity

Maurice: When I first began teaching writing as an undergraduate at Florida A&M University, a historically black college or university (HBCU), I'd had no formal teaching preparation. Instead, I modeled my practice after Mr. H (my composition instructor of two semesters and, like myself, a person of color). I often queried Mr. H about what he did in the classroom and why he did it, and the knowledge I gained from those discussions with him influenced my development as a writer as well as my pedagogy and teaching philosophy. I was not only his student assistant but his protégé, of sorts, as he shared with me the writing habits and patterns of error he frequently encountered in the writing of his mostly black students—students who entered college from disadvantaged economic and academic backgrounds not dissimilar to my own. I spent the summers during high school as a writing tutor for struggling minority students in the Chicago Public School system. I had always strived to improve my own writing, but it was during this time that I committed myself to a lifetime of helping other student writers improve theirs.

Naturally, I was especially interested in understanding the best practices for teaching other minority students to write well. I wanted to help these students understand the expectations of writing in college, expectations for which I felt unprepared, particularly as I entered first-year writing courses as a non-traditional learner informed largely by my military writing experiences with the army writing style—with standards that include using short words, short sentences (15 or fewer words), short paragraphs (no more than 10 lines), and one-page letters and memorandums for most correspondence, as outlined in Army Regulation 25-50, *Preparing and Managing Correspondence*. However, Mr. H, also an army veteran, helped me to realize how the writing requirements in one institution naturally segue to writing in other institutional contexts, where concise, grammatically correct writing is emphasized. He taught me an important lesson about teaching writing: that my experiences with writing in the army and in the HBCU demand and require that I adapt my writing skills and, subsequently, my teaching techniques to different contexts. Ultimately, I am, quite naturally, at odds with any taxonomy that fails to consider how the conditions that shaped me as a writer (and subsequently as a writing teacher) matter to the field of composition.

I think North's *MKC* largely ignores the contexts that shape practitioners' lore, and I find that omission serious—and unfortunate. As Victor Villanueva indicates in

his *Changing of Knowledge* chapter, "Rhetoric, Racism, and the Remaking of Knowledge-Making in Composition," North "never quite gets…to the realization that there are biases at play—…never gets to acknowledge, or maybe even realize, the biases in his gaze" (122). While I do agree that "the nature of structural racism…allows one to ignore the bigotry that nevertheless obtains," I would not suggest that such omissions in *MKC* make North structurally a "bigot" but, rather, as Villanueva concedes, "a victim of his time," insofar as *MKC* is unable to fully appreciate the conditions that shaped my learning, my understanding, my knowledge—knowledge that is my contribution to the field (Massey and Gebhardt 123, 124). The basis of my knowledge, then, is informed by "lore," as North suggests, but I make no apologies for "lore," as it continued to form the basis of my practice and scholarship in my subsequent writing instruction experiences with the diverse student population at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and the predominantly white, male students at the US Military Academy at West Point—writing contexts for which scholarship alone could not adequately prepare me. Louise Wetherbee Phelps discusses the importance of North's study to a newly developed writing program at Syracuse University, and when I apply *MKC* to my own diverse teaching contexts, North's work, still relevant today, offers "a concept of lore that became a provocative and fertile focus for…thinking about teachers' knowledge" (868).

The various writing contexts I inhabit—and the lore that inhabits them—have shaped my role as a writing Practitioner, and, in keeping with North's taxonomy, as a Historian. I am drawn to composition as a historian because, as North tells us, "[history's] internal structure is a familiar and comfortable one: a narrative, a kind of story" (69). My story is filled with narratives, with stories wrought from lore, from practice, from a deeply personal background. Yet my role as historian departs from North in at least one important respect: unlike what he characterizes as "Composition's Historian inquiry" (77), which signals linear movement, my work, and my approaches, are not dependent, as he claims, on "some notion of 'progress'" or a pattern that moves "from the bad toward the good" (77). Indeed, my history is counter-history—my story, counter-narrative, the antithesis of linear, or inevitable, progress.

Beyond North's "Frontier Settlement": Remapping Lore through the Porous Boundaries of Practitioner, Critic, and Researcher

Nidhi: I had never planned on becoming a teacher, and the fact that it happened was entirely serendipitous. I began as an illustrator with training in design, but the unexpected happened when, shortly after graduating, my alma mater, the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT) in New Delhi, invited me back to teach in the Department of Design. NIFT had a state-of-the-art design education, but being a pioneering design institute that was just twelve years old at the time, it had no established pedagogical programs to train its new crop of designers who were, for most part, inexperienced

teachers. Faced with this situation and no other recourse, I initially developed a customized pedagogy fashioned from my experiences as a student. I identified and imitated the techniques, methods, skills, even the mannerisms of my former teachers, especially those I recalled as being popular among my fellow classmates, such as starting with theory before demonstrating practical illustration techniques. Simultaneously, and as importantly, I mentally documented and avoided all aspects of their teaching unpopular among us when we were students. A few of those aspects included assuming we were familiar with obscure historical concepts no longer in vogue or spewing a list of French terms like "haute couture" without explaining what they meant.

By supplementing my experiences, both as a former student and as a teacher, I gradually enriched my own pedagogical practices, which I shared with my junior colleagues on several occasions. I had, oblivious to North's formal definition of Practitioner Lore, created and disseminated my own "accumulated body of traditions, practices, and beliefs" that add up to the way teachers understand "how teaching is done" (North 22). I based my pedagogical practices on this lore for almost a decade and sought no other means to teach because to me lore was and remained legitimate pedagogical knowledge.

This is why North's idea of the "House of Lore" "as a 'very rich and powerful [body] of knowledge'" resonates with me (27). North's attempt to name and, therefore, define lore in terms of its past and present in *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*, gives lore and Practitioners a chance for a legitimate scholarly future, on par with other disciplines. As Patricia Harkin explains, in a nod to the ongoing importance of North's ideas in *MKC*, practitioners "evoke disciplinary language, not to produce knowledge, but to solve a problem. Lore, in this context, elides without denying the opposition between theory and practice" (134).

That being said, it is hard to extend the same support to North's taxonomy and definitions of various methodological communities, especially of the Critic. According to North, the critic is someone who establishes a canon of texts, interprets them, and develops theories about these texts and their interpretation. North states that the critic's methodology, one commonly used in literature, is limited in Composition to what he calls "little more than a frontier settlement" (116). North's definition of the very role of the critic is problematic when applied to Composition Studies, because writing is not restricted to "hermeneutics," or interpretation, and any pedagogy based strictly on such a methodology is practically unsustainable in the reality of the fluid composition classroom.

Several scholars have repeatedly, and in various contexts, mentioned the "map" that North attempts to create, and, to me, the term "frontier settlement" brings up another vivid cartographical image similar to North's description of Composition. This cartographical imagery problematizes the definition of Critic because, as illustrated by Lance Massey in "The (Dis)Order of Composition," North's "realist landscape" is one in constant transition and, hence, without definite frontiers. North

also acknowledges that the topography of Composition is "pulling-apart," or as Massey writes, a "more politically palatable (term)…fragmenting" (305). Massey cites Gesa Kirsch, who believes that Composition as a field has evolved and "is characterized by …methodological diversity" (qtd. in Massey and Gebhardt 306). This further blurs already indefinite boundaries.

These blurred lines make it hard to resolve the conundrum that if there is no boundary to start with, how can the Practitioner be limited to any non-existent, indefinite, ever-changing "frontier"? The definition of the Practitioner-Critic partially holds its ground when the Practitioner, as a maker of knowledge regularly exposed to the gaps inherent in repeated pedagogical procedures, becomes aware of and is forced to comment on these various pedagogical shortfalls. Here, the Practitioner is the Practitioner-Critic but in a limited sense. For a Practitioner to be a critic, as per North's definition, the Critic must necessarily take on the role of Practitioner-Researcher as well. According to North, Researchers are "those who adopted modes of inquiry geared to lead them to more 'scientific' knowledge" (135).

Why do I find it necessary to adopt the additional role of "Researcher" as well? Looking back at my past teaching experiences and my present role as a graduate student, I see that I regularly straddle North's categories of Practitioner and Critic. While I have benefited from self-created lore year after year, I also repeatedly face recurring gaps in pedagogical practices. In the process, I have found myself contributing significantly to establishing a canon of texts, interpreting them, and developing theories about these texts and their interpretations, but I could only do this when I moved into the role of *researcher* as well. Like the critic, I began to seek and establish my own set of canonical sources of knowledge—textual and otherwise—which I then went on to interpret and theorize, but this role was informed by the context of the courses and the challenges they presented, inadvertently pushing me into the secondary role of the Practitioner-Researcher. In other words, to be a Practitioner-Critic and examine the *how* of improving student performance, it became equally necessary to adopt the constant cycle of examining, testing, and modifying in an almost scientific manner that constitutes the very role of *researcher*.

Indeed, the reality of the classroom made it evident to me that the moment the teacher shines a light on the flaws in pedagogical processes, the Practitioner inevitably becomes a Critic, and the instant the Practitioner-Critic attempts to correct the situation, the boundaries between Practitioner-Critic and Practitioner-Researcher dissolve. The Practitioner-Critic can only remain effective when, per force, he or she takes on the role of Practitioner-Researcher, thereby pushing the frontiers of the discipline forward and nullifying the boundaries of North's definitions. For me, North's categories necessarily became remixed in productive—and inevitable—ways.

This cross-category movement is reinforced when the entire Practitioner-Critic-Practitioner-Researcher cycle repeats itself and results in the creation of recognized, formal scholarship. An acknowledgment of the role of the researcher

promises both Practitioners and Lore a great deal of academic power and respect. The reality of the classroom, the source and destination of pedagogical knowledge, necessitates that North's boundaries be opened or at the least made porous. It is only when this multiplicity of roles is addressed, acknowledged, and remixed that the idea of scholarly legitimacy for Practitioners and their Lore can eventually be realized.

Resisting *MKC*: Lore, Practitioner-Philosophers, and North's Revealing Omissions

Kate: I bristled at North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition*: each section, all the categories, the concluding remarks. The whole book. At first, I thought this was due to his tone regarding Practitioners because I identify as one. I considered whether North's categorization of practitioners as relying too much on "lore" and not enough on more scientific inquiry angered me simply because it suggested that practitioners were "lesser" or because it suggested I needed to fit into another of his categories, as a critic, historian, or philosopher, for example, if I were to be a "real" Rhetoric and Composition member. I also wondered if I was just being put off by the implication that my work should be more clinical and less personal, that I could either "research" or "practice" and that these were somehow not *teaching*, that they were somehow better than teaching.

I felt much like Lynn Z. Bloom, who notes in "The World According to North—And Beyond" that her first brush with North, despite her generally positive feelings, left her finally dissatisfied, and eventually disillusioned, with his work, because "I was—and to this day remain—a teacher, not a practitioner of teaching" (31).

In addition to these problems, I found critical pedagogy's absence from the text surprising. Where were Paulo Freire (who remade our understanding of the teacher's role in the classroom), Ira Shor (who offered his attempts at critical pedagogy for all to critique and learn from), and Henry Giroux (who linked critical pedagogy to social problems through theory)? Why did North cite Freire as influential for Ann Berthoff but not consider Freire's contributions to the field? (94)

As I ruminated on this, I turned to my own, admittedly limited, experience as a teaching assistant teaching Composition I (the first semester of first-year writing) at a small, Midwestern state university. I started my master's program jittery and terrified as I followed the recommendations and syllabus our Composition Coordinator had created. Quickly, though, I began to metamorphose into a teacher concerned (perhaps tending toward obsession) with how to best help my students become better writers and critically conscious citizens of the world. This evolution did not take place in a vacuum; I spent many hours reading and discussing theory and pedagogy with my fellow students, my mentors, and the non-tenured instructors with 20 plus years of experience teaching writing—North's practitioners. Everyone showed a marked interest for student learning and writing improvement; most wanted students to develop critical thinking skills and confidence as writers. The best, most dedicated instructors wanted more: students able to engage the hard work of illuminating the

world's social, cultural, racial, class, ethnic, gender, and environmental oppressions, among others. These teachers taught, gathered evidence of their outcomes, reflected, read, and re-wrote their assignments, tweaked pedagogies, tossed readings, tore at their hair until they began to see their classrooms working as they wished. None of them would fit into one of North's categories. They practiced a keenly researched pedagogy reinforced by lore and theory as best fits the needs of their students.

Given my role as a Practitioner, it may be surprising that I also identify as one of North's Philosophers, labeled by North as "one of Composition's most important groups" (91). I agree with North that the philosopher's impulse is "to account for, to frame, critique and analyze the field's fundamental assumptions and beliefs" (91). North is also on point when he writes that "a Philosopher of Composition ought to be able to figure out which are the best and which are the worst ways to teach or research writing" (96).

Yet North makes other claims about Philosophers that I regard with far more circumspection. I am doubtful, for instance, when he writes that Philosophical inquiry "deals not with things in the world, hands on, directly—like Practitioners, or Experimental Researchers, or even Historians—but with the operations of reason, in this case by focusing on its manifestations in the Philosophers themselves, and in the activities of Composition's other inquirers" (96). With this statement, North seems to focus on separating the results of philosophical thought from the act of inquiry. He doesn't allow for a more interconnected role between Philosopher and Practitioner. Indeed, what Bloom calls North's "take-no-prisoners approach and language" are problematic because, as she points out, they "seem more to abuse his subject than enlighten it" (38). Bloom echoes my own feelings as a Practitioner-Philosopher—and all of the complications that role entails—when she writes, "North's complaints about fuzzy or flawed methodology cast progressively more doubts on his categorization system, rather than on the research he is analyzing" (39).

North attempts to scientize philosophical practice by linking it to reasoned methodological inquiry aimed at creating historical lineages for comparison, which simply is not what philosophy does. Philosophy ruminates on the causes, effects, contexts, and possible outcomes in order to mold a better future based on a dialectic between the needs of the present and historical understanding, that is, a dialectic based on *lore*. Indeed, as Patricia Harkin suggests, "The experiments of lore are not like the experiments of the recognized sciences. Practitioners rarely have the time, resources, or inclination to conduct experiments that meet standards of reliability and validity" (126). Reading North today reminds us that Composition teachers have always been scholars and researchers simultaneously, and they have worked to assist their students in attaining agency, whether in writing, thinking, speaking, or another activity; this was true even before critical pedagogy gave us the tools and terms to hone and focus our praxis.

Placing people and history into categories as a means of understanding

Composition Studies sterilizes its work, makes it seem less about the reality of confronting social inequality and injustice, racial and ethnic prejudice, and class discrimination, in an effort to bring the field some kind of scientific cachet. Composition does not need science. Composition needs lore. Composition needs teachers informed by their humanity, and that of their mentors, peers, and students, in order to become a united field working to empower the oppressed. As Louise Phelps argues, "*practice being more than knowledge, it humanizes theory*" (884).

Theory and Lore, Lore and Theory: Shall the Twain Meet in "Formalist" Sentence-Combining?

Rose: As a graduate student, a classmate of teachers, and a parent who often receives teacher instruction on how to better help my own children succeed academically despite their challenges, I have been exposed to and often relied upon the lore of the practitioner. At times teachers have ready answers to assignment concerns that arise from the inattentiveness of a student with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). However, when my children do not respond well, teachers often find themselves making educated guesses about a solution when additional reading, remedial grammar worksheets, and writing practice do not improve the writing experience of someone like my daughter. I remember sitting at the kitchen table with my daughter as words eked out one by one onto a page soon covered in marked-out text as she struggled through a composition assignment.

Certainly some style or method was available to ease the composition process for individuals, not exactly basic writers, but no less stymied when composing a sentence. Year after year, teachers passed along time-honored strategies, that despite my lack of training, I strove to reinforce at home. What was to be done? My daughter was entering the 10th grade and continuing to struggle with composition assignments. This was becoming my eleventh hour, but what might happen should a teacher reach into the archive of lore and dust off a technique first explored during the 1950s? We discovered the positive effects of kernel sentence combining introduced to my daughter and her classmates earlier this year by her English teacher.

Noam Chomsky's transformational-generative grammar, Kellogg Hunt's study of clause length, and John Mellon's subsequent sentence-based studies gave rise to the sentence-combining practices that flourished in the 1970s. Although the practice had been abandoned in the 1980s, it has experienced a resurgence, at least in one 10th grade classroom. By teaching my daughter about kernel sentences and the practice of combining, she was free to start by writing briefer sentences knowing that she had tools for going back and creating more mature structures. What might my daughter's academic future be if not for the formalist studies that led to sentence-combining?

It was from the formalist studies in linguistics that Composition researchers derived model building as a method for studying unobservable phenomena. According to North, the "Formalist inquiry in Composition has focused almost exclusively on

modeling writing" with small sample sizes (241). I am troubled by some of the implications of this research and theory for our teachers, those individuals operating in high-stakes testing situations with large numbers of students on a daily basis. Their educated guesses, model-building, and inquiries are based on a large population and not the few subjects to which Formalists limited their studies. Because every classroom of students is different from another, the effectiveness of a supposition is played out in the classroom by the students' ability to engage in and produce written compositions.

When I think about the numerous teachers who have attempted to discover the key to composition success for my daughter, I am most grateful to those willing to dig into their files or the back of their drawers to find some idea, practice, or technique—their lore—to serve her needs. I am not implying that solutions cannot originate in Formalists' studies and theory. I am saying that the efficacy of those solutions is realized only when the teacher puts the information into practice in a given class. As Victor Villanueva points out, "Linda Flower, our straw formalist, was right when she argued . . . that sheer speculation isn't enough, that we need ways to test what it is we believe in our theory" (129-30).

Flower, like those contributing to sentence-combining practices, recognized that formalist-based hypotheses, model-building, and studies could be meaningful only after the resulting theories had been tested. This testing, conducted in a carefully controlled environment, establishes a foundation upon which the teacher can build. Teachers have to be innovative, often generating instantaneous solutions to challenges presented by the unique learning styles of each group of students. One teacher's lore based on the formalist theories of sentence-combining proved key to a better writing experience for my daughter. I see her success as part of North's ongoing legacy. As Patricia Harkin suggests, "Lore is passed around from person to person and passed on from generation to generation" (126).

Putting the "House of Lore" in Order: Reaching the "Reluctant Clinician" through Inquiry-Based Knowledge

Georgeann: Composition instructor by day and Ph.D. student by night, I was most intrigued by Stephen North's discussion of practitioners and clinicians, two research communities with which I have the most familiarity. While his descriptions of practitioners' "rambling mansion"—the house of lore—might seem disparaging to some, I appreciated his assertion that practitioners' body of knowledge is fragmented, compartmentalized, and possibly even illogical or sloppy. Several years ago, my English division contracted representatives from the WPA to evaluate our composition program, and their assessment was that our program was almost "anarchic" due to our instructors' incoherent statement of overarching program goals and learning outcomes. I was then tasked with leading a committee to revise our master course syllabi, coordinate professional development opportunities, and lead assessment efforts. This

experience helped me understand both the challenge and necessity of putting our "house" in order through critical reflection, communication, and assessment; it also gave me firsthand experience with the reluctance that many composition instructors feel toward the more "clinical" approach.

Eager to engage in deliberate pedagogical reflection, even I have felt like Victor Villanueva's "reluctant clinician" at times (121). Somehow the calculated, empirical approach of clinicians seems counter to the personal, subjective act of composing. When I led my English division's assessment efforts, I encountered many instructors who openly questioned the efficacy of mandated assessment in improving student learning. So thoroughly inculcated in the use of "lore" to shape their practices, the instructors were resistant to measure student outcomes in a more concrete way. They even seemed blind to Patricia Harkin's observation, based on North, that "[l]ore can help us see ways in which solving for one problem causes another" (135). Similarly, Lynn Z. Bloom examines North's critique of clinicians, suggesting that "such research be expanded, in depth and in longitude, to provide portraits of individual student writers as 'whole, complex people,' 'each with steadily improving sources of data, and within a gradually richer canonical framework'" (237). In the same way, instructors must appreciate that data collection is only one part of the assessment process, that analysis of results, dissemination of information, and discussions of pedagogical implications should follow.

North explains that a clinician "regards any contributed piece of knowledge as a portion of [a] larger pattern. A mode of inquiry guided by it will assemble, through a gradual process of accumulation, a composite image—a sort of multi-dimensional jigsaw puzzle, the final shape of which the investigators cannot know" (204). While the "rambling mansion of lore" has many disconnected rooms, clinical inquiry seeks to find a more holistic framework (205). North recognizes the limitations to clinical knowledge yet calls it marketable and accessible to "would be" researchers (205) as it brings theory and practice together by identifying a problem, designing a study, collecting and analyzing data, interpreting the data, and drawing conclusions (implications for research and teaching) (207). In this way, using the clinical approach through institutional assessment measures may help instructors construct knowledge and put our "house" in order.

Complicating Water-Cooler Talk: Documenting Lore as an Ethnographer and Practitioner

Ben: As a Ph.D. student in Rhetoric and Composition, a composition instructor, and a former middle and high school English teacher, I was struck by Stephen North's discussion of how lore circulates, as well as how it is received by the discipline. North acknowledges that "the academic reflex to hold lore in low regard represents a serious problem in Composition," but he also suggests that "[p]ractitioners need to defend themselves—to argue for the value of what they know, and how they come to know it"

(55).

This passage came to mind last week when, in a graduate course, my fellow students and I questioned several of the research findings in George Hillocks' *Research on Written Composition*. More than one of my classmates felt we should complicate the research indicating that grammar instruction had no verifiable impact on the improvement of student writing; most of us questioned some of the research-supported conclusions regarding revision; and, all of us wondered about the findings that teacher comments do not impact the quality of student writing. As graduate students and writing instructors, we were coming to the defense of our experience-based, practitioner knowledge. We believed, and continue to believe, in lore. Perhaps Louise Wetherbee Phelps best sums up our approach: "Lore is experience that has been expressed, circulated, imitated, sustained and confirmed by repetition, achieving canonical status as 'common sense' through its range of cultural distribution and its staying power" (869).

The truth is, though, that while we value lore and it informs so much of our work, we know very little about this body of knowledge. Few scholars have even broached the topic—North, Phelps, and Patricia Harkin come to mind—and no one has subjected lore to any sustained research study. This seems to pose a serious problem for practitioners, whom North charges to "argue for the value of what they know, and how they come to know it" (55). How, then, can we systematically understand lore, and come to the defense of this body of knowledge?

To truly understand the relationship between theory and lore, we will have to become ethnographers. We will have to study, not only the validity of practices that circulate through lore, but also *how* lore is circulated, distributed, and received in a specific local community—a particular school, a department, a group of new teachers. We will have to get a comprehensive sense of the behaviors and discourses of that community, and we will have to embrace our roles as participant-observers. As North writes, "Ethnographic inquiry produces stories, fictions. Ethnographic practitioners go into a community, observe (by whatever variety of means) what happens there and then produce an account" (277). In one of his rare moments of praise for *MKC*, David Bartholomae acknowledges the value of that account, stating, "[North] is often brilliant in his reading of individual cases as he finds gaps and holes and blind spots" (226).

As a methodology that aims at comprehensively understanding a community, ethnography also enables us to inquire: What kinds of practitioner knowledge do new teachers bring with them to a specific community? Where and how did they accumulate that knowledge? What are the standards by which some practices become codified through departmental meetings, teacher training, and other institutionally sanctioned gatherings? What kinds of practitioner knowledge circulate through "water-cooler" talk?

In many ways, my colleagues and I—and indeed all of us in the field—are

already engaged in some form of an ethnography of lore, however elementary that may be. We are all constantly studying our local communities, documenting its discourses as participant-observers, picking up on effective practices. I think of myself scribbling notes and documenting discussions in graduate courses, recording not only subject-area knowledge, but also pedagogical practices of graduate professors that I may incorporate in my own teaching: *Consider teaching each class session from a different position in the room like Dr. Shepley does?* I find myself reflecting on last week's departmental meeting, where we recorded and absorbed professors' advice on the ins and outs of presenting at academic conferences: *Start up casual conversations. Avoid forced networking.* I see my notes from last month's supervisory meeting, where we discussed our various approaches to teaching a hybrid composition course: *Maria has her students post to online discussions during face-to-face class meetings. Try this?* I think of the contents of the teaching journals that I have maintained for every class that I have ever taught: *Need to figure out a way to raise standards for peer review responses.*

I am already documenting lore, already a participant-observer, and, indeed, we all are. We just need to conduct more sustained, more comprehensive ethnographic inquiries into lore than the ones in which we are already engaged. Richard Fulkerson also advocates for ethnographies of lore, as he questions whether or not "the standards governing the acceptability of ethnography…would be equally applicable to lore and thus could help resolve the question of how to assess lore-based claims" (60). While Fulkerson makes a thoughtful proposal, I contend that it misses the mark a bit. We ought to see ethnography as a means of generating knowledge, not merely as a methodology for evaluating the practitioner knowledge that circulates through lore. Instead of using ethnographic standards as a lens, as Fulkerson advocates, we ought to focus first and foremost on how ethnography can help us understand what lore is exactly and how it functions within particular communities. That focus would help us maintain lore's distinctive qualities even as we investigate its various sites of dispersion and influence.

As a graduate student looking ahead to a future in academe, I like to think that my dual role as an ethnographer-practitioner is one that will serve my own interests, and those of our field. By documenting and reflecting on my teaching practices, as well as the communities in which I work, I can engage in an ethnography of lore that will enable me to understand the value of my experiential knowledge and how I came to know it. As Harkin urges, "We should do all we can to bring lore to light" (138).

From the Bottom Up: Using Practitioner Knowledge and the Role of North's Historian to Formalize Theory

Rachael: As a practitioner lucky enough to have a cubicle surrounded by other practitioners, I have gleaned many teaching strategies by presenting my problems to the group and bouncing ideas off of them. We have varying levels of experience and numbers of years in the field, so some of our ideas are new and some are trustworthy

strategies that have been used throughout the years. Not once in my four semesters at my current institution has anyone pulled out a book of teaching theory to come up with an answer to one of our quandaries. Indeed, even seasoned professors flip through their mental playbook (not a book of theory) when asked what they would do in a particular situation or how they would teach a specific concept. This seems to fly in the face of North's assertion that "Scholars and especially Researchers make knowledge; Practitioners apply it" (21).

As a first-year composition teacher, I am responsible for helping my students progress in their writing. Being relatively new to the field, I was discouraged when I found that my students were resistant to revision, brushing aside my comments and just taking the grade from the first draft. At the suggestion of one of my colleagues, I changed my strategy, requiring my students to submit a revision that included at least one paragraph detailing why they revised particular aspects of their first drafts. I found that the students finally read my comments and actively engaged in reflection about their own writing, thus producing substantially better second drafts.

This lore that North critiques as stuff that "inquiry would show to be a muddled combination of half-truths, myths and superstitions" (23) is the backbone on which composition studies is built. Instead of dictating theories from above and then trying to successfully implement them into the classroom below, what might we discover if we took a more bottom-up approach and transformed good "lore" into formalized theory? That approach might help to resolve the concern Richard Fulkerson expresses: "The key question about lore is Does it work? Which seems to mean that there is good lore (which works) and bad lore (which doesn't)" (54). Using lore-based knowledge as a step to developing theoretical knowledge might solve the dilemma he describes.

Though I passionately identify as a practitioner first and foremost, I somewhat ironically also identify as one of North's historians. I find it essential to construct "knowledge about who and what has come before" (North 66). Do these two roles, Practitioner and Historian, contradict each other? At first glance, they may seem to; however, I think they can complement each other as well. As North points out in his chapter on the Historians, it is vital to search "for an identifiable pattern in some set of features" (North 75). This has traditionally taken place by searching for patterns among books of composition theory, written from the top to be implemented at the bottom. For example, it has long been determined through studies that have evolved into theory that commenting on student papers yields few, if any, results. Yet by implementing a strategy that requires students to respond to the comments teachers make on their papers, I have found these theories to be inaccurate. What if other practitioners tested this practice in their classrooms? What if they arrived at the same results? This bottom-up approach (one based on practice) might eventually overturn years of theory.

The compatibility of history and lore—history and practice—seems to be

precisely what Erica Frisicaro-Pawlowski has in mind. Echoing what many of my fellow teacher-practitioners and I have discovered, Frisicaro-Pawlowski suggests that our most often-used tools of the trade—what we might call the foundation or roots of our "lore"—are also the basis of a new kind of history in the field. She writes, "[O]bjects of study—including textbooks, testimonials, curricular designs, and so forth—continue to form the primary locus of the contemporary historical impulse. The field's historians are more likely to use the material, measureable artifacts of composition as their data, rather than less tangible forms of evidence" (97). History is lore; lore, history. Absent, though, is "less tangible" theory, and, it seems, never the twain shall meet.

Of course, to formalize "lore" would require a different sort of history entirely. Instead of examining all of the theoretical texts that have been created, emerging scholars would examine successful practitioners at work. They would have to listen to and record the secrets these masters have to share. With all the years of experience, the years of trial-and-error, surely patterns would emerge indicating what "lore" has been successful and what should be avoided. In this way, practitioners, those who rub shoulders with struggling writers on a daily basis, can be directly responsible for developing theories based on proven practice in the classroom. As North asks, "What can a Historical inquiry tell us about what constitutes a 'useful' reality, or about how writing is 'actually done?'" As a Historian, I want to document the lore of Practitioners and learn what new histories can be forged on a daily basis through classroom lore.

Inventing the New Clinician: Digital Humanities, Technological Tools, and Updating North's Practitioner Knowledge

Liz: Recently, I chose to use digital humanities methodologies to evaluate one teaching practice commonly circulating in Practitioners' lore: a specific approach to peer review in which first-year composition students write response letters to each others' drafts before meeting in group conferences. I first encountered this lore through conversation; another Teaching Fellow recommended it as an alternative to typical in-class peer review assignments where students often provide little more than shallow comments about language or formatting errors on each others' writing. Since this practice has also been written about in professional publications, I followed up on my colleague's suggestion by reading more teacher research about this style of group conferencing. After adopting this practice for three semesters, I had anecdotal evidence of its successes and its occasional failures, and I also had 342 individual response letters written by students to their peers' drafts and posted to our course website. I decided to save each of these response letters as plaintext files, code them, and run them through Voyant Tools, a web-based text analysis program, to see what trends emerged.

As a composition scholar using the tools of the digital humanities in this way, I fit in the Clinician category of North's taxonomy as one who is interested in "the ways in which a particular subject does, learns, or teaches writing" (137). But I also see

my work as being closely bound with my teaching and my identity as a Practitioner. I identify first and foremost as a teacher of writing, and my contributions to knowledge in the field are inseparable from my drive to become a better writing teacher. As a digital compositionist, I am able to use new digital humanities methodologies that North could not have anticipated when he wrote *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* to affirm my teaching practices, making me a Practitioner-Clinician. Even in the far more recent Massey and Gebhardt collection, the authors admit that if they were to write a "Call for Papers" for their collection today, "we would seek out discussions of technology as it has shaped composition research and practice since 1987" (4).

I see these new digital humanities methodologies as giving even the busiest of Practitioners new tools for doing real inquiry on teaching methodologies to confirm or contribute to lore. I found North's assertion that "Practitioner inquiry is most often a combination of informed intuition and trial and error" to be a cautionary but true description of how lore is often shaped and evaluated (45). And as a Teaching Fellow, teaching two classes of 27 students while taking 9 hours of graduate coursework each semester, I can see the validity of North's argument that "the practitioners in the best position to conduct inquiries are those least equipped to do so" (35). But digital humanities methodologies help to address these constraints by allowing for easier and quicker analysis of data than researchers in the 1980s had access to.

I also see these tools from the digital humanities as providing new means for teachers to confirm or shape their own teaching practices, and in turn, test and confirm lore. As Richard Fulkerson points out, one of the primary weaknesses of lore as North presents it is that there is no way to test it. North argues that other methodological communities can confirm lore using their approved methodologies and thus make "true" knowledge, but practitioners can only vouch for the effectiveness of their lore through experiential narratives. Fulkerson argues that this limitation that North places on lore means that "[m]aking any distinction between credible lore and not-so-credible lore isn't an option if there is no test and if nothing can ever be rejected or discarded" (52). But by embracing hybrid roles, we can take these other methodologies and use them to test our lore and support our claims that it does indeed work. As a Practitioner-Clinician, I can test the classroom practices I employ as a Practitioner (in this case, group conferencing) and test them using the skills of a Clinician (evaluating student writing from that conferencing) to determine whether my lore is credible.

The digital humanities provide Practitioners with easy-to-use tools that make these hybrid roles possible, which is crucial because, as North points out, "the Practitioners in the best position to conduct inquiries are those least equipped to do so" due largely to time constraints (35). Voyant Tools, the program I used to analyze my student texts, is web-based and user-friendly, showing great promise as a useful tool for other practitioners to analyze a corpus of their own students' writing or even for a first-year writing student to analyze her own writing. In my own research,

promising trends that emerged from the text analysis of my students' writing encouraged me to continue using group conferencing in my classes while also pushing me to think of ways to improve that pedagogical practice.

One basic example: I noticed that students who wrote longer response letters had greater concentrations of words suggesting substantial revision suggestions, like "paragraph," "solution," "audience," or "example," and I decided to increase the minimum required word count for my response letter assignment in subsequent semesters. This practice is in line with how North envisions the Clinician's role. He writes, "Clinical knowledge accumulates by accretion . . . it approaches the world it studies by examining phenomena again and again, looking at them from different angle, probing them in different ways, aiming to render a composite . . . image" (205). Digital humanities methodologies allowed me to look at my students' writing in a different way and adapt my pedagogy accordingly.

The tools of the digital humanities have helped me better engage in reflective teaching practices, allowing me to combine my own observations with data from text analysis to better shape my teaching practice. These digital analytical tools show me the value of my hybrid role as Practitioner-Clinician. I have also been able to share my findings in different venues, from conversations with others in my department to presentations at conferences in the field, contributing to an ever-growing and ever-strengthening body of lore for writing teachers to rely on.

Making Lore Theoretical: Forging Reciprocal Relationships as Practitioner-Experimentalist

Jessie: I first came to composition lore from a place of urgent necessity. I had just been hired for my first adjunct position, teaching developmental writing at a community college, but I had never taught in a classroom or had any training in composition pedagogy. I was peripherally aware that something called composition theory existed, but I had no time to spare to track it down and train myself from scratch, and it would be some time before I encountered those theories in my graduate work. And yet, all of the sudden I found myself trying to cobble together a syllabus and formulate coherent assignments that would guide the twenty-four struggling students of my first class to freshman-level work. I was keenly aware that stakes were high and time was short. Formal composition theory was, at that time, of no immediate help to me whatsoever.

It was lore that I needed. I spent time in the adjunct workroom, swapping syllabi and assignments and debating methods; I earnestly but unwittingly reinvented the wheel by developing homemade pedagogical theory to suit my own style. Almost everyone I spoke to worked in the same conditions and with the same student population as I did, and I could quickly discern teaching styles and ideological investments in conversation. Lore was fast, lore was local, lore was available, and, most of all, lore was *contextualized*. More than once I was in a conversation with other practitioners and realized that our differing contexts rendered our lore largely

meaningless to each other. But in that sense, it *was* useful—it was quick and easy to discover when contexts were incompatible, so I knew when to discount someone's lore with little wasted time or effort and move on to someone else's. To explain the absolutely crucial nature of context that makes lore so useful as theory in situations like mine, I'd like to illustrate what I mean about lore in an example of its use in experimentation.

Richard Fulkerson helpfully points out that "[w]hat North needed was…some fair way to distinguish credible lore from incredible" (52). As a Practitioner-Experimentalist, for me that fair way is experimentation. There is a long-running and more or less evenly divided clash of lore in the department where I work about why students fail composition. Roughly half of the faculty has long insisted that the majority of failures are due to an acute deficiency of requisite skills. With equal conviction, the other half has held that most failures are instead due to a lack of readiness for the demands of college, as exemplified by those students who neglect to turn in their papers or attend class. Over this past year, our department came together to test the validity of these competing claims by collecting data from each of us on every student who failed our courses. The data overwhelmingly pointed to problems with the demands of college as the issue, and we will be piloting a course next semester specially designed to address the needs of these students with increased individual conference time and counseling support. By next year, we will be prepared to review the results of this pilot course and debate the possibility of opening up more sections of this course model.

Thus, lore pointed the way to a question that could be fruitfully addressed via experimentation; moreover, because we are all aware of the context—in the sense that we are all familiar with the same student population, institutional constraints, and each other's various instructional styles—we have a clearer idea how to evaluate the results than we would with any published research we might read. The theory we glean from pedagogical texts is not so readily digested and evaluated because it lacks the critical context that imbues lore by its very nature. As North says, "The Experimentalist's goal is to put together the best design possible under the circumstances" (177), but he neglects the vital place of lore in defining what those circumstances are.

In these ways and for these reasons, lore *becomes* theory for us as composition instructors. It is theory made relevant and concrete. As Patricia Harkin says, "When, through a process of informed intuition, practitioners do what works, they bring a number of disciplinary projects into a concrete problem" (134). Harkin thus joins together disparate strands of North's book. While lore often obscures the exact theory that lies behind its inception, it gives us the ready-made application of theory in contextualized praxis. It is with this understanding of the valuable reciprocity between lore and theory that I approach North's text. It's crucial to me that he establishes the importance of lore in composition not just as a sometimes-accurate ontology, but as a type of understanding particularly valuable to an *art* rather than a science. Methods of

teaching composition, as we all know after even the briefest teaching experience, vary between instructors, learners, and localities. This variability is the heart of what makes it an art, and it is what mandates a different approach to composition—and composition research—than to, say, evolutionary biology. I am entirely supportive of Victor Villaneuva, who cogently enumerates the difficulties of applying the methods of the natural sciences to the study of writing, and instead counsels the centrality of a narrative approach. I believe lore—which is, after all, a species of narrative—is indeed a way to address those difficulties and unite Practitioners and Experimentalists.

Conclusion: Redrawing Boundaries, Remixing Composition's Future

Paul: For graduate scholars in the field, lessons from Stephen North's *The Making of Knowledge in Composition* are complex and multi-layered. From their perspective, it is clear that North's influential book, to use Erica Frisicaro-Pawlowski's words, "attempts to encompass or bridge multiple subject positions frequently in tension with one another" (99). Those tensions are evident, for example, in students' subject positions as practitioner-historian, practitioner-ethnographer, or practitioner-clinician, to name just a few. Yet the very nature of these overlapping identities seems to contradict one of Frisicaro-Pawlowski's assertions in "Making Knowledge, Shaping History":

> For today's scholars, roles designating where one enters into the intellectual life of the discipline are more clearly cut. Is one a theorist or a researcher? Does one work predominantly with issues of writing and technology, or with issues of basic writing? (99)

Contrary to Frisicaro-Pawlowski's binaries, it seems the roles graduate students have outlined here are anything but "clearly cut"; indeed, they complicate, intersect, and cross boundaries in ways North himself could not have anticipated. Liz Blomstedt Keating, for instance, combines technological tools from the digital humanities with her clinician-based inquiry into first-year student writing, some of her study undoubtedly touching on basic writers, among others. Drawing on digital technology to conduct research—a practice Massey and Gebhardt say they would have liked to feature in their volume—Liz continues to find a central role for lore. As Liz just said above, she is able to test classroom practices like group conferencing as a Practitioner and then use her skills as a Clinician to evaluate the student writing that results from those conferences. Combining the two roles of Practitioner and Clinician allows her to assess the credibility and reliability of her lore. Nidhi Rajkumar sees one function of her Practitioner-Critic role as theorizing about texts, but finds it necessary to test her hypotheses—based in part on lore—and shifting her role to that of Practitioner-Researcher. She thus moves in and out of various roles, her peripatetic dance a way of remixing North's roles with his House of Lore in innovative ways. In the process, Nidhi finds that "[t]he reality of the classroom, the source and destination of pedagogical knowledge, necessitates that North's boundaries be opened or at the least made porous."

While North called then-recent changes in the field "the revolution" in composition studies, the graduate student selections here reveal a different kind of disciplinary revolution that has quietly taken place outside of North's taxonomies. Indeed, that revolution can be seen as related to Massey and Gebhardt's claim that while North's book represented a "watershed moment" in the history of the field, "we now find ourselves on the brink of what may become an equally paradigmatic shift" (5). As evidence of this new revolution, or paradigm shift, take Maurice Wilson, who says he is a historian, in part because, according to North, "[history's] internal structure is a familiar and comfortable one: a narrative, a kind of story" (69). Yet Maurice is also drawing on profound changes in the field involving the personal and its use in academic discourse when he writes, "My story is filled with narratives, with stories wrought from lore, from practice, from a deeply personal background." Each of the graduate scholars here tells a similarly personal story, shaped by changes in the field and the *new* history Victor Villanueva recounts in "Rhetoric, Racism, and the Remaking of Knowledge-Making in Composition":

> The men and women of color who pulled this profession into the world of personal academic discourse, of storytelling mixed with evidence of various sorts, have been pointing to what so many others see, that understanding humanity's humanity can best be attained through telling our own stories of ourselves. (131)

Some of the stories told here are remarkable, helping us to see, as Villanueva puts it, that "understanding humanity's humanity can best be attained through telling our own stories of ourselves" (131). Graduate scholar Kate Highfill is keen on that humanity and about the field telling stories that "confront social inequality and injustice, racial and ethnic prejudice." Kate goes on to say that in finding that humanity, "Composition does not need science. Composition needs lore. Composition needs teachers informed by their humanity, and that of their mentors, peers, and students, in order to become a united field working to empower the oppressed." Like Kate, Jessie Casteel opposes an emphasis on a "science" of composition, instead considering the field an "art." Jessie embraces the ideas of Victor Villanueva, who, she says, "cogently enumerates the difficulties of applying the methods of the natural sciences to the study of writing, and instead counsels the centrality of a narrative approach." Jessie, who identifies as one of North's experimentalists, adds, "I believe lore—which is, after all, a species of narrative—is indeed a way to address those difficulties and unite Practitioners and Experimentalists."

For students like Ben Good, the idea of using personal narrative means devising "an ethnography of lore," a methodology that involves "constantly studying our local communities, documenting its discourses as participant-observers, picking up on effective practices." Ben goes on to describe his original methodology that involves discovering his own stories through others' narratives:

> I think of myself scribbling notes and documenting discussions in

> graduate courses, recording not only subject-area knowledge, but also pedagogical practices of graduate professors: *Consider teaching each class session from a different position in the room like Dr. Shepley does?* I find myself reflecting on…professors' advice on the ins and outs of presenting at academic conferences: *Start up casual conversations. Avoid forced networking.*

Personal academic discourse is also important to Georgeann Ward, one of Villanueva's "reluctant clinician[s]" (121), who concludes, after leading assessment efforts at a local college, that "[s]omehow the calculated, empirical approach of clinicians seems counter to the personal, subjective act of composing." Part of Georgeann's solution, in the spirit of Lynn Bloom, is to propose, as Bloom does, that Stephen North's research on clinicians "be expanded, in depth and in longitude, to provide portraits of individual student writers as 'whole, complex people'" (237). Rose Pentecost also finds meaning in the personal because the formalist practice of sentence combining helped improve her daughter's writing: "What might my daughter's academic future be if not for the formalist studies that led to sentence-combining"? In Rose's case, methodology is intimately linked to the personal, specifically, to her interest in her daughter's ultimate writing success:

> When I think about the numerous teachers who have attempted to discover the key to composition success for my daughter, I am most grateful to those who were willing to dig into their files or the back of their drawers to find some idea, practice, or technique—their lore—to serve her needs.

Indeed, Rose suggests that her daughter's improvement through sentence-combining exercises is connected to North's ideas about theory and practice. She writes, "I see her success as part of North's ongoing legacy." In many ways, though, it was the combination of theory and practice, in the form of sentence-combining, that took a problematic situation and demonstrated, as Patricia Harkin said of North's ideas, that "theory is the conflict itself, the contending with words" (135).

In his afterword to Massey and Gebhardt's *The Changing of Knowledge in Composition: Contemporary Perspectives*, Stephen M. North counters some of what he calls the "[a]pocalyptic stuff" in the edited collection. Attempting to emphasize a more optimistic tone, North points to the writers in the volume who provide "some vision, some path—however utopian or systemically wrenching—whereby a morally, pedagogically, and intellectually defensible form of writing instruction might survive, if not thrive, in higher education and beyond" (324-25). In his efforts to balance what he sees as an apocalyptic vision, North might add to his list graduate student Rachael Sears, who is optimistic about her pathway in the field. Combining the roles of practitioner and historian, Rachael asks, "Do these two roles, Practitioner and Historian, contradict each other? At first glance, they may seem to; however, I think they can complement each other well." The answer, she finds, comes in combining, and in fact, remixing, the elements of North's taxonomy that matter most to her: "As a Historian, I want to document the lore of Practitioners and learn what new histories

can be forged on a daily basis through classroom lore."

In responding to North's *The Making of Knowledge* and its reception, including Massey and Gebhardt's edited volume, the graduate scholars here take up North's recent call for a vision and path toward a sustainable form of writing instruction. By starting with North's categories in *MKC*, mixing and remixing his scholarly taxonomy with the importance of practitioners, and identifying their own roles in original ways, they have rebuilt North's House of Lore for the future, creating new categories with permeable, fluctuating, and evolving boundaries. The "vision" and "path" these graduate students have taken, filled with theory, lore, and much more, leave little doubt that writing instruction, and composition, will indeed survive and thrive in twenty-first century classrooms. Toward the end of his book, North adopts a pessimistic note, predicting that composition is "pulling itself apart" (364). William Irmscher counters that outlook, reminding *MKC* readers that "[c]omposition has battled to survive some of the worst adversities that it could be subjected to" (516). Indeed, as Irmscher intimates about the future of the field, and as the graduate students here affirm in important ways, "The direction is up" (516).

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Can You See Me Now? Rural Queer Archives and a Call to Action

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PreScript: Don't Let Your Girls Grow Up to be Cowboys

Circa 1966, my little queer heart fluttered when I "saw" gender and sexual difference for the first time. Myrtle was her name, Myrtle Miles, Myrt to those who knew her, at least according to my 86-year-old aunt who seems to have gone to school with Myrtle. "She was a character," says my aunt. Code for queer, I now see. She played the guitar and sang at every Wyoming State Fair throughout my childhood. Butch. Men's fancy snakeskin cowboy boots. Men's bolo tie. Men's pearl buttoned snap shirt. Men's pants. Men's big belt buckle. Men's hair. I loved Myrtle. Myrt. I don't remember any other Myrtles in my early life. Myrtle never knew it, but she was my hero.

The exigencies for this exploratory essay are multi-variant and interpenetrating: a heterosexist if not homophobic encounter with rural National Writing Project (NWP) teachers; an undergraduate glbtq literature class that I forced into an imaginary proximity with the NWP teachers; a backlash of state-level policy to non-straight rights advocacy; the onslaught of bullying against (and sometimes murder of) those who are perceived as gendered or oriented differently from the norm; and the continued depression and high suicide rates among queer, transgender, and inter-sex youth. As I began work on this paper, several states already had or would be attempting to enact legislation that outlaws any reference to homosexuality in public schools (Utah, Alabama, Tennessee). These policy moves were being made even as federal legislation, such as the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" and the Supreme Court challenge to DOMA were moving forward; social media was still vibrating with news of Tyler Clementi's suicide; and, I had just failed miserably in an attempt to have rural public school teachers in a National Writing Project Summer Institute include queer stories and lives in their curricula, let alone to imagine what queering their classrooms might entail.[1] This failure haunts me every day of my teaching life.

In the essay that follows I explore rural queer issues of (in)visibility (and haunting trauma) through my own rural queer experiences and remembrances and two very different teaching moments, one with NWP Teachers (and by extension their students) and one with my students in a glbqt class on a progressive (though rural)

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campus. While the teaching moments I discuss are in reality separate, they have become merged and connected in my imaginary; one experience attempts to speak to the other. As this imaginary merging started, I began thinking, rather obsessively, about glbtq artifacts as resources for students and teachers. Thus, this essay also broaches queer archives as potentially powerful sites for queer visibility. Some of my own queer memories, like the PreScript that opens this article, disrupt the text, serving as a mini-personal archive now made public.

The PreScript represents my first "queer" remembrance. I could take up any number of moments in this memory, but it is the repetitive tension between invisibility and visibility that intrigues me. The coded "character" for queer is a denial of visibility. An absence of other "Myrtles" is a sign of invisibility. (Surely there were others?) And yet, counter to invisibility, there (here?) was Myrtle, dressed to the nines in boots and bolo tie, performing, making herself visible. Moreover, "I now see" the code. This tension haunts me—in this memory, but also in my teaching life.

Queer in Composition

My hope is that this essay adds to the relatively small collection of queer scholarship in composition studies and even more specifically to the nearly non-existent scholarship in rural queer composition. It is a humble gesture toward recovering and creating rural queer archives that may impact heterosexist and cis-gendered teaching practices while contending with the vexing issues of queer visibility and invisibility particularly though not exclusively within rural sites. [2]

Scholars have been publishing on queer matters for quite some time. It has not been until fairly recently, however, that scholars have begun to examine issues surrounding rural queers.[3] The field of rhetoric and composition itself first began to address queer issues in the late 1980s with the occasional panel and a Special Interest Group at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Early scholarship included Hart's "Literacy and the Lesbian/Gay Learner," Sloane's "Invisible Diversity: Gay and Lesbian Students Writing Our Way into the Academy," Rothgery's "'So What Do We Do Now?' Necessary Directionality as the Writing Teacher's Response to Racist, Sexist, Homophobic Papers," Miller's "Fault Lines in the Contact Zone: Assessing Homophobic Student Writing," and Malinowitz's monograph, *Textual Orientations: Lesbian and Gay Students and the Making of Discourse Communities*. *College English* published a special issue on Gay and Lesbian Studies/Queer Pedagogies in 2002, and in 2004, *JAC* published a special issue on queer theory and composition.

Jonathan Alexander has his hand in much of the recent scholarship. In 2009, he and David Wallace published "The Queer Turn in Composition Studies: Reviewing and Assessing an Emerging Scholarship," in which they survey and analyze fifteen years of "LGBT/queer studies and composition/rhetoric studies" (300). They note that the inclusion of queerness in the field pales in comparison to that of other diversity issues. Alexander and Wallace seem hopeful at the end of their review and analysis, and they

renew their own commitment not only to queer's "theoretical but also to its intimate and multifaceted pedagogical relevance to our work as compositionists" (318). But by 2012, however, when Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes published "Queer: An Impossible Subject for Composition" in *JAC*, Alexander has decided that queer cannot be a subject for composition at all.

Since visibility is an important concern of this essay, I want to briefly review three essays that were formative for me, and that focus on the thorny issue of visibility. One could argue that much (if not all?) of the literature on queer and composition is about visibility and invisibility, directly or indirectly. The construction of the closet ensures that any of our literature addressing coming out, inclusion of queer material, or queering our teaching or curricula is in some way about queer visibility. Moreover, raising and risking queer cannot help but be about visibility since it can only be seen in relation and relief to the hetero-normative assumptions of culture. Scott Lloyd DeWitt's and Jonathan Alexander's essays published in the 14th volume of the 1997 issue of *Computers and Composition* are two of the earliest works directly addressing web technology and non-normative sexualities. DeWitt, as an out gay man wanting to form a sound theory and pedagogy for the teaching of writing in the new era of computer technology, takes up queer visibility and opposition to it on the web. His essay, "Out There on the Web: Pedagogy and Identity in Face of Opposition," stems from a concern over what his students might encounter if they choose to make visible non-straight identities. DeWitt was moved to conduct this study because, as he notes:

> Negative images of g/l/b people and lives become reality when nothing counters. In a world where people do not see real gay and lesbian people living their real lives, these negative images gain power in that they are the only representations available. These negative images are granted power that is potentially identity forming. (231)

As a teacher committed to integrating new technologies into his teaching of writing and fully expecting non-straight students to begin to use the web to create g/l/b identities, he investigates the nature of such literacies in web writing. Toward thoughtful pedagogy that takes the web into account, DeWitt reports on what he learns when he interviewed six research subjects who had created or were associated with a specific web page. DeWitt specifically asked his interviewees if they identified themselves as gay, lesbian, or bisexual on their sites and discovered that those who were "out" on their web sites signaled that through "text and design elements to represent that they are g/l/b" (236). A case of homophobic trolling endured by one of his subjects caused DeWitt to worry deeply about how some students might fare under such attack.

Alexander's essay for the same issue of *Computers and Composition*, "Out of the Closet and Into the Network: Sexual Orientation and the Computerized Classroom," is another of the field's first to note the power of the web for providing students means for probing "the relevance of sexual orientation to all students' lives, whether they are lesbian, bisexual, gay, or straight" (208). While the essay focuses more on role playing

sexual identities in networked classrooms than on information available in web spaces, it certainly points to Alexander's later work, which is some of the most thoughtful we have on queer archives.

David L. Wallace's piece in the 2002 *College English* special issue on lesbian and gay studies and queer pedagogy, titled "Out in the Academy: Heterosexism, Invisibility, and Double Consciousness" is noteworthy as ruralness and visibility intersect in this essay. Wallace shares with readers three sketches from homophobic encounters he had as a faculty member at Iowa State. The rural setting in which Iowa State resides is important enough that Wallace alludes to it more than once. Of primary interest to Wallace, however, is the way in which the three encounters he describes catapult him into coming out as a gay man, to making his gayness visible. In each case the experience is mostly positive, but nonetheless, Wallace makes clear the fear, unease, and risk he felt doing so. His hope, though, was to create a "discursive and rhetorical shift" where in "getting more traditional colleagues to be able to read texts and situations from perspectives that engage differences according to race, gender, class, sexuality, and other social positions" is possible (54). He goes on to say about his three encounters:

> from a theoretical perspective, these examples have tacitly raised the question of how one moves from object to subject status…, that is, how one speaks back to cultural narratives that write one as either visible or illegible. For lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and the transgendered (as well as for those of other marginalized identities), finding the means to speak may be the primary issue in rhetoric…
>
> Although the inclusion of queer perspectives and discourse can provide an important means for transforming culture, it would be a mistake to presume that such changes will necessarily be welcome. (65)

Becoming visible, as he suggests, has risks and certain pushback from hetero-normative culture at large.

Information and images have exploded in digital spaces in ways that were hard to imagine in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes remind us of the potential rhetorical space for digital queer archives in their recent web text in *Enculturation*, "Queer Rhetoric and the Pleasures of the Archives." Alexander and Rhodes bring the classical appeals of logos, ethos, and pathos as organizing heuristics to the idea of digital queer rhetorical counterpublics. As they see it, "the online queer archive offers us a nearly unprecedented opportunity to think the body in rhetorical practice—and in this case, the queer body in queer rhetorical practice." They go on to theorize the potential of a rhetorical turn to queer archives while simultaneously creating a queer archive. This text is one of the most complex, intriguing, and groundbreaking in the field. I return to it later.

Beyond Wallace's 2002 article, conversations about rural queerness are slow to enter the field, even though rural sexuality (and violence) haunts our writing through repeated references, left unexplained or unexamined, to Matthew Shepard's death. (See,

for instance, Alexander and Rhodes "Queer Rhetorics" as well as Nichols.) In a rare article focused on rural and queer issues in the teaching of writing, Danielle Mitchell's 2008 *Composition Studies* essay, "I Thought Composition Was About Commas and Quotes, Not Queers: Diversity and Campus Change at a Rural Two-Year College," Mitchell points out that the cultural and geographic profiles of many rural community colleges include an ongoing "chilliness" and that the closet is much more than a mere "historical metaphor" (23).[4] She argues that, given the situational context of this rural profile, many educators, herself included,

> face the specific pedagogical task of using their introductory composition course as both a site of writing instruction and a critical zone of cultural contact. Simultaneously, then, the goal is to facilitate improvement in student writing while also broadening their range of cultural experiences in order to better foster diversity, making room on campus for difference—different subjectivities, different ideas, and different expectations. (23)

While things are not so hostile in my own rural, yet fairly progressive university, what Mitchell describes—the chilliness, the silence, the lack of any direct or open support for gender or identity variant students—fits the profile of our public schools here in Appalachian Ohio. Indeed, the ongoing bullying and ostracizing of students who are, or who are perceived to be, outside the gender and sexual binary would also support the rural profile that she discusses. A little over three years ago, in a town from which our Writing Project has participating teachers, a cell phone camera captured video that was then sent out on social media of a young man being beaten for his perceived "gayness." As we know, such incidents occur frequently across geographic locations. I would note, as well, in spite of the perceived progressiveness of the institution in which I work, that there remain plenty of spaces emanating a sense of chilliness. While campus and classrooms may, for the most part, be reasonably glbqt friendly, Uptown, which boasts multiple bars on each block, has no gay or lesbian identified bar. For that, a 70-mile trip north is required. Also, the prevalent bar culture Uptown sparks the typical misogynistic cat calling and harassment of women and those who identify as or are perceived to be outside the norm. And as if that were not enough, I have personally heard local teens and early twenty-somethings who live in the surrounding hills and counties plan to go "queer hunting" near campus. I can only hope that these huntings remain metaphorical, and I do confess to keeping an eye in the local paper for any queer bashings.

Recently, Garrett W. Nichols, in "The Quiet Country Closet: Reconstructing a Discourse for Closeted Rural Experiences," narrates his own past as a rural queer in an attempt to create discourses that make his own rural, closeted past relevant. He explains that,

> to be closeted in a rural community is to lack access to certain available discourses through which to understand one's own experiences. I

> recognize that the closet takes on many forms and many gradations for different people. For me, the closet was totalizing and informed by intersecting dynamics of family, community, and religion.

Nichols is unable to access his own queerness because there were no reference points within his community in which to recognize it. Poignantly, he does state, near the beginning of his queer tale (archive) that he is very much alive, is not suicidal, and has never been shot at in the woods nor tied to a fence, a clear reference to Matthew Shepard that many queers would immediately recognize (although an astonishing number of my current college students would not). As Nichols's narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that school experiences are also central to the totalizing closeting he experienced, with—as is often the case—the ever present bullying and teasing that accompanies even a whiff of something "off" with one's sexuality in rural school settings. Though never beaten, he clearly bears the memories of bullying. Moreover, issues of queer invisibility are implicit in the point Nichols makes about a lack of discursive means by which "to understand one's experiences." I firmly believe that schooling ought to provide these means. It is a matter of social justice.

Trauma Waxing (The Teachers)

While the NWP teachers I work with are painfully aware of bullying of all kinds and were generally open to thinking about teaching and social justice, raising queer issues with them did not go well. They were directly asked to confront issues of sexuality, orientation, and gender variance in their own classrooms. Our catalyst for opening the discussion was "It's Elementary in Appalachia: Helping Prospective Teachers and Their Students Understand Sexuality and Gender," an article by Kent State Professor Patti Capel Swartz that argues for integrating lgbtq literature into elementary and high school classrooms, as well as the film *It's Elementary: Talking About Gay Issues in School,* to which Swartz' article refers.[5] Only a couple of the teachers were willing to publicly state that they would consider bringing queer lives and history into their curricula. While our discussions of race and poverty seemed to emotionally tire the teachers, and there was some resistance to "dwelling" on race in discussions, on the whole they expressed a much more positive response to working on teaching issues related to race and poverty than they did to issues of gender and sexual variance and identity. Teachers were hesitant and clearly ill at ease considering queer contributions to literature, art, history, or science, let alone for inclusion in their classrooms. I had hoped to proceed to a discussion of problems related to using "add a book and stir" approaches to race or gayness, but we never got that far. They did voice their concerns that acknowledging anything outside of the bounds of heterosexuality would upset the children because gender and sexual difference can be "uncomfortable," that it would be unfair to Christian children, that parents would be upset, and because the teachers were not sure they had enough (or any) queer children in their classrooms to warrant attention. This last assertion disturbed me because in other discussions it was clear that the teachers would willingly revise their

curricula to "accommodate" immigrant and racially diverse students so that all children felt love and acceptance, even if they had only one student that the teachers could identify as such. While perhaps I should not have been unduly surprised, I was caught off guard by the firm resistance from a group of teachers usually open to experimenting with curriculum.

The NWP considers sharing best practices through demonstrations a key element of the "teachers teaching teachers" model. While I did not expect teachers to completely revise their teaching demonstrations based on our discussion surrounding inclusion of queer issues, I did expect that the needs and teaching of queer children and youth would at least be raised in subsequent discussions on diversity and teaching for social justice. That explicitly did not happen. Instead, while other kinds of difference and ways of teaching tolerance through curriculum were directly addressed in their demonstrations, there was dead silence regarding all things queer, transgender, or gender bending. The teachers simply did not allow for any sightings of queerness among their students. When we as Writing Project Directors tried to force the issue, the response defaulted to hostility and comments about their own and their students' identities as Christians.

While it was the teachers who were present in the physical learning space of the Summer Institute, I was terribly haunted by the students of these teachers—students physically absent, yet in a way, very present. For me, a dotted line connected those rural public school students to our work and to their teachers' homophobic, cis-gendered, and heterosexist responses and dismissals. We were, after all, reading, researching, and writing about how to teach literacy to their students. In this way, then, the teachers' students, students I have never met nor taught, are as much the subject of this article's excursion as are my own students. Again, I find myself returning to issues of visibility and invisibility. Queer Appalachian students were doubly denied existence, once in their own physical classrooms and again during the Summer Institute as their teachers refused to speak of them.

Interlude: Migration , Silence, Absence, Invisiblity

I have lived in rural America for all but nine years of my life, four years when I was in my twenties and the other five when I was in my late thirties. I was born and raised in Wyoming. My mother moved to Portland, Oregon, during my last year of high school, and I moved to be with her four years later. After finishing the last two years of my bachelor's degree and my master's degree in Portland, I moved to rural New England. I then moved to rural Mississippi. Four years later I moved back to Portland and five years after that I moved to Appalachia, five miles from a small rural village that bears my mailing address. My migration pattern may resemble the common rural-queer-moves-to-urban-center-for-new-and-better-life trope. But, even during the time I lived in Portland, I felt decidedly rural in my identity. I did not migrate to an urban center because of my queerness, and though I think it is fair to say that living in an urban center impacted my understanding of queerness, I have never been an urban queer. Moving to very different parts of the country has also taught me that there are considerable differences

among rural geographies and rural identities, queer or otherwise. In other words, there is not one rural queer. Geography itself plays into this. Wyoming, for instance, is far less populated than Ohio or West Virginia, and towns are spread out over hundreds of miles of land. Queer isolation is hard to overcome if an urban center like Denver is a seven to eight hour drive. Imagine this physical space pre-internet…

I teach queer composition, queer rhetorics, and queer literature to undergraduates and graduates in part because I inhabit a queer identity. Yet, neither in my college courses nor in the Summer Institutes for the Writing Project do I always explicitly "come out." But neither, I argue, do I closet myself. The fact that I do not necessarily explicitly declare my queerness in these circumstances makes some lgbqt identified people livid. They feel I am being cowardly. They feel I am betraying others who live outside the norm. They feel that my not explicitly coming out reifies the closet that is so deadly and deadening for queers. Perhaps they are right. Even I am perplexed by my contradictions, my longing for both visibility and invisibility. I present ambiguously. This ambiguity, though, is part of how I present queer. And, I would argue, that my rural sense of self at least partially shapes this. Those who want to can read and recognize queer. They do "see" me. My queerness erupts, outside of disclosure, in several ways: my playfulness; my (mostly) suppressed rage; my collection of shoes that together make up a rainbow; the books that line my office walls; the classes that I teach; and through any other number of clues, some subtle and some not so subtle. Only on occasion has an undergraduate remained "clueless." The Writing Project teachers, on the other hand, seem to misread, or not read, my ambiguity, my queerness. There seems to be no hint that queerness might exist somewhere within our Summer Institute's classroom walls. The fact that they can't or don't is part of why I argue for rural queer visibility. Yes, I am aware of my own contradictions here.

How, I can hear you wondering, can you expect to be visible if you don't come out? Coming out verbally and explicitly is only one way of being visible. Usually, within the Writing Project, I identify first and foremost as a teacher. I do so because that is in fact who I am. I orient to the world far more as a teacher in my daily life than I do through my rather complicated set of desires. As many who write about intersectionality have noted, sexual identity may not be the only identity one wishes to inhabit, or in some cases, such as race, be unable to inhabit. With NWP teachers, I forestall discussions of my identity as a queer researcher working on queer subject matter. We are starting our exploration first and foremost as teachers, and once we are teachers "together," I am better placed to traverse new territories with them. Clearly invisibility and visibility remain at war in these forays.

Whether or not a teacher (or a student, or anybody for that matter) decides to come out or not, the fact that there is a "closet" is concrete evidence of invisibility in the culture at large. Honestly, I might have opened the closet door with a different group. But as the conversations with this group unfolded, all of the directors of the Writing Project, not just me, felt that my doing so would risk shutting down their exploration rather than prying it open. It is also true that I was not looking forward to feeling more trauma, trauma that arose and attached itself to me through all of my past experiences and through the present experience of hostility and through all that renders invisible (not even viable) anything outside of heterosexuality and gender conformation. I was also not interested in having them dismiss our discussions as my "homosexual agenda." There was too much at stake. In this case, we made a strategic teaching decision. I say "we" because the other three members of the team did not explicitly "out" me and because we discussed whether or not I ought to explicitly disclose my

queer identity.

Other scholars have written about "risking queer," so beyond the above interlude I won't belabor that point here, other than to say that whether one is in any real danger or not, feelings of fear, risk, and danger are often present facts. As my interlude exposes, even those of us fairly comfortable in our queer skins, comfortable enough to write about it professionally, can still feel it.

Engendering Archives

Shortly after the Summer Institute in which I challenged teachers to discuss queer issues, Alexander and Rhodes published a multi-modal essay in *Enculturation* ("Queer Rhetoric and the Pleasures of the Archive" 2012) and a companion video essay in *technoculture: an online journal of technology in society (*"Queered"). "Queer Rhetoric and the Pleasures of the Archive" makes an argument for public archival representations of queer lives. They argue for bringing queer archives directly into the work of queer composition and rhetoric. They interweave visual queer archives into the textual argument for queer (re)imaginings of ethos, pathos, and logos. Most of the archival material they retrieve and present, however, represents urban artifacts. Most certainly web 2.0 technologies ensure that rural and suburban archival queer material can be located, but it remains far less prominent than urban queer archives. Several times while searching specifically for rural queer sites, I encountered broken links and disappointment. As those who were born into the digital age participate in the creation of archives, we can expect archival material that reflects the experiences of non-urban queers to flourish, hopefully rapidly, but currently it remains less well represented.[6] Alexander and Rhodes got me thinking about rural queer archives and the possibility of shifting the responses to queerness by rural teachers and students. This ultimately led to my asking students in a glbqt literature course at the university to create archives of queerness, based on what they felt needed more visibility. I longingly imagined a direct connection between them and their archives to the teachers, and through the teachers, to queer Appalachian youth. I will discuss these archives shortly. Suffice it to say that, while I longed for direct connections, I had at least created dotted lines between my college students, the NWP teachers, and the teachers' Appalachian students through the discussions, readings, and composing assignments in the college literature course.

Queer Rural/Rural Queer

Proposing visibility for queerness, and especially rural queerness is complicated. Mary L. Gray's book, *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America* points out how much the role of traditional family plays in trying to do queer advocacy. Her ethnographic research reveals that, where urban queers are able to form alternative or

non-traditional family structures, this practice is by far more difficult to do in rural areas. Also, she notes that networks such as the Gay Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) are seen as forcing themselves on rural communities. It is worth mentioning that the movie *It's Elementary,* the foundation for introducing our Writing Project teachers to queer curricular possibilities, had the direct sponsorship of GLSEN. According to Gray's research, rural communities often close ranks against what they see as "urban agitators," and outside pressure. I can't help but wonder if at least some of the teachers responded to the film in this light, even though some of the schools featured in the documentary were rural schools.

Gray's research also points to issues I find pertinent. For many rural queers, staying in the family network is critical. Alternative families are less available than in urban centers. Often, being able to stay with family means keeping one's queerness as invisible as possible, or at least unable to be "read" by hetero family and community members. I intimately know this reality and thus recognize that on multiple levels it troubles my desires to make rural queer visible. As Gray's study reveals, "'Rural communities' material dependencies on structures of familiarity and the value placed on conformity as a sign of solidarity intensify the visibility of compulsory heterosexuality's hegemonic sexual and gender norms" (138). Given our reliance on the hetero/homo binary, queerness of all kinds would, it seems, escape visibility and reinforce the notion, as expressed by a teacher in the Summer Institute, that non-straight children are not present enough (code for "I don't have any queer kids and if I do I don't want to know it") to warrant any change in a heterosexist curriculum and teaching practices.

Gray's data also clearly reveal, however, that rural youth do seek digital archival material:

> A media in situ approach applied to this fieldwork shows rural queer youth prioritizing particular genres of media engagement. Rural youth used the Internet, particularly engagements with youth-spun websites and personal ads on commercial media properties like Gay.com, to confirm the existence of queerness beyond their locales and to strategize how to bring that queerness home to roost. (127)

We might ask why rural queer youth must "confirm the existence of queerness beyond their locales." In part it is because of the lack of rural queer archival material—invisibility. Moreover, it is because metropolitan queers, including academics and artists, feed anti-ruralism. As Scott Herring notes in *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism*, the storyline that all of us are fed is that, in order to have a life, rural queers need to get on the next bus out of town, head for the city. "Recent strains of queer theory and lgbtq politics," Herring argues, dismisses rurality; the rural "(take your pick: Idaho, North Carolina, small-town America, hick) is shelved, disavowed, denied, and discarded in favor of metropolitan sexual cultures such as New York City, San Francisco, or Buffalo" (5). Although Herring goes on to argue that there is indeed a

thriving culture of rural queerness and queer artists that have critiqued the metropolitan norms, and in fact collects an archive of novels, memoirs, journals, and photographs as evidence, it still remains that his archive is one of the few. As an archive published by a university press, it also remains outside the reach of most rural queer youth. And, in my twenty-five plus years of teaching in rural America, I have come to believe that there may be less access for rural queer youth to any number of queer archives than we like to imagine.

Trauma Waning (What the Students Said)

The students who took the queer literature class, like the youth Gray studies in *Out in the Country,* know their way around the internet. As I mentioned above, I asked my class to compose queer archives in order to make visible, through image, some part of queer culture that they believe *needs* visibility. I shared with them my experiences with the teachers in the Writing Project and, likewise, shared with them how frustrated and devastated I felt with the teachers' responses. Most students were two to three years removed from their high school experiences, though there were a few first-year students; all but two or three of the thirty-four students adamantly concurred that their teachers in K-12 did not bring queer narratives, experiences, or discussion into the curriculum. Only two out of thirty-four students knew about (but had never seen) the AIDS Quilt. The majority of them agreed that in their high schools the possibility that any of them (students or teachers) might not be heterosexual, if imagined, went unspoken. The exceptions to this were students who attended urban, arts magnate schools. One straight-identified student took the queer course because she is applying to graduate schools with a focus on Adolescent Literature and felt that her own lack of knowledge and absence of experience with queer people or queer material would be a detriment to her future students.[7]

I did not require students to choose images from rural settings, nor images of identities that are marked as rural. I asked them to create archives where they believe we need visibility and to consider placing those archives in the public domain in some way. For most of them, this placing meant solely the web; but a few of them did a pamphlet drop around campus and Uptown. Against the backdrop of our discussions, which did include ongoing and explicit discussion, reading, and viewing of rural, urban, and suburban contexts, the students decidedly went in their own directions. None of them chose to do archives that could be identified as particularly rural. When they did concern themselves with geopolitical boundaries, it was usually on a global level; more often, however, they chose other thematic frameworks, such as lesbian motherhood, transgender activism, queer punk, third genders, queer athletes, black transgender prisoner abuse, and transgender and queer children to name a few.

Though I personally desired more intentional rural archives, I was pleased at how students gravitated toward images and texts that acknowledged various intersectionalities. By the time they were working on their archive projects, several of

them had indicated that they believed the best path to visibility was through marked difference. Their move to this position on difference in itself surprised me, since at other times during the semester they had spent significant time arguing that queers are just the same as non-queers and that marriage equality marked the most important queer issue. They had been decidedly perturbed at the idea of embracing stigma. We had spent a few sessions discussing Warner's *The Trouble with Normal* and the ways in which an expectation for average or sameness leads to deep stigmatization that can, literally, be fatal. However, we had also discussed complications surrounding "passing" for a number of identities, including gay, bi, and transgender identities. (Visibility and invisibility once again.) We had read Jennifer Finney Boylan's memoir, *She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders*, the comic (and tragic) transgender narrative of a Colby College professor in rural Maine; we had viewed the documentary *Southern Comfort,* a film that tells the stories of a group of rural transgender persons in the American south, including the story of Robert, a transman who died of ovarian cancer in part because he was denied health care; we had watched *Out in the Silence,* a documentary centered on a gay high school student in Oil City, PA. In the case of both films and the memoir, rurality and gender and sexual identity are at issue; the protagonists seek the ability to pass.[8] They do not want to be visible. It is important that I tread lightly here, though, because I do not want to suggest that passing is necessarily a direct equivalent to seeking "normalcy" or invisibility. Issues of visibility are far more complicated than many of us make them out to be.

Like all categorization, the rural/urban/suburban categories are both heuristically useful and limiting. On the one hand, knowing that there are other queers who look just like you—"normal" (invisible?), just like any other rural person or, conversely, knowing that there are others who are different like you, thus forming a sort of likeness in difference—can be very affirming. On the other hand, discussions surrounding the complications around visibility and invisibility, normalcy and deviancy in different geopolitical spaces, were unavoidable in my class, since we discussed not only those texts and films already mentioned, but also viewed *Paris Is Burning* (urban black), *Pariah* (urban black) and *The Laramie Project* (rural white) as well as read Annie Proulx's short story "Brokeback Mountain" (rural white), Michael Chabon's debut novel *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh* (urban white), Alison Bechdel's graphic memoir *Fun Home* (rural and urban white), and Jeanette Winterson's *The Powerbook* (a different kind of queer space altogether). The geographic mix and diverse interests of the class itself brought many possible organizing principles for their archives into play. No matter the organizing principles for composing their archives, however, students were imagining the Writing Project teachers and rural students as one possible audience. While my forcing the imaginary yoking of the Summer Institute and our lgbqt course pressured class members to invoke the NWP teachers and their students, my students seemed willing to do so with passion. Their own remembrances of fenced out queerness in school and everyday lives provided what we together came to call the

"fire in our bellies."

Creating and making public digital queer archives may do some good for intervening in discriminatory policy making, throwing queer youth a lifeline and providing rural queers access to queer experiences and to the knowledge that they are not alone, that others are out there and that some of those queers have chosen to stay in their rural homes and not migrate to urban spaces. There are complicating caveats, however. It is not just that for somebody to be visible somebody else must be willing to *see;* it is also that heteronormative structures and strictures lurk, unexposed in the everyday life of schooling.

For instance, in their "Queer: An Impossible Subject for Composition," Alexander and Rhodes have "now come to believe that queerness is not simply one of composition's difficult subjects" but that it is one of "composition's impossible subjects" (179). They point out that

> A number of interrelated knowledge/power complexes make queerness impossible in composition. First, and perhaps easiest: the juxtaposition of sex and schooling forms a theoretically compelling yet politically dangerous (institutionally suicidal) site. Sex, especially non-normative sexual relations, is a never "appropriate" in the classroom. It destroys our composure. The parallel tongues of school and sex can only exist if they promise not to touch. (179)

If this is the case for Alexander's and Rhodes' pedagogical context—university teaching, *in California no less*—then it most certainly must be for public school teachers in rural Appalachian Ohio.[9] Queer, they argue, is outside of the boundaries of school composing, of writing programs that must guarantee certain kinds of skills, certain kinds of form, and certain kinds of behavior. So, too, must queer—queer visibility, queer lives, queer experience, and queer composing—be contained or excised in public schools. If the boundaries pinch like a too-tight girdle in the university, the standardizing, normativizing testing of public schools and the tightly controlled access to any information on sexuality, let alone non-normative sexualities and identities, cut off one's breath entirely. Even if I can convince the teachers I work with to "see" queerness, to be open to it in their students, they cannot view or bring digital archives into the learning space. I do mean this literally because the schools in our area block access to sites pertaining to sex, sexual orientation, etc. Clearly, teachers in our rural schools teach under very different circumstances than I do.

In this same article, Alexander and Rhodes argue that staying on the margins, actively disrupting, refusing to be "composed," has great value. Indeed it does. Theoretically, I want to linger on the margins with them. I want to urge rural queer youth to join us. The truth is, however, not only is this dangerous for real bodies, but some rural queers, like some transgender people, don't want to be on the margins, don't want to live in alternative communities even when they could create them, don't want to look or be different. Many an urban queer has angrily critiqued the rural desire to lay low, to seek invisibility, arguing that if those hicks would just get angry, flaunt

some outrage and some queerness, they could live their lives proudly out. If what is important to rural queers is getting along, being accepted by straight family and community members, and if there is no alternative family to take you in and protect you after you have provoked and unsettled, it may well be that the provocation is momentarily satisfying, but ultimately treacherous. If wearing the glitter is dangerous, then throwing the glitter may well result in homelessness at best, tied to a buck fence and left to die at worst. This simple fact uncovers the inevitable tension in my own desire to make rural queers visible and marked against heteroculture and even sometimes against their own desires. Such contradictions became part of the discussion in my lgbtq literature class as students composed, narrated, reflected on, analyzed, and imagined audiences they hoped to reach.

A Call to Action

What I have to say is not earth shattering, on one hand. In some ways it is extraordinarily commonsensical. But on the other hand, I would go so far as to say the consequences, though not guaranteed, hold possibility to be quite extraordinary, may, in fact, transform classrooms and lives, might even save lives. After all, a large percentage of homeless youth identify as lgbtq. The number of lgbtq youth who commit suicide is proportionally high. Bullying and murdering of those who are or who are perceived to be nonconforming to cisgendered and heterosexist norms continue at an alarming rate. As I finished this version of this essay, a young transwoman, Leelah Alcorn, intentionally walked into traffic on a busy interstate in Southwest Ohio and was struck and killed by a truck. Her suicide note made it clear that she did this because she felt her family and the world would not accept her. This particular senseless loss reminded me of a depressing fact that some teachers tell me they are instructed not to intervene if an act of bullying is against students perceived to be or actually associated with gender or sexual non-conformity. In this moment, the trauma I feel waxes again.

Remember that one exigency for this exploration was the resistance of National Writing Project teachers to ideas for queer possibilities and curricula in their rural Appalachian classrooms. (Many [most?] readers of this journal will not reside nor teach in rural areas, but my hope is that there is something instructive here for them as well.) The strength of this resistance alongside the ongoing anti-queer and anti-transgender rhetoric in our public, institutional, and legal spheres catapulted me into a moment of trauma resulting in this rather odd stew of concerns about visibility and invisibility for rural queers as well as a revived knowledge about the dearth of rural queer archives. My own remembrances are meant to offer readers a sense of my positionality, but also to engender a small archive that highlights issues of visibility and invisibility that continue to vex at least some rural queers, including students, especially those who are given no space in which to choose visibility without condemnation. The dotted lines of connection among the NWP teachers, their students (some possibly queer), my university students, me, and hopefully my readers, are, of course, tenuous

and to a certain degree imaginary. Nonetheless, some of you work with teachers through a variety of formal and informal programs. The dotted lines to K-12 students may well exist for you as well. If nothing else, some of the students in those classrooms may one day be your students. Or, perhaps those students have younger family members and friends still in a K-12 classroom. While we cannot generalize from the experiences here in Appalachia to all classrooms, I do contend that problematic contexts for queer and transgender students remain prevalent across national geographies.

For me then, what is at stake in the resistance of the NWP teachers I write about here is their own understanding of difference (lack of?), but also the lives of their students, those students to whom I have never laid eyes on yet feel keenly connected to through their teachers. The teaching context for the NWP teachers is much different than mine. Most of the teachers do not live and work under conditions that allow them to easily integrate queer material into their classrooms. Neither students nor teachers have access to online queer domains through school servers. They cannot access research databases with information on queerness. These rural Appalachian teachers rightly feel the terror of losing their jobs. A few indicate they might get away with teaching a young adult novel with gay themes under the auspices of multi-educational curriculum. Most indicate they don't want to. And of course, while beyond the scope of this essay to address fully, there are some important critiques of such curricular approaches. Pritchard, for instance, points to the flawed logic of the additive model (add a gay themed novel and all is well for queer youth). Unless issues of power, intersections of multiple identities and not just sexual identities, and more nuanced understandings of safety are addressed, curricular adjustments will not be transformative to the degree they need to be (Pritchard 321-322). Thus, I cannot in these current moments of trauma, expect much at a curricula level. On the other hand, teachers themselves might be willing to allow for queer existence—that is queer students—in their classrooms if the teachers are saturated and confronted with queer humanity.

Staying the Queer Course

It's Elementary is an even-keeled documentary, one that tries not to evoke emotion. It works to show, as a matter of fact, how queer can curricularly thrive in public schools. It is self-limiting in a couple of ways, however. First, I think it is open to the recent critiques of multicultural education that assume an uncritical model in that the film's primary goal is the addition of gay themes to the curriculum. Second, I suspect that to the teachers I work with it is also just one more "here is what you should be doing in your classroom with your curriculum" in an onslaught of daily dictatorial pronouncements from others. I will continue to view *It's Elementary* with the teachers for its pragmatic and ethical value; but I will also show them what my students, who a few short years ago were their students, think is important in queer, genderqueer, and

transgender visibility. That is, I will continue to ask my students to create archival material with teachers and younger students in mind. I will ask their permission to make those archives available to teachers, and I will ask them to make them available to others in public spaces, digital and otherwise. I do not fear or eschew pathos. I will show the teachers *The Laramie Project, Out in the Silence*, *Pariah*, *Two Spirits,* and the predictably sweet romantic comedy *Saving Face;* I will introduce them to the "wrong kind" of queer in *Southern Comfort*, *Paris Is Burning, Tongues Untied*, and through Brandon Teena and Leelah Alcorn. I will ask them to consider power, intersectional identities, and our own complicity in a system that literally kills non-conforming individuals. They may cry. They may be stunned. They may be hurt. They may be angry. They will surely feel manipulated. This is risky business for me and on my part. But they will be confronted with and asked to acknowledge (to see) queer lives, queer deaths, and queer humanity. And because they are teachers, they will respond.[10]

For my colleagues in composition studies, I hope for a continued awareness of the urgency for addressing queer issues in our teaching, administrative, and scholarly lives. Queer compositionists have pointed out our own dearth of queer archives and materials, including those in the ubiquitous textbooks of FYE. Perhaps what I have written here has convinced you that the majority of our students have come to us from schools where queerness is invisible, not allowed, or at best considered reasonably addressed by a single reading. Might you reconsider what role you could play in opening your curricula to a space where queer archives could thrive alongside others, examining the heterosexist, racist, sexist, and classist structures and strictures that impinge on all of us, the layers of power, the neoliberal pitfalls we are prone to? Like me, were you alarmed that only two of the university students in an lgbqt literature course knew of the existence of the AIDS quilt, let alone of the horrific racist and homophobic history that led to the quilt's creation?

As a queer teacher, a teacher of queer rhetoric, composition, and literature, I find the idea of a conscious representation of queer, genderqueer, and transgender archival material in public space to be tremendously potent—not only for what those representations mean for me as a rural queer person, but also for the potential power they possess to disrupt heterosexist and cis-gendered culture and for engaging both queer and non-queer students in public discourse around sexualities. Making queer lives visible can facilitate acceptance, empathy, and alliances. This may be particularly crucial for rural queers. Because of the complexities around rural queerness and visibility, however, such tasks may be quite fraught. As Alexander and Rhodes argue, we need to carefully consider what we do with the archival material. They also contend that while queer archives may not fully account for or "embody" the experience of queer trauma, the archives can "offer us a sense of the rhetorical practices developed in response to such trauma—rhetorical practices arising out of the specificity of queer experience and queer possibility" ("Queer Rhetoric"). I agree on both counts. Retrieving, viewing, and discussing queer artifacts provide powerful means by which

teachers and students can begin to understand the role of heterosexist and cis-gendered culture in queer and transgender silence and silencing, as well as begin to critique the role of private and public rhetorics that wall queerness out of public space, dialog, and rhetorical history. Hopefully the work that my students are willing to do will be one of the many steps needed to make visibility an option for rural queers, to open the minds of those who teach them. Rural queer archival material must find its way to our colleagues in the public school setting, into rhetoric and composition, and into the body politic.

Post Script: Trauma, Always Trauma

I'm not out, still, to everyone. Not my non-academic neighbors up in the Appalachian hillside. Not to all of my family members, though I am sure they know, or at least they acknowledge my "oddness." We just don't speak of it. There seems to be no will to do so, on either side. But nor do I hide it. My 86-year-old aunt knows. She asks questions like, "Why queer instead of lesbian?" She genuinely wants to know. She asks if it is OK if she tells people I'm lesbian, or at least bisexual. "It is easier to explain," she says. But she quickly takes the bisexual part back. She told me a story recently. She has a friend let's—call her Bonnita. Bonnita is 92 years old. Bonnita's daughter is lesbian. Even though my Aunt and Bonnita have been very close friends for decades in the very small town they live in, they have never spoken of lesbian daughters and queer nieces. Finally, last year, my aunt broached the subject by offering me up as the family lesbian, even though she fully understands that I do not identify as lesbian. My aunt recognized that the stakes were high for her friend, and she knew that in such a high stakes game I would proudly wear the mantle of lesbian. Her friend Bonnita sobbed in deep grief and gratitude. "Oh," she said, "I have never spoken of my daughter as a lesbian to anyone. Not anyone. Ever." Bonnita and her daughter are now a part of my story. A story that is most assuredly traumatic, most assuredly rural.

Notes

[1] I embarked on this endeavor knowing full well how problematic it is to assume that adding a few gay-themed stories does much to transform a curriculum. (See Pritchard, for instance.) It may in fact, reify problematic assumptions. On the other hand, I needed to start somewhere and college students have told me that it would have made a difference to them if they had been given opportunities in high school to read about gay experiences.

[2] By archive I simply mean informal or formal collections of queer material of any kind, including movies, videos, web pages, images, novels, memoirs, etc. From their position as scholars of rhetorical public space, Charles E. Morris III and K.J. Rawson argue that continuing to collect glbtq materials is vital, but to also enact queer archives the archivist must disrupt and challenge "normativizing collecting and circulating

practices of other institutions" (76). Important texts that focus on queer archives outside of the field include Ann Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feeling* and Judith (Jack) Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place*.

[3] See, for instance, the Bell and Valentine collection *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities*, Gray's *Out in the Country*, Stein's *The Stranger Next Door*, Howard's *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History*, and Scott Herring's *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism,* and Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place,* to name a handful of book- length projects.

[4] I am inclined to agree with Mitchell that the closet remains intact in many rural settings. Halberstam complicates this, though, by arguing that the ubiquity of sex among rural gay men and a desire for gay men who have migrated to urban centers to return to rural lives "belies the closet model" (37).

[5] *It's Elementary*, released in 1996, is widely recognized as a groundbreaking film that offers teachers documented ways in which they could bring queer issues into the classroom. It also illustrates how willing and able children are to engage in issues of diverse identities. Later versions include a second DVD that presents teacher workshops on the matter.

[6] While it is not within the scope of this paper to focus on rural digital access, my own experience with issues of limited bandwidth and dicey connectivity suggests that access may impact queer rural representations.

[7] This group of students is not necessarily representative of the entire student body, of course. The course is an elective that most students take because they either self-identify as non-normative, know somebody who does, or feel a genuine desire to know something more about gender and sexuality. It is open to both upper and lower-division students from across the university. The course is listed as Gay and Lesbian Literature, although I teach texts by transgender, bi, and straight theorists, writers, and filmmakers.

[8] On the other hand, we also watched the documentary *Two Spirits*. Fred, the murdered Native American youth, is intentionally visible.

[9] Appalachian composition scholar Todd Snyder, born and raised across the border in West Virginia, writes, "Rural Appalachia had taught me how to think, feel, and believe about the issue of homosexuality. Homosexuality should not be discussed out in the open" (197).

[10] Will I come out to them? I do not know. My hope is that my queerness will be visible to them, that my difference is no longer subsumed in heterosexist and cis-gendered assumption.

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Rejecting the Business-Model Brand: Problematizing Consultant/Client Terminology in the Writing Center

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> "…words carry with them the places where they have been." —Lester Faigley

> "Students are not customers to be served. They are much more important than that." —David M. Perry

In a recent job advertisement for an English faculty member, the Texas A&M University at Kingsville called first and foremost for a candidate who could "provide excellent customer service." [1] This language is indicative of the business-model thinking that has permeated higher education, especially in recent years. While we may not be surprised to find this terminology in our job calls, one place where we may expect it less is within the university writing center (WC), a place that was founded on pedagogies of collaboration, community, and process. Yet, four recent WCenter listserv conversations have focused on the language used to talk about WC work, WC workers, and student writers who are sometimes called "clients." [2] In these conversations that are mostly dominated by WC administrators, "tutor" is most often associated with student feelings of weakness, lack of skill, and need for help; "consultant" is associated with work that is "important" and supported by the International Writing Center Association Summer Institute; and "client" is used to describe a particular kind of professional, proactive student who seeks a specific type of expert input. Despite the consistent presence of these terms and their definitions, conversations surrounding them continue to pop up. Why do WC practitioners[3] keep posting requests for advice about whether or not to rename themselves, even after a seeming consensus has been reached via an overwhelming preference for the use of "consultant"/ "client"?

While a recurring public conversation surrounding this issue of naming continues, other sources suggest that the use of "consultant" has not actually replaced the use of "tutor." For example, Writing Center Director Clint Gardner created a podcast at the 2011 Rocky Mountain Peer Tutoring Conference at Weber State

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University in which he asked WC practitioners from across the country how they define the work that they do. Use of the term "tutor" outnumbered "consultant" ten to one (Gardner). The following year, Jackie Grutsch McKinney confirmed a similar finding in a more formal research study. She conducted an anonymous survey distributed via the WCenter listserv that asked participants to define "writing center" and the kind of work done there. She found that the words "tutor," "tutors," "tutoring," and "tutorials" were used 186 times and the terms "consultant," "consulting," and "consultation" were used just 36 times. Grutsch McKinney notes this as surprising, since "many seem to assume that 'consultant' is preferable to 'tutor'" (64). Yet, "tutor" was over five times more prevalent in these privately conducted surveys than "consultant." This discrepancy between what WC practitioners publically discuss over the WCenter listserv and what they say about their work when asked individually and privately suggests that a closer investigation into the labels used in the WC is needed.

WC practitioners have been concerned with the ways they name themselves since the inception of WCs. When these conversations show up in our scholarship and research, they tend to focus on the ways that cultural moments determine the labels we use for the spaces in which we work. For example, Peter Carino recognizes how the climate of open admissions in the 1960s-70s led to the use of "clinic" and "lab," both of which, despite best intentions, came to be thought of as remedial ("What" 33). The danger involved whenever we define the work we do is that the larger academic community is always reading such labels as metaphors, created by words that carry much meaning within a larger cultural context over which we don't have control. In these particular "tutor" vs. "consultant" conversations, there seems to be an even greater margin of error because the WC practitioners themselves, when asked individually and privately, label their roles in ways different from those used when WC administrators publically discuss terminology in professional spaces like the WCenter listserv and on WC websites.

What has become evident in these listserv conversations is that we have not engaged in enough critical, self-reflective questioning that considers what the terms "consultant" and "client" mean in our current cultural and economic moment. Scholars have recognized the need for such reflection on the terms we use to describe ourselves as a necessary move towards more fully representing who we are and what we do (Grutsch McKinney; Rendleman), but we have yet to do this work. At a time when the university is strongly influenced by neoliberal ideologies that favor privatization, [4] corporatization, free markets, and individualization over the public, regulatory practices and social welfare (Duggan), we must ask ourselves: who benefits from the use of business-model terminology in the WC? How does the labeling of WC practitioners as "consultants" and student writers as "clients" change the ways that WC practitioners view themselves, the ways that student writers view WC practitioners, and the ways that WC practitioners view student writers and student

writers view themselves? Is the seeming public and scholarly preference for and use of business-model terminology the WC's attempt to professionalize itself in response to the growing pressure faced by universities to corporatize? If our conversations about WC terminology seem to be in a moment of flux, what potential might the WC have for being a place of resistance to the reinforcement of the business-like terminologies and neoliberal ideologies that are already accepted and used across the university?

My purpose in this essay is to critique the use of "consultant" and "client" in WC scholarship, on WC websites, and throughout WCenter listserv conversations.[5] Ultimately, these labels and the effect they have on our work, even if subconscious, have the potential to damage and change the relationship that WC practitioners have with student writers. I begin this critique by analyzing three key articles published in *The Writing Center Journal* in the 90s that reject the use of "tutor" and argue for or seem to accept the use of "consultant" and "client." Next, I consider how "consultant" and "client" are defined within the business context in which they are most prominently used, and I show how the transfer of such terms into the WC is problematic when the influence of neoliberalism and corporatization on the university is strong. Within this framework, I analyze WCenter listserv commentary from WC practitioners across the country who use the terms "consultant" and "client" to describe the nature of their work, and thus may be unintentionally reinforcing neoliberal ideologies that value efficiency, profit, and product in ways that conflict with prominent WC philosophies and pedagogies that emphasize collaboration, community, and the composing process (Clark; Harris "Talking"; Hobson; Lunsford; North). While I primarily see the work of this essay as critique, I conclude with suggestions for future research that attempt to better understand how both local and global analyses of the language we use to define our work in WCs is needed to foster a stronger sense of self-awareness. I also suggest that WCs are places with much potential for resisting, subverting, and critiquing the reinforcement of business-like terminology and neoliberal ideologies that operate within the university at large.

The Move from "Tutor" to "Consultant" in Writing Center Literature

Although it has not received recent attention in our scholarship, the use of terminology to describe what tutors/consultants do in the WC has been explored over the past several decades. One of the first texts to reconsider the roles WC tutors play was Muriel Harris' "The Roles a Tutor Plays: Effective Tutoring Techniques," in which she argues that in order to be successful, tutors must be able to "change hats mid-sentence" from coach, to commentator, to counselor (63). Harris focuses most on the role of "tutor as coach," because of its non-directive, yet collaborative nature. However, the term "coach" never really did replace "tutor." More than ten years later, Lex Runciman, in "Defining Ourselves: Do We Really Want to Use the Word Tutor?," questions the WC's use of the term "tutor" by tracing the history of the term through its original use in the tutorial system of Oxford and Cambridge to Stephen North's use of the term in "The

Idea of a Writing Center." Yet, Runciman notes that the use of "tutor" in America's education system has not taken on the respectable British meaning but has instead been associated with remedial instruction (30). Thus, Runciman is perhaps right to call for a change in terminology that distances WC tutors from an association with remediation. He offers several alternatives to "tutor," including "writing assistant," "writing fellow," and "writing consultant."

The term that gets forwarded after Runciman's publication is "consultant." The acceptance of this term is made explicit in William McCall's "Writing Centers and the Idea of Consultancy," where he establishes this move by arguing for the use of the term "consultant" because it more accurately conveys the work "actually done in the writing center" (167). McCall tells his own story of stepping into a WC as a new director and preferring the term "tutor" to "consultant" because to him, "*consultant* was pretentious, more appropriate in the business world than in educational settings" (63). He then conducted his own research with the intention of discovering the ways in which faculty and students at his institution understood the terms "tutor" and "consultant," which encouraged him to "reassess [his] alliance to tutor" (164). Throughout McCall's discussion, he makes some curious claims about the relationship between what he calls the "tutor/tutee" and the "consultant/client" relationship. According to McCall, the use of "consultant" suggests an exchange between equals while "tutor" implies a hierarchical interchange between unequals.

Simply put, McCall argues that "tutors are for failures and consultants are for those who want to improve," even though he recognizes that those who usually identify as "consultants" in a business context, "seem colder, [and] more interested in problems clients are experiencing or trying to avoid than in the people or person who face the problems" (167). In his article, McCall moves the conversation about "tutors as consultants," a model in which the student writer is primarily defined by his/her writing problems, far away from Harris' concept of tutor as a coach, commentator, and counselor.

Although McCall's article received no direct critique, some scholars acknowledged the danger in adopting the "client/consultant" terminology in the WC. For instance, in "Clients Who Frequent Madam Barnett's Emporium," Scott Russell provides one way that the use of these terms has changed his own perceptions of the work he does as a tutor by comparing tutoring to the business of prostitution. By equating tutors to sex workers on the grounds that they face similar kinds of "clients," Russell claims that tutors and prostitutes both "have to deal with multiple clients, often strangers, for purposes that are ostensibly for the client's gratification… [and they must also] deal with aspects of the client's performance that are intimate in nature and involve the client ego" (62). From Hoigard and Finstad's 1992 book *Backstreets: Prostitution, Money, and Love*, Russell borrows three major client types: "the occasional client," "the habitual client," and "the compulsive client" (62), and satirically adds some of his own client types, including "the brutal drop-in," "the punctuation

fetishist," "the red pen request," and "the moral imperative." In his conclusion, Russell does recognize the dilemma faced by those who work in WCs as either having to change the "ancient arrangement of provider and client [or] re-invent it in new venues" (71). He also claims that in any place where people are intimately arranged in such a way that one is in the position of professional (as suggested by the term "consultant") and one is in the position of client, collaboration becomes difficult. Thus, the move to use "consultant/client" can and did, at least for Russell, problematically influence his perception of the roles tutors play in the WC.

What strikes me as odd about this tutor/consultant conversation in our scholarship is that no one really spent much time responding to or questioning Runciman, McCall, or Russell. I'm surprised that the comparison between tutors and prostitutes did not receive at least some critique, since I would think that such a comparison would make us uncomfortable. In his article, Russell does not question the idea of student as client, but rather seems to accept it. At the same time, Russell writes not about tutors/students, but instead focuses on the assumptions and possible connections that can occur because of the use of the "client/consultant" model used in other businesses outside of the WC. What Russell doesn't explore is why this similarity between WCs and the business of prostitution may be problematic and how the work in these two places is actually rather different. For example, when clients frequent sex workers, they are no longer trying to learn a skill, but rather seeking out temporary and immediate pleasure. In the WC, clients are trying to develop as writers (at least we hope), a challenging and somewhat slow process, yet one that also has a longer lasting influence. Russell, as well as most participants on the WCenter listserv, seems more concerned with justifying and explaining our work in WCs than with critically reflecting on the ways in which we describe and talk about it. In order to understand the cultural implications embedded in the use of "client/consultant" and what those terms mean when used in a university setting, we need to move outside of the WC and its scholarship.

The Cultural Location of the Writing Center, Consultant/Client Terminology, and the Corporate University

Although writing scholars have attempted to redefine "consultant/client" for their use within the WC, they haven't spent enough time considering the other kinds of meaning that the terms carry. Not only must we consider "consultant" and "client" from within the business-like world in which they are most commonly used, but we also have to consider what these terms mean in the context of the larger university and its political climate. These observations will reveal not only why "consultant/client" terminology often isn't suitable for the WC, [6] but also the potential for the WC to be a place of resistance to the reinforcement of business-like terminology within the university.

As recognized by both McCall and Russell, the terms "consultant" and "client" have a rich history of use in the business world, and the terms carry problematic

connotations with them when they are transferred to the WC and used to redefine the tutor/student relationship. For instance, scholarship in business has acknowledged that the consultant/client relationship is hierarchical; the consultant does the "knowledge work" that consists of identifying/diagnosing the client's problem, supplying ideas, creating and developing solutions or alternatives, and evaluating those alternatives from an expert standpoint, while the client is passive (see Fincham; Ford; Nikolova, Reihlen, and Schlapfner). Thus, there is very little actual collaboration or conversation that takes place, and once the client has sought help, his/her role is to receive the information from the consultant. Within the context of the WC, this kind of relationship suggests that the student's main action is making the appointment and getting his/herself to the WC, and once the session starts, the consultant takes over while the student writer simply listens.

While I am arguing that "consultant" and "client" may not be the most accurate terms to use in WCs today, before moving forward I want to acknowledge that in the mid-90s, there was perhaps an important reason for moving away from "tutor" and towards "consultant," in hopes of shedding the often marginalized term "tutor" for the seemingly more professional term, "consultant." For example, in *Universities in the Marketplace*, Derek Bok recognizes how the university can benefit from operating according to a business-like model. He argues that since there is always a need for money, universities (and WCs as well) can indeed benefit from applying business strategies that emphasize money saving techniques, strive to improve the quality of what we do, and focus on quicker adaptation.

However, as Bok warns, we must be careful about the ways in which such attempts may conflict with the educational values of teaching, research, and community. This move that occurred in the 90s toward the seemingly more professional use of the term "consultant" risked changing our WC identities, a move that was also challenged by William Macauley and Nicholas Mauriello in *Marginal Words, Marginal Work?*. Through their collection, these authors argue that we need to re-imagine the margin as something we should "work from/in/of…without that [exclusively pejorative] judgment, as outside the text of the academy, as a practical location rather than a judgment" (xiv). Thus, they suggest that we may perhaps be losing a valuable part of our identity if we attempt to cleanse ourselves from seemingly negative marginalized terms, such as tutor. Here, Macauley and Mauriello remind us of the value in understanding our position and how to empower ourselves from within it, rather than attempting to recreate ourselves via a new label that ignores the context that has defined us since our beginnings.

While the move to consultant was understandable in the cultural context of the mid-90s, under closer inspection, it undermines the goals of the academy and is not suitable for WCs in universities facing the pressure to corporatize (Bosenberg; Bok; Giroux; Rose; Slaughter and Rhoades). In *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy*, Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades offer a theory of academic capitalism that

focuses on university actors as participants in "networks" that "link situations as well as faculty, administrators, academic professionals, and students to the new economy" (15). These actors work to link universities to one another, to corporations, and to various state agencies and "initiate academic capitalism," rather than existing solely as "players being 'corporatized'" (12). Thus, it is through these capitalist market relationships that organizations within institutions are forced to understand their own identity and function.

Furthermore, Slaughter and Rhoades argue that universities practice market behavior not only in terms of making connections outside the ivory towers but also within themselves. This in turn makes students into players themselves because universities practice internal business relations, in addition to building relationships with corporations and the neoliberal state. Slaughter and Rhoades explain that, in addition to being associated with marketing and advertising, market-like behaviors often "cut across colleges and universities, attaching a price to things that were once free or charging more for items or services that were once subsidized or provided at cost" (26). Thus, external monies are generated and used by these "profit centers" that can then be used "to cross-subsidize other institutional activities" (4). Moreover, knowledge in the corporate university becomes something private (as opposed to public or collaboratively generated), and thus students are valued not as students but as "intellectual workers" that "make them market actors" (30). As a way of functioning successfully within the academic capitalist economy described by Slaughter and Rhoades, WCs would benefit in terms of their relationship with the greater institution by acting as for-profit centers that treat students like customers (or clients) who become part of the market networks.

This academic capitalism that influences universities stems primarily from the pressure of neoliberalism described most clearly by Lisa Duggan in *The Twilight of Equality?* as a late 20th century manifestation that privileges the private, corporate, and individual without acknowledging the needs of the public.[7] For the university, this means functioning more like a for-profit business, rather than as a public means of support for students. When this kind of framework is imposed on the university and felt by a place like the WC, our usual emphasis on helping student writers through collaboration and process is threatened by the need for efficiency and production.

Yet, because of its lack of stable identity within the university, the WC can actually be a valuable site of resistance to neoliberalism. When we consider the WC's history, we find that its rich flexibility (Harris "What's"), somewhat chaotic nature (Clark), peripheral institutional location (Hemmeter; Macauley and Mauriello), and attention to local contexts (Mauriello, Macauley, and Koch) make it a valuable cite for countering neoliberal ideologies. For instance, in "'Our Little Secret': A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions," Elizabeth Boquet recognizes the seemingly dual role of the writing center when she acknowledges two of its possible histories of origin: growing out of the early conference method, which suggests that

WCs were created to "sustain hegemonic institutional discourses" (466), or as an extracurricular entity, "attempt[ing] to wrest authority out of the hands of the institution and place it in the hands of the students" (466). We can perhaps best see the influence of both histories on the WC today when we think of the chaos that occurs within, recognized by Irene Clark as a "willingness to entertain multiple perspectives on critical issues, an ability to tolerate contradictions and contraries" (82). Thus, WCs should continually investigate the presence of neoliberalism in ways that are "diverse, contingent, [and] flexible," as Duggan notes, and offer resistance while attempting to understand neoliberal pressures "*in relation to* coexisting, conflicting, shifting relations of power along multiple lines of difference and hierarchy" (Duggan 70).

But to function as sites of resistance, we must realize that when it comes to understanding our named identities or roles, we should be ready to change them to reflect our local contexts in ways that defy rather than reinforce institutional hierarchies regulated by neoliberal ideologies. In this particular moment, we need to rethink our identities, not by accepting "tutors" or "consultants," but through looking for something different from both. We need to investigate how the consultant/client terminology might change the relationship between tutors and students in three particular contexts: first, on WC websites, where WCs have used the labels "consultant" and "client" in their marketing techniques; second, in business literature, where the connotations associated with "client" should lead us to question which students are valued through the use of this term and which students are made less visible; and third, on the WCenter listserv, where WC professionals talk about the appeal of rebranding themselves with consultant/client, which they inaccurately judge as less full of baggage in comparison to tutor. If we look closely at these contexts, we can begin to move toward more collaborative approaches to labeling WC practitioners, which provides an important opportunity for WCs to resist the business-model approach to education.

Selling Ourselves to the University and Beyond: The Use of Consultant/Client as Marketing Technique

In order to think through the marketing of the WC to the larger community and the university itself, we must first consider why that marketing relationship is complicated based on the WC's lack of a common, physical location. The WC has long been a place with a "history as not a place but a method" (Boquet 466) and as "a gap in the university structure" (Hemmeter 42). This is significant since, as Carol Haviland, Carmen Fye, and Richard Colby point out, "location is political because it is an organizational choice that creates visibility or invisibility, access to resources, and associations that define the meanings, uses, and users of designated spaces" (85). Such locations are usually influenced by the WC's proximity to certain departments, the English department or writing programs, campus-wide tutoring centers, student service organizations, second-

language learner programs, residence halls, and libraries. Because of their lack of locatedness, WCs must establish themselves via networking across departments and within various student services. While building such relationships isn't necessarily a bad thing and can indeed be very beneficial (see Macauley and Mauriello), the larger institutional valuing of academic capitalism makes it difficult to sustain such relationships in ways that support students rather than neoliberal ideologies.

Since WCs can exist in various locations and often employ WC practitioners who come from a variety of backgrounds and levels of education (Bromley, Northway, and Schonberg), the need for using local, context-specific terminology to define the role of WC practitioners makes sense. However, because WCs do not often have a concrete, generalizable, and stable location within the institution, they may feel pressure to participate in academic capitalism in order to establish the kinds of networks Slaughter and Rhoades deem necessary to the functioning of academic capitalism.

One example of how WCs attempt to build these relationships is via their websites. Through an approach to marketing that builds on the concept of student-as-customer, most WCs are using the terms "consultant" and "client," both as a way of attracting new employees, as well as advertising to students and faculty across, and sometimes beyond, campus. While the use of such terminology by for-profit universities, such as Kaplan, University of Phoenix, and DeVry University, might not surprise us, the fact that public universities, such as Purdue, Penn State, University of Texas at Austin, University of Nebraska Lincoln, University of Wisconsin Madison, the University of Louisville, and the University of Houston, to name a few, are also using "consultant" and "client" on their WC websites perhaps invites more questions.

Some public university WCs, such as my own, are even offering corporate services to businesses, with "diagnostic writing assessments" and the option of meeting "off campus at any time, including nights and weekends" (University of Houston Writing Center, N.d.).[8] This particular WC website offers options on the left hand of the screen, which include "student services," "faculty services," and "corporate services," while a list of the WC's partnerships is across the screen forming a right hand column. Thus, "student services" seem to be one of the many services offered by the WC, and the webpage appears to be written for many audiences beyond the student writer.

The WC then, within the context of a corporatized university, can establish itself through participating in the business of academic capitalism. Gaining such capital can be valuable in that it could lead to more monetary support much needed by underfunded WCs. For example, at my current institution, we have partnerships with various departments across campus, some of which pay the WC monetary fees for services. This setup is valuable in that it supports context-based and course-specific relationships, but limiting because students whose instructors haven't partnered with the WC or don't have funds to pay the WC have fewer opportunities to benefit from

services. While this has led to our ability to grow and prosper as a WC in many ways, it also makes our "service" of tutoring/consulting something that must meet departmental-customer expectations. Thus, the titles and names we use to refer to ourselves in this kind of neoliberal relationship do carry important meanings. When we use "consultant" and "client" in such settings, our work begins to resemble a business exchange far from what our work has been in non-profit, student-staffed WCs.

"Clients" in the Writing Center: Where Do All the Students Go?

While the move to use "consultant" as a way of establishing the professionalism and value of WC work within the larger academic economy, though problematic, may indeed reap some benefits, referring to students as "clients" is much more likely to detrimentally harm our relationships with students. To better understand the lineage of this term, I would like to turn once again to business literature. In "Client-Consultant Relationships: An Analysis of the Client Role From the Client's Perspective," Lars Jesperson argues that three images of the client are present in business/management literature: the customer, the client, and the victim.

Of the three images, none of them suggest that an equally collaborative relationship between client and "consultant," like the one McCall argues for, is possible. The first distinction of "client as customer" suggests a brief encounter without the establishment of a relationship. In the WC, this kind of attitude would lead us to simply meet student-client expectations without attempting to understand them as writers. The second distinction of "client as client" reinforces the consultant-as-expert hierarchy in which the consultant is sought when the client's job becomes too difficult and he/she must turn to the consultant in order to solve or "fix" the problem. This kind of scenario clashes strongly with the concept of peer tutoring which emphasizes the student as active in WC session, [9] and has been called for by WC scholars such as Irene Clark, Muriel Harris, and Eric Hobson.

Finally, the third depiction of "client as victim" is perhaps the most troubling because it suggests a naïve client who feels pressure from his/her manager, and thus becomes dependent on the consultant. Yet, this scenario is also the most reminiscent of a particular kind of student we often see in the WC: one who has been sent there by someone who holds a position of power (often a professor), and thus becomes dependent on the consultant to help him/her meet the expectations of the instructor. Robin Fincham also recognizes this power dynamic in "The Consultant-Client Relationship: Critical Perspectives on the Management of Organizational Change." She argues that from the manager's perspective, consultants are external and "live off it [the corporation] as a kind of benign parasite" (340). Operating from this kind of model, both the student-client and the consultant are victimized, which prevents the consultant from being able to help empower the student. Thus in the context of the WC, the "client as victim" model is dangerous because it reinforces the problematic

triangular relationship recognized in writing center literature by both Nancy Grimm and Thomas Hemmeter as one in which the professor/teacher holds power over both the tutor and the student, despite the teacher's absence.

Although within the WC context using the word "client" to represent students may not be intended to evoke the role of customer, client, and victim as explained by Jesperson, we can and should use his work to understand how clients in the business world conceive of their relationships with consultants. If WCs are attempting to create "consultant/client" relationships, they should be aware of how these terms have been constructed in their most prominent context. I do not mean to suggest that using "consultant" results in intentional endangerment or victimization of clients, but rather that adopting such terms may have a degree of these unintended effects. Unfortunately, we can begin to see the enactment of these roles in one WC professional's response to a December 2012 WCenter listserv post titled "Tutor or Consultant." In it, she writes:

> We embrace the way the term consultant professionalizes the relationship between consultant and client, and we sincerely hope that the term projects the image of a student-client who comes to the writing center seeking a specific type of expert input. However, we don't see that as serving the interests of the corporate university. Instead, we see it as an acknowledgment of agency on the part of our student-clients and as a way of asserting our recognition of clients' ownership of their writing goals, their academic and personal identity, and their internal locus of control… Our goal is to create a context in which students can seek expert support for their writing in a way that privileges the student as the goal-setter in the relationship and that makes the very act of the coming to the writing center an expression of agency and self-efficacy on the part of the client.

Here, the term "consultant" means a professional expert with whom the student has more agency and ownership over his/her writing. What seems especially interesting to me in this response is the way that the "student-client" is defined as someone who is privileged as the goal-setter and a professional who seeks a specific type of expert input and acts with agency, while simultaneously asserting ownership over writing goals, academic and personal identity, and internal locus of control. However, to what extent is student agency recognized when it's operating within a hierarchal power structure in which the consultant holds the expert knowledge/power?

Furthermore, we should read into this discussion of the student-client the findings of Pam Bromley, Kara Northway, and Eliana Schonberg's "How Important Is the Local, Really? A Cross-Institutional Quantitative Assessment of Frequently Asked Questions in Writing Center Exit Surveys," which suggests that, across a large public land-grant institution, a mid-sized private university, and a small private liberal arts college, the top five reasons for why students visit the WC include: to improve

writing, to improve grades, to satisfy an instructor's recommendation, to receive assistance with challenging assignments, and to determine whether or not they're on the right track (24). While these results do indeed leave room for student-clients to visit because of their own personal goals, they suggest that students are mostly motivated by external forces (grades and instructors), which may create a context in which acting with agency is difficult.

Furthermore, the model promoted in the listserv post above seems to envision a particular kind of pro-active, student-client who recognizes his/her own agency, while ignoring other kinds of students who often frequent WCs, including students whose teachers require them to go, students who are failing and need help, writers who are resistant, and insecure writers who don't have particular goals but feel stuck. We must be careful about the terms we use to talk about students, and recognize the ways in which labels can influence who feels comfortable visiting the WC. Should we be excluding the kinds of students who may indeed need our help the most?

One particular kind of student writer who may feel especially alienated from business-model terminology in the WC is the "basic writer" (BW).[10] While this label is limiting, I use the term here because the history and political contexts it evokes need to be acknowledged (DeGenaro; Soliday). In particular, WCs have tried to minimize their connection with BWs (Carino "What"; Grimm "Rearticulating"; Lerner),[11] even though WCs could play a valuable role in aiding them (Shaughnessy; Robinson). The relationship between WCs and BWs is a complicated one, especially because BWs may not see the WC as having an important enough role in helping them to succeed in college (Robinson) and because WCs often see their mission both philosophically and pedagogically in conflict with that which many BWs need. For example, WC philosophies often promote a focus on higher order concerns via a mostly non-directive approach, while BWs often prefer and excel when practitioners who work with them take a more directive approach to both higher and lower order concerns, as Marc Scott, Jacklyn Hockenberry, and Elizabeth Miller suggest. Because of this conflict in approach and need, some BWs exist as "invisible minorities" that may be unseen by the WC (Scott, Hockenberry, and Miller 50).

Finally, we know from William Burns's valuable article about the location of the Open-Admissions Writing Center that BWs visit for reasons that go beyond just wanting to use a computer or being tutored. Furthermore, Burns notes that when WCs try to turn student texts into "absolute, decontextualized spaces," they further "alienate writers who already feel the academic culture is silencing them" (63).[12] BWs are also especially vulnerable in a business-model WC because of the ways in which they've often been left out, silenced, or separated from composition, both when composition has been concerned with professionalizing itself (DeGenaro), and when universities turn their attention to greater institutional needs related to profit, enrollment management, and good public relations (Soliday). Thus, these student writers in behavior and need may conflict with a business-model WC agenda, meaning that,

when WCs focus on efficiency, profit, and production, BWs and their needs are at risk of being left out.

Thus, in addition to reconsidering how we name ourselves in the WC, we also need to think more carefully about the way that we label student writers in the Center. Jennifer Beech recognizes this in her book chapter, "Fronting Our Desired Identities: The Role of Writing Center Documents in Institutional Underlife." While her work focuses more on the ways in which we label ourselves and students in WC documents, she also argues that we should refer to students as "writers" (199). If WCs can make this important change in the way they talk about student visitors to the WC, then students (and their instructors) may begin to see themselves as "writers".

The Appeal of a New Brand: Writing Centers Attempting to Get Rid of Their Baggage

In this article, I have looked at how the consultant/client terminology problematically transfers business-model meanings to the relationship between practitioners and students in the university WC. I have also considered how those meanings are further perpetuated given the current cultural context of the university as strongly influenced by neoliberal ideologies and the pressure to corporatize. Then, I looked at how the WC's lack of locatedness within the institution makes it especially vulnerable to building relationships across campuses via academic capitalism, at how "consultant" and "client" are used as a university-wide marketing technique, and at how these terms privilege a particular kind of student-client that reinforces a hierarchal relationship with an expert consultant.

Yet, it is equally important to look internally to better understand how and why WC professionals feel drawn toward rebranding themselves with consultant/client labels. Neal Lerner articulates the value that brands hold in "Rejecting the Remedial Brand: The Rise and Fall of the Dartmouth Writing Clinic." He turns to higher education by referring to '"branding expert"' Dr. Robert A. Sevier, who writes, '"This is the era of the brand. Study after study indicate that institutions with a strong, valued brand enjoy opportunities that other less-branded institutions do not"' (qtd. in Lerner 13). While his article focuses on Dartmouth's elimination of its Writing Clinic in 1961 because of the remedial brand its writing students projected, I refer to Lerner's article for two primary reasons: first, to offer a similar cautionary tale about how poor branding in the WC can hurt its relationship with the institution; and second, to show the power writing programs have to shape institutions by "fight[ing] the brand" or "shaping institutional identities in ways consistent with our values" (30). Furthermore, Lerner's article suggests that the way we brand or label ourselves in WCs *does* matter, in terms of our own understandings of ourselves and our relationships with students, but also because of its impact on the university brand at large. This ability has also been recognized by Boquet who argues that WCs "remain one of the most powerful mechanisms whereby institutions can mark bodies" (465).

Thus, when we brand ourselves as WCs we are both representing the university and the students who visit us.

When we consider the concept of branding within neoliberal ideologies and the corporate university, the pressure to brand WCs as professionals who are seen as active participants in the market of academic capitalism seems valid, and the decision to define practitioners as "consultants" who work with "student-clients" is in some ways understandable. Yet, another way to think about our desire to be seen this way can perhaps be explained by the affective identification associated with branding. In *Branded Bodies, Rhetoric, and the Neoliberal Nation-State,* Jennifer Wingard discusses the ways in which branding and affective meaning-making work under neoliberalism. Wingard defines affective identification as something that "works as a backdrop of feeling that resonates with histories, rhetorics, and images that are not evoked directly but that circulate to connect our memories and bodies" (9). Thus, branding relies on *pathos* because "brands serve to create emotions through identification with images and symbols, and those emotions circulate, gaining value depending on their context and intelligibility" (9).

Within the university, branding can occur through language and titles. When we change our name from "tutor" to "consultant," we are in a sense (and as one WC administrator will say in a WCenter listserv conversation) attempting to "rebrand" ourselves for affective reasons; we prefer "consultant" because it makes us more confident about the work we do and about ourselves, while also locating us within the circulation of affect associated with professionalization, business, power, independence, profit, and freedom.

By choosing "consultant/client," I wonder to what extent is the WC—a place that does not usually root itself in the sciences or business—[13] acting based on affective identification? To what extent is our acceptance of business rhetoric in places where it wouldn't normally be found based on a visceral, gut-like feeling that "consultant/client" is a more valid way to talk about our work in WCs? When we rebrand "tutors" and "students" as "consultants" and "clients," we are attempting to separate ourselves from a shared painful history that associates us with remediation. Thus, we are perhaps acting from a need we feel to justify ourselves for our own well-being, in hopes of being respected by the university, and thus ensuring our continuance as an essential player in the corporate university.

However, renaming ourselves via affective meaning making isn't necessarily a bad move.[14] For example, one WC director decided to rebrand her WC in hopes of moving away from a marginal identity and toward a more context-specific one. She explains that in her center, they use "peer tutor," but that they're "considering rebranding to Undergrad Specialists because it fits an acronym [they] want to use." Although this director doesn't explain further what this acronym means to her and the undergraduate specialists themselves, the "US" acronym doesn't carry the business-model connotations that consultant and client do, and instead evokes a feeling of "us"-

ness, one of collectiveness, community, inclusion, and collaboration.

Unfortunately, it seems as though the majority of WC professionals prefer the consultant brand. For example, one respondent writes strongly in favor of the term "consultant":

> [I prefer] consultant. It matters. Tutor carries baggage both in a hierarchy and a remediation sense. People will argue, but it's true for those outside our unique discourse community. We strongly discourage tutor language in our Center. We are collaborators and peers and fellow writers.

While this respondent associates "tutor" with remediation, weakness, and hierarchy, she also associates collaboration, peers, and writers with the term "consultant." What's interesting here is that she ignores the ways in which these qualities of collaboration and peers have previously been directly associated with the meaning of tutor/tutoring within the WC. Furthermore, this respondent asserts that "tutor" has damaging baggage outside of "our unique [Writing Center] discourse community," which suggests that for audiences outside of the WC, the name change is an important way to establish the WC as no longer remedial and instead professional.

Still, the above respondent seems to consider "consultant" to be a neutral term when applied to WCs. Another listserv participant makes a similar move, explaining that, "the shift in terminology [from tutor to consultant] is an important part of the new identity we're crafting on campus." This "newness" associated with the term "consultant" is contrasted with the term "tutor" as one that "seems to carry undeserved baggage." Using the word "baggage" associated with "tutor" and not with "consultant" seems odd to me, as if these WC professionals are suggesting that consultant is somehow ahistorical and acontextual. This affectively appealing move seems to suggest that we are getting a fresh start and a new identity when we use the term "consultant." Yet, we aren't thinking affectively about the other contexts and ways that "consultant" is used, especially in the business world.

Despite our affective desire to re-brand ourselves, Wingard also points out that brands do not necessarily represent identities.[15] She argues instead that brands are assembled based on "possible subjecthood" and that emotions are engaged in a way that seems logical (20-22). Thus, perhaps our use of consultant/client terminology comes from an attempt to brand ourselves in a particular affective way that makes us feel somehow more legitimate and makes us feel as though our work has value and meaning in the greater institution and beyond. We must consider the reasons and assumptions behind the use of either tutor or consultant/client so that we can begin to understand why the change is being made, why it continues to be part of our conversations, and why, perhaps, there is some kind of discomfort with both using "tutor" and also with changing our name to "consultant." If there was no concern about whether or not the move toward "consultant" is right in the WC community, we wouldn't continue to solicit advice about whether or not to change our names.

Toward a Collaborative Renaming

While I have been rather critical of the WC community's move away from using the term "tutor" in favor of the seemingly less loaded term "consultant," I do think we've made progress and that we're right to sense a need to change the way we talk about the work we do in WCs. As Bok points out, the corporatization of the university can lead to a few benefits. For example, some WCs may have built partnerships across campus and increased their funds, which lead them to be able to offer better services to students, faculty, and staff. Instead of being underfunded and understaffed, WCs then have the opportunity to afford more. And perhaps, considering this move, "consultant/client" terminology better fits the relationships WCs are moving toward within universities. However, we need to stop, take a step back, and recognize how these labels are reforming and rebranding our relationships with student writers. As Macauley and Mauriello, and also Lerner suggest, perhaps we shouldn't be attempting to abandon our history as marginalized tutors whom we have most often understood as collaborative, community-focused, and process- (rather than product-) driven, in favor of a more professionalized and hierarchal relationship embedded in the use of "consultant/client" terminology. Although some of those who use "consultant/client" want it to mean something more collaborative and empowering for both students and tutors, I worry that these terms do indeed carry more "baggage" than we're willing to recognize.

Instead, WCs might think about ways that they can resist and/or subvert the business-model approach to education. As Burns and DeGenaro have both noted, WCs can be places where we recognize that the WC "is not an autonomous, 'student-owned' space" (Burns 69), but rather can be a space where we can critique hierarchal relationships that exist within the institution. One way that we can begin to do this kind of work is by rethinking how we talk about the work we do in WCs and how we conceive of the role and value of the student writer.

While there are no general, overarching solutions for how we should label WC practitioners and student writers, much could be gained by moving towards more localized, context-specific ways of describing our work. We might ask: what term for WC practitioners might make students most comfortable? How would WC practitioners themselves prefer to identify? How would students themselves like to identify within the space of the WC? As some members on the WCenter listserv have suggested, we might consider terms like advisor, coach, undergraduate teaching assistants, mentors, peer writers, and writing fellows as possibilities. These terms also carry baggage worth investigating in future research. Yet most importantly, decisions about what to call WC practitioners and student writers should not be made solely by directors and administrators based on their own visions, but rather in collaboration with WC practitioners, and even student writers, themselves.

As Harris put it in response to the February 2013 WCenter listserv conversations, "they [WC practitioners] should have some voice in the decision." Thus, we must do more research similar to Gardner's and Grutsch McKinney's that

asks WC practitioners how they identify their work in WCs and what kind of title they want to hold. This work needs to be done at both the local-institutional level and also later at a more global level. Based on Gardner's and also on Grutsch McKinney's findings, this process may consist of acknowledging that many WC practitioners still identify as "tutors." Thus, before rejecting the term completely and accepting "consultant" instead, we need to spend more time talking with those who identify as "tutors" and asking them why they identify that way.

Notes

[1] For a more in-depth discussion of this ad and its implications, see "Faculty Members Are Not Cashiers" by David M. Perry in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

[2] These WCenter listserv conversations include the January 2012 thread "Tutor vs. consultant," the December 2012 thread "Tutor or consultant," the February 2013 thread "titles for tutors/writing consultants," the March 2014 thread "what do you call the people you work with."

[3] Instead of using "tutor" or "consultant," I use the term "writing center practitioner" to mean those who work in the writing center with student writers on student writing. Like all labels, this one too is limited. Writing center practitioners are not just practitioners but are often also scholars, researchers, teachers, directors, administrators, peers-tutors, students, professionals, etc.

[4] Like Nancy Grimm, I use the term ideology "as a way to call attention to a system of intertwined ideas, beliefs, and values designed to maintain the status quo" ("Retheorizing" 80) and to refer to the manufacturing of an unconscious consent that begins to feel "naturalized through discourses that suggest the obvious ways that 'normal' people are supposed to think, write, act, speak, and believe" (81).

[5] In their valuable edited collection *Writing Centers and the New Racism: A Call for Sustainable Dialogue and Change*, Laura Greenfield and Karen Rowan justify the use of quotations and references from the WCenter listserv. They justify their decision to use the WCenter listserv in the following way:

> The citation of listserv posts remains contentious in the writing center field. To be sure, a person's informal comments in a mass e-mail are not intended to constitute a person's formal scholarly position on an issue. A listserv does, however, represent a significant discursive space in which ideas about language, practice, and–implicitly—ethics, circulate. Our decision to bring in quotations from and references to the listserv is therefore meant to demonstrate the kinds of ideas about race pervasive in the public sphere, not to single out an individual person for her or his views. For that reason, we have chosen not to cite the individual writer by name (1).
>
> I use WCenter listserv conversations for the same reasons, but instead of attempting to understand ideas about race pervasive in the public sphere, I am interested in understanding ideas about how we label

> and/or feel we should label writing center work(ers) and student writers. I too have chosen not to cite individual writer names. The full archives are available at http://lyris.ttu.edu/read/?forum=wcenter.

[6] I realize that the consultant/client terminology may be suitable for WCs at some particular universities. That being said, the decision to use such labels should be made after careful deliberation, not simply as the default.

[7] For a more in depth analysis of the corporate university and the influence of neoliberalism in higher education, see Boesenberg , Lynch-Biniek, and "Reforming Academic Labor, Resisting Imposition, K12 and Higher Education," the 25th Issue of *Workplace: a journal for academic labor*.

[8] This organization reflects the UHWC website pre-November 2015, as it has since been updated to be more mobile-friendly.

[9] I acknowledge that peer tutoring is just one tutoring model and that other kinds exist, like graduate student tutoring and professional tutoring. Peer tutoring is also one of the most, if not the most, common models and was/is the model around which much writing center research and scholarship has been and continues to be established.

[10] Robinson carefully defines "basic writer" as "non-traditional students," including both native speakers of non-standard varieties of English and students with different language backgrounds like ESL, who are often underprepared for mainstream academic discourse.

[11] This history is also reflected in a more recent study of university writing centers across the country, very few of which acknowledge their work with "remedial" populations (see Salem).

[12] In addition, Scott et al. found that basic writers may not feel comfortable when made the "primary agent" because they may already be anxious about visiting the WC (54).

[13] The sciences and business are the disciplines that Bok and Slaughter and Rhoades identify as ones that seem most likely to align themselves with neoliberal ideologies.

[14] Here, I mean to distinguish between "renaming" and "rebranding." The word "brand" comes from the act of burning flesh (human and animal) with a hot iron to mark and signify ownership. In contrast, to name comes from the act if identifying, distinguishing, or describing a thing.

[15] And, according to the origin of the word "brand," are often imposed by someone in a position of power.

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Toward A Mestiza/o Consciousness: Translingualism and Working-Class Students

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Introduction/Background

Wazzup? Hi. Yo. Hello. Urbandictionary.com defines all of these "words" as a form of greeting. As a "veritable cornucopia of streetwise lingo, posted and defined by its readers," (*wazzup*) this site not only reflects the hybrid, multiple Englishes that characterize the multicultural, "mashup" demographic of the U.S. (a multiplicity that defies the category "American" or any other categorization) but it also reflects the way many of us language—drawing on a variety of home, social, popular culture and academic "codes" we have either learned or embodied from interacting with the local, situated cultures around us. Working-class students or those students less privy to the "high brow" cultural and academic affordances an affluent zip code often implies in our country, are those most likely to come to academia entrenched in these languaging "reals," or hybrid codes that often reflect communication in their social and work communities. In higher education, they are often met with a "linguistic prescriptivism" (Nero and Ahmad) or a push toward one "right" type of speaking and writing that denies their lived experiences. The academic "border" can be one of the most difficult and soul-crushing epistemological spaces these students attempt to traverse—ironically a crossing that is socially constructed as a route to empowerment. This article theorizes and illustrates ways that students might employ multilanguaging through multimodality to navigate the borders of their classrooms, disciplines, and assignments in the hybrid and online college classroom. To do so, the first section approaches translingualism[1] through Gloria Anzaldúa's theory of a mestiza consciousness. This perspective not only provides a way to valorize what Victor Villanueva calls "other cultural organization" ("Politics" 174) in the classroom, but also a move toward decolonizing the digital for working-class students through an affective pedagogy that connects to their material motives and experiences. Section two of this article turns to a personal example of the impostor syndrome I felt as a first-generation daughter and student in order to demonstrate the subtlety of linguistic violence and epistemic silencing in the often-Platonic context of institutional education. Section three exemplifies a mestiza/o

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heuristic through classroom examples of multilingualism and multimodality in the classroom. Finally, this article offers a way to imagine how working-class students can work in, with, and against their writing environments and furthers the discourse of how digital environments can enable the act of critical composition for both academic and other contexts.

A Border Consciousness & Multi-Rhetorical Heuristic for Working-Class Students

In *Borderlands*, Gloria Anzaldúa discusses the makings of a multicultural consciousness as one that derives from "racial, ideological, cultural and biological cross-pollinization…a consciousness of the Borderlands" (76). The *mestiza* consciousness Anzaldúa describes is a useful way of understanding the "linguistic geographies" (Perryman-Clark, Kirkland, and Jackson 10) students and faculty may embody in our increasingly globalized culture, one that alters signifying and signification through "geo-migrations and other forms of postmodern sociocultural contact" (11). Though language has always been a fluid, evolving construct, increased transnational economic and social experiences proliferated by globalization and technology foreground a pluralistic orientation to languaging that is more visible than ever. Translingualism is a lens through which scholars are "currently re-envisioning writing and reading" (Canagarajah, *Literacy* 1) for a globalized geo-political, social, and economic landscape.

The concept of translingualism can be connected to the student-centered teaching movement that began over four decades ago with Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) and Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers* (1973), followed by the Conference on College Composition and Communication's (CCCC) 1974 resolution declaring "Student's Right to Their Own Language" (SRTOL). The crux of the resolution asked administrators and faculty to shift English/writing education from an emphasis on uniformity to one on "precise, effective and appropriate communication in diverse ways, whatever the dialect," to encourage students to use their English varieties to communicate in the academy. The SRTOL movement has led to a more expressive, experiential writing-to-learn culture in many academic spaces, though national policies such as *The English Only Movement*, *No Child Left Behind*, and *The Standards and Accountability Movement* consistently deny the lived experiences of our multicultural citizenry. Translingualism can be viewed as an extension of the SRTOL discourse, though it takes into consideration multimodal rhetorics—visual, aural, gestural, etc.—and "glocal" or global and local (Perryman-Clark 10) contexts and practices.

Working-class students often encounter global and local situated forms of writing and composing through the Standard Written English expected in the academy and again through the various genres required of specific disciplinary discourses. Though the Oxford English Dictionary defines the working class as "A class of society or social grouping consisting of people who are employed for wages, esp. in unskilled

or semi-skilled manual or industrial work, and their families, and which is typically considered the lowest class in terms of economic level and social status; the members of such a class*"* ("Working Class"), for Stuart Hall "There's no permanent, fixed class consciousness. You can't work out immediately what people think and what politics they have simply by looking at their socio-economic position" (Derbyshire). Similarly, Rubin et al. note "it is possible for a working-class person to have a relatively high [socio-economic status] while remaining in a stereo-typically "blue-collar" occupation" (196). Income can be, but is not always, an indicator of working-class students. This article assumes the intersectional identities of working-class students, identities that intertwine with other ubiquitous categories such as race, gender, and socio-economic status. Like the *mestiza*, the working-class student in academia negotiates "the ambivalence from the class of voices [which] results in mental and emotional states of perplexity" (Anzaldúa 78). First-year composition and core courses that advocate expressivist-centered assignments and SRTOL sometimes complicate the playing field when working-class students migrate to their disciplinary courses and must "start over" to negotiate and imitate rhetorical situations that appear completely disconnected from their languaging experiences. Furthermore, institutional policies and practices that valorize and reward what Geneva Smitherman calls "the Language of Wider Communication" (Perryman-Clark 5) are often at odds with working-class students' use of their own vernaculars in certain rhetorical contexts. A *mestiza/o* consciousness garnered through translingual practice might help working-class students acknowledge and name the multiplicity of their own rhetorical resources and how they might use these to navigate the "life between and across [the] languages" and spaces they encounter in academia and beyond.

Mike Rose, Donna LeCourt, Julie Lindquist, and others have written extensively about the under-explored position of working-class students in academia. Often these students are conflicted between a strong desire for economic capital (Bordieu and Thompson 14) and a desire to retain a foothold in their working-class communities. However, the inclusive/exclusive nature of academic discourse typically instills in these students a metaphoric ultimatum to choose between their working-class and academic identities, fostering the message that acculturation is the best and only way for one to achieve success—in and out of college, that the codes therein are the "key" or "secret" that will enable the desire for class mobility that brings these students to college—a secret one can only appropriate if he/she denies his/her Other identity and working-class rhetorical practices. These may include slang, dialect, and Other languages or Englishes that ironically enable some of these students to finance their college educations (through the discursive practices of their work communities) but disenable them from participating fully in academic culture. In this way, the working-class student's predicament is much like the *mestiza*'s: "Cradled in one culture [that of her home and upbringing], sandwiched between two cultures [working-class community/academic], straddling all three cultures and their value systems, *la*

mestiza undergoes a struggle of the flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war….only by remaining flexible is she able to stretch the psyche horizontally and vertically" (Anzaldúa 78-79). The message of acculturation that often accompanies academic discourse disenables expressive flexibility for the working-class student, creating an episteme of violence and "cultural silencing" that has material consequences for his/her identity. This "colonial encounter" tells the working-class student to deny his/her identity and linguistic resources, to scrub his/herself clean in favor of the discursive practices of the academy (Denny 72).

The problems with the academic message of acculturation are twofold. Acculturation assumes a fictitious perception of language as a static entity—that one kind or "correct" English exists when, in actuality, every "American" (a tenable discursive label/marker in itself) brings his/her own cultural, hybridized Englishes to the table, even native-born, monolingual students. Monolingualism or the particular kind of Standard Written English that trumps in most academic contexts is simultaneously a cultural myth and a *necessity* for the model of the university as we know it to exist. Without the myth of a unified, monolingual "commonality," the hierarchical stratosphere of our colleges becomes precarious, as does its divided disciplinary infrastructures. A pluralistic, fluid orientation to languaging presupposes that academic codes, like linguistic codes, *share* common ground with ways of communicating beyond their campuses and, further, that connections exist between disciplinary discourses and other communities *on* campus. The borders of academe reify monolingual orientations, colonizing students to adopt the discourses and epistemologies of those in power, denying their lived communicative practices.

The second problem is that linguistic and rhetorical practices as recognized/valorized in the academy are increasingly intersecting and overlapping with rhetorical practices in digital spaces. These contexts reflect a multiplicity of communicative practices that overturn monolingualism at every corner. In short, it is disadvantageous and could actually be materially disadvantageous to teaching students a monolinguistic, SWE orientation when technology has become such an inherent part of our communicative cultural landscape. Excluding working-class students from the pluralistic rhetorical mindset they require to analyze and understand the multiple-semiotic/multimodal practices that digital communication, particularly awareness of the socially constructed digital genres that have currency in our geo-political economic climate—blogs, websites, social media, and other interfaces—would be reifying the socio-economic stratification these students already struggle with daily in their personal lives outside of the academy. Acculturation just doesn't work. Enter translingualism.

Translanguaging involves using linguistic and non-linguistic means to communicate. Suresh Canagarajah defines a translingual orientation as "[considering] all acts of communication and literacy as involving a shuttling between languages and a negotiation of diverse linguistic resources for situated construction of meaning"

(*Literacy* 1). The object of translingualism is to foster a particular kind of rhetorical attunement—an ear for or turning toward difference or multiplicity (Lorimer 228) that enables "uptake" or successful communication in any context, "real" or virtual. Here the student brings his/her multiple languages, Other Englishes, and ways of communicating that exceed the grapholect (Elbow 130) or written variants of language—and determines how to combine these to achieve the rhetorical purpose for the specific time and place he/she is in, whether it is through an assignment for a first-year composition course or a Skype presentation for a cohort of colleagues in Europe. In each case, the student (citizen) draws on his/her multiple semiotic resources to achieve his/her purpose in communicating. Translingual students combine linguistic, auditory, spatial, gestural, and visual methods (Arola et al. 5-12) to achieve a rhetorical purpose that may include a real and/or "virtual" audience. Translingualism also takes into consideration that many working-class students may be addressing a new social class of individuals that may share a lot of commonalities in their propensity toward communicative exclusivity, with the literati of academia—their virtual (arguably wealthier) counterparts—the digerati (Nakamura *Cybertypes* 24). In fact, faculty and students can view the many interfaces and digital spaces of cyber-culture as a parallel to academia and its many disciplinary genres and sub-genres. Working-class students require a translingual orientation for communication and writing across discourses in the academy but also in critically considering their rhetorical positions vis-á-vis the digital "borders" they negotiate daily. Translingualism can also be viewed as the application of a skill that is tacitly being fostered through working-class students' daily rhetorical practices in digital spaces such as email, texting, or social media, and therefore a somewhat relevant and familiar resource for them to draw on in the composition classroom.

Like the *mestiza*, who is straddling spaces of epistemology, the working-class student can use a translingual lens to "[develop] a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance for ambiguity…She has a plural personality, she operates in pluralistic mode—nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns ambivalence into something else" (Anzaldúa 79). Offering the working-class student a translingual orientation to communication, where he/she can draw on all of her/his linguistic resources, may enable him/her to analyze and identify genre and discourse conventions more readily and to re-contextualize language for the personal, professional, academic and virtual spaces he/she performs in. Translingualism makes hybridity, multiplicity and variety in communication permissive, even favorable: "Existing terms like multilingual or plurilingual keep languages somewhat separated even as they address the co-existence of multiple languages…[T]he term translingual enables a consideration of communicative competence as not restricted to predefined meanings of individual languages, but the ability to merge different language resources in situated interactions for new meaning" (Canagarajah *Literacy* 1). The working-class

student's ability to identify and name what may be institutionally perceived as the rhetorical "good, the bad, and the ugly" is what enables him/her to talk back to "tropes of oppression…maintained through nomenclature" (Perryman-Clark 14). A *mestiza/o* consciousness and translingual orientation disrupt the spaces and lines of orientation that attempt to scrub students "clean" of linguistic working-class markers.

A translingual approach demands that composition "instructors" also adopt the *mestiza/o* consciousness we hope to foster in our working-class students. "The work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended" (Anzaldúa 80). Self-awareness of our own socio-cultural imbrication and interpellation in the institutional web that our working-class students struggle to negotiate is necessary for instructors to be able to name and help students identify the genres, sub-genres, and rhetorical constraints that emerge in this context. Like our students, we too traverse epistemological spaces daily in our lives and professions. A translingual *mestiza/o* orientation demands that we expose the social materiality of communication, particularly writing in academia, as a host of discursive practices connected to a particular institutional location with ideologies and epistemologies that are localized and often inscribe students' bodies as Other (LeCourt 202-203).

Institutional initiatives that support and model translingualism are already in place in most colleges and universities. Writing across the Curriculum programs where students and faculty communicate, write to learn, and learn to write across disciplinary and digital divides have become robust pillars and in some cases models of inter- and intra-institutional pedagogy. Writing centers and emerging online writing labs or OWLs are other institutional hubs where one-on-one consultations, either face-to-face or online, often require effective translanguaging across rhetorical and generic divides for "uptake" or a successful session to occur. Each of these programs/spaces has evolved locally on many secondary and post-secondary academic landscapes in response to the pluralism of students, faculty, and the increasingly interdisciplinary academic and social ecologies they negotiate. Composition instructors can draw on these translingual models or resources in constructing syllabi and practices that encompass collaboration, multiplicity: we just have to channel our *mestiza/o* consciousness reach across the "borders" of campus communities to do so.

Working-class and all non-traditional students should imagine the college context as a contact zone (Pratt) where they might learn to "become…the officiating priestess [versus the sacrificial goat] at the crossroads" (Anzaldúa 80) of epistemological spaces. Once students understand academic writing as an authoritative discourse "[or] the central colonial encounter" (LeCourt 203) they can work to "address…[or] challenge the material conditions of that institutional location" through "fertile mimesis" (Horner et al. 56) or a hybridization of their own discourses with those of the particular assignment or genre they are performing. A translingual

approach to language instruction coupled with a collaborative orientation to pedagogy, one in which the composition classroom becomes a kind of composing lab—working with librarians, instructional technologists and perhaps, faculty from other disciplines—facilitates the *mestiza/o* consciousness (Anzaldúa) and translingual orientation faculty and working-class students—or those students most privy to cultural silencing—need to decolonize their communicative contexts.

A local, situated consideration of the socio-political and economic culture and "borders" our students negotiate in and outside of the classroom fosters successful understanding of and orientation toward translingualism. Awareness of what kinds of "uptake" or communicative epistemologies working-class students privilege and how their identity informs and is informed by writing to learn, learning to write, and writing in the discipline activities can bolster translingual pedagogy. Making writing and processes of meaning-making "central object[s] of study…connected to culture, the social real and power relations at the points of production and circulation" (LeCourt 204) paves the way toward a fluid, agentive *mestiza/o* consciousness for working-class students in the composition classroom—a borderland consciousness they can use to shift gears not only between rhetorical contexts and genres but also between modes of communicating. Creating assignments tied to translation, deconstruction, and talking back to the "social production…of culture" (LeCourt 204) enables relational awareness and critical inquiry of systemic obstacles that often complicate learning. Assignments such as literacy narratives or autobiographies and self-directed projects that give working-class students room to wrap themselves around particular discourses or topics they experience or want to investigate in and beyond the composition classroom offers a step in this direction. What "social real" informs these students' identities outside of their academic experience? How can they channel that reality to perform or negotiate assignments and expectations of the academic discourses in which they may be trying to gain foothold? Offering students an alternative "social gaze…[one willing to be] disrupted" (LeCourt 202) as an instructor or classroom audience presents a genuine opportunity for translingual orientations and a "*mestiza/o* consciousness." Localizing pedagogy and assessment practices offers an alternative gaze while foregrounding students' identities.

Impostor Syndrome

Anzaldúa's borderland consciousness is one that resonates for me as a working-class, immigrant daughter. In my childhood, I had to negotiate the borders of the Southern Italian culture of my household—a culture and dialect that is still not considered the "right" kind of Italian today—with the American world outside of it, while negotiating the inscriptions of the working-class daughter alongside these two cultural identities—a third identity in sharp contrast with the white, Anglo-dominant preppy school community of the all-girls Catholic high school I attended.

While the other girls played soccer and attended student council meetings after school, I came home to a limited window for homework knowing I had chores that awaited me such as folding laundry

and helping my mother prepare the evening meal. School and the time to ruminate over assignments and books were considered a luxury to my parents, whose education was abruptly aborted when each of them was in seventh grade. My mother's apprenticeship with the local seamstress of her town and my dad's early career as a painter in Naples are the adolescent experiences that inscribe their lives and ideology still, their inability to understand why a job is not enough to make my sister and me "happy"—why we want more than that.

Sleeping in on Saturdays was inconceivable in our house. There was dusting, bathroom scrubbing, and ironing to do that would give my mother a jump ahead on the upcoming week. Though I struggled with algebra and physics, I knew precisely how to wrap the dust cloth around my forefinger so that I would reach every crevice. There was no room for adolescent roamings or imaginings in a home where there was always more work to do, where there never seemed to be enough money to for anything recreational except meals—a ritual that is central to the Italian culture but one that I still associate with oppression having watched the women of my family slave tirelessly in the kitchen through illnesses, depression, and other life struggles without ever receiving a helping hand or even a thank you from the men at our tables—the "breadwinners" who were too tired and concerned with the more "important" work of paying the bills.

A mestiza consciousness evolved instinctively in this working class, gendered context. The oppressors were my parents and I resented them, but I also loved and understood them despite "the angers of that house" (Hayden In 12) and part of me became them in some respects, albeit a hybrid version that enabled me to "cross" other borders, and cultivate other identities, among them, that of the "American" student. I could not name this consciousness at the time, nor see myself reflected in any parts of my high school context except, perhaps, in the reoccurring theme of the biblical sacrificial lamb, espoused in my theology classes (ironically taught by a zealous male layman). Julia Alvarez poignantly epitomizes the impostor syndrome that characterized my emotions at that time:

> So, mirror in hand,
> I practiced foreign faces, Anglo grins,
> repressing a native Latin fluency
> for the cooler mask of English ironies.
> I wanted the world and words to match again
> as when I had lived solely in Spanish. (Alvarez 15-20)

This feeling stayed with me as I tried to cultivate a culture of recognition and valorization in my teaching experiences later.

Translanguaging in the Classroom

A translingual approach "treats textual practices as hybridizing and emergent, facilitating creative tensions between languages" (Canagarajah, *Literacy* 2). In my efforts to differentiate instruction and scaffold assignments in composition for the diverse local cultures in my first-year composition courses at a community college, a four-year state college, and a four-year private university, each with distinctively different demographics, translingual practices emerged before I could identify or theorize them. At one institution where most of my class was comprised of working-class students

(some who made it clear early on they could not attend every class because they had conflicts with the jobs that were paying their college tuition), offering composition assignments that enabled "alignment of words with many other semiotic resources" throughout the semester yielded dynamic results (Canagarajah, *Literacy* 1). Each of these assignments was designed under the theme translation.

The first assignment was a literacy narrative asking students to "contextualize and translate their multiple identities." The second assignment was a research paper asking students to translate a web-based text or "tool" of their choosing, and the third assignment was a collaborative collage where students worked together to translate a concept or theme connected to their discipline. The first three assignments were designed as scaffolding steps toward a collaborative group final project *of their own choosing* at the end of the semester versus the research paper that often culminates a first-year writing course (a terminal assignment that typically does not intersect with student interests or work beyond the FYC classroom). Additionally, each of the assignments was scaffolded through a brainstorm, draft, peer-review and revision process so that students could reflect upon and revisit their own epistemological development, tasks that require consistent "translation." I did try to group students by major for the final project, which, in some cases, facilitated deciding on a topic and mode of presentation.

One group of pre-med students in first-year composition at a four-year private university determined to understand the conventions of publication in their science courses, joined forces to create a Tumblr "how to" blog/project in this vein. Another group of students from healthcare, accounting and sports management fields decided to explore what communication—particularly technology-driven communication—looks like in their respective professional workplaces through interviews and outreach. A group of business majors wrote a children's book through storyjumper.com to historicize the concept of tax inversion. Students employed a *mestiza/o* consciousness and translingual approach through all of these projects not only in their efforts to traverse the "borders" between Standard Written English and their own vernaculars but also those borders between SWE and their disciplinary languages. Finally, students employed a *mestiza/o* consciousness and a translingual orientation as they navigated digital genres such as Prezi, MindMeister, and Blogger versus traditional essay genres to determine which would best help them analyze and communicate their project topic to the class.

Each of these projects reflected a negotiation of students' "social reals" and "rhetorical reals." Interestingly, almost every group of students in this particular institution chose projects connected to their desire for "capital" in their respective professional fields, even though my assignment sheet invited an array of topics from social justice to academic to professional themes (where I did not provide a list to choose from). For these students, acquiring the capital of their disciplinary or professional discourse equates to the capital necessary for the social mobility they came

to college for. Many of the students told me they were grateful to be given the choice to construct a "pragmatic" project.

Collaborative projects where students had to negotiate their rhetorical purpose and audience, decide on a genre, and choose which conventions of the genre would help achieve that purpose facilitated a pluralistic or *mestiza/o* consciousness, a translingual heuristic and some tension in this course. In students' reflection papers on the final project—which was assigned as a "digital remix project"—complaints about certain group members not "carrying their workload" and other issues coordinating and decision-making as a group were rampant. However, having to work toward the common goal of completion/grade and the impetus of a meaningful project enabled compromise and ultimately a unified final project (Russell). Scaffolding the project "pieces"—planning, research, drafting, final copy—and asking for individual student contributions to each piece of the project countered the propensity for one person to take over for the benefit of the group. Through these individual submissions, I was able to see each student's process and how he/she contributed or compromised his/her stance for the end goal of the group. The parceling or consistent inclusion of the individual piece also ensured that no one student's identity was suppressed in the project experience.

Some students drew on the digital spaces and genres they were writing in daily (Tumblr, Twitter, etc.) while others considered new digital tools they wanted to learn how to use to construct their projects. If the platform was new, students worked together to learn and navigate the genre to determine whether it was a fit for their rhetorical purpose, which was articulated early on in their project proposals. Students also had to consider how the context would inform content and vice versa since the two were inseparable in this case. All of this involved a translingual orientation—a strategic assemblage of multiple semiotic resources—that was specific to the project topic in many instances but also derived from many of the students' lived experiences using blogging, Twitter and YouTube as consumers and producers. In an end-of-semester questionnaire, students revealed that their initial reluctance toward group work was ultimately trumped by their ability to create in a genre they felt comfortable with versus a more traditional "academic" genre they may have struggled with earlier in the semester. One student's feedback reflected that of many in this course: "I think that composing a multimodal project helped me understand the topic more because it opened my eyes to things that I did not see or notice before and related to the topic better." Another student added: "[composing multimodally] helped me understand my topic because I got to see it through more angles."[2]

Multilanguaging and multimodality emerged here as a product of the assignment but also as part of the multiplicity in the classroom. Each student had to intersect linguistic, disciplinary, digital genre savvy to conceive of and compose the group's digital remixes. The last step was to traverse the border of creating a composition and presenting that composition orally to the class. There were three

projects I felt had particular "uptake" or persuasion. The first was a group of business majors' digital storybook about tax inversion, *Fairy Tales and Taxes:*

> These students used fairytale vernacular to explain the history and effects of tax inversion in a way that made it easy enough for young child to understand. The "characters" in the text represented the government, corporations, and people affected by tax inversion. Students successfully negotiated both the language of their discipline and the literary conventions of a fairytale to simplify and communicate an otherwise complicated subject.

A second group of pre-med students in the same first-year composition course designed a Tumblr blog with a Twitter feed as a resource attempting to unpack writing genres and conventions in their field. This project, which included interviews with advice and "how-to tips" from medical professionals and scholars, can be used as a reference tool in perpetuity. Students even listed themselves as contacts for future pre-med students who may have questions about the processes of writing in medicine. In this case, a border-consciousness evidenced in their inter-disciplinary translanguaging, fostered students' subjectivity, reflected in their mastery of medical writing discourse conventions:

Finally, three students with majors related to either healthcare and medicine exposed how the media is complicit in maintaining a white supremacist, cultural hegemony in its emphasizing of certain "epidemics" over others. The premise of this group's multi-media PowerPoint presentation was that if affluent countries with more white citizens are affected by an illness, the illness becomes newsworthy and oftentimes "cure-worthy." This was probably the most controversial of the projects as the students juxtaposed media clips that dramatized the Swine Flu and Ebola—illnesses that have been around for decades but did not become a glocal (global and local) media concern until the "right people" started getting sick—versus ground-breaking medical innovations that receive little to no media attention because the demographic of the people who have that illness are considered "dispensable."

This PowerPoint slide shows a spoon invented to help Alzheimer's patients eat independently. The students pointed out how, despite the thousands of victims who succumb to this illness annually (typically elderly people who would, in this case, be viewed as "dispensable"), this groundbreaking invention received no media coverage whatsoever:

> Perhaps the most attention-grabbing part was this group's use of the hip-hop song "The 3rd World" at the end of this presentation. Before closing with this song (one group member emailed back and forth with me for weeks to obtain permission to use this, as it contains explicit lyrics), the students explained that it talks back to the intersectional politics of capitalism, media, and medicine. The African American Vernacular and Spanish lyrics illustrate what Vershwan Young calls code-meshing: a strategic combining of languages and vernaculars to

> affect a rhetorical purpose. The angry code-meshing of vernacular and profanity coupled with the loud, insistent lyrics and militant musical rhythm communicated the emotional injustice and call to action behind the informative slides and video clips of the earlier PowerPoint. Below are some of the ending lyrics of the song: f*** your charity medicine, try to murder me / the immunizations you gave us were full of mercury / so now I see the Third World like the rap game soldier / nationalize the industry and take it over! (Immortal Technique).

In all of these projects students negotiated their own English varieties with disciplinary and digital genres in a process that Horner and Lu describe as "sedimentation": taking pre-existing language (and in this case, genres) and re-contextualizing them to make "new" or hybridized meaning. These projects illustrate that a *mestiza/o* consciousness and translingualism are not particular to bilingual or multilingual students. They illustrate that we all—"native speakers" or not—already translanguage to "rhetorically listen" (Ratcliffe 203) and communicate in the situational contexts of our daily lives.

I was troubled by dubbing the project a "digital remix," in the way this might create the systemic silencing students often feel when confronted with academic assignments designed around very specific disciplinary or sub-disciplinary genres. However, I found that those students more reticent to embrace a digital project used a more traditional digital genre such as Google Docs or PowerPoint to convey their work. Allowing lots of time in class for students to collaborate and share one another's digital skills or sometimes directing students to the resources on campus that might help them achieve their rhetorical purposes more seamlessly—the librarian, the writing center, the office of instructional technology—but also reminding students to think critically about the relationship between their genre and purpose was key to this process. Again, many students' choices emerged as almost instinctual and connected to their "social reals" (LeCourt 6)—issues or ideologies they struggled with or wanted to learn more about.

Conclusion

The postmodern orientation of translingualism, a languaging ideology so broad that it seems to defy categorization, can be challenging from a pedagogical and learning standpoint. In a culture where "social sorting" (Nakamura 11) often determines the materiality of our students' lives, it is tricky to make transparent the fluidity that translingualism advocates. Unlike the rules of Standard English, it is difficult to find a textbook definition of what types of rhetorical multiplicity garner uptake and which do not, which types of translingualism are A-worthy and which are subpar. "Monolingual ideologies have relied on form, grammar, and a system for meaning-making….A translingual orientation requires an important shift to treating practices as primary and emergent, as form is so diverse, fluid, and changing that it cannot guarantee meaning by

itself" (Canagarajah, *Literacy* 4). My students were quick to insist on definitions and reminders of what concepts such as "multimodal" and "genre" meant as we worked on their projects. Analysis and discussions throughout the semester about vernaculars and the parallels between these and the assorted disciplinary and digital genres students negotiate and appropriate daily, reinforced the idea that literacy practices are situated—that what is deemed as an "effective form" of communication is often contingent on a particular time and space.

Translingualism is a nuanced pedagogy whose methods and materials are still evolving. However, this post-colonial pedagogy is one that most connects working-class students material realities with the discursive forums of their academic lives. The *mestiza/o* subject positions that working-class students employ in their translingual practices are most similar to the orientations they are already accustomed to in their social media entrenched languaging reals. These practices also defy the "colonial encounter" in the academy by channeling "pre-print," "pre-colonial" literacies rooted in orality and visuality (LeCourt 38). Encouraging discursive *and* non-discursive rhetorical practices can be particularly useful for working-class students. Faculty should enable spaces and assignments for the types of linguistic, visual, and auditory meaning-making students experience daily, particularly through use of their cell phones, in the classroom. "Rhetors have always known about the power of a particular orator's tone of voice, the use of gesture at key points in a speech, appeals to patriotism and to the emotions, the use of vivid imagery and storytelling, and even the value of grooming and general appearance: manipulation of any one of these elements has a direct affect on the audience" (Murray 11). Offering working-class students opportunities to use languaging beyond "discursive, print-oriented rhetoric" (1) may offer self-recognition and more occasion for "uptake" in the composition classroom.

Donna LeCourt says that working-class students' awareness of difference—"even of how difference is implicated in social relations and language use—does not in itself foster agency nor alter the technologies of subject production that seek to reproduce academic subjectivities within students." She suggests that the students "see writing as offering not only a space of reproduction, but also one in which new meanings might be created that offer alternative ways of 'caring for self'" (197). A translingual approach to composition that encourages multiple semiotic resources and a *mestiza/o* consciousness offers resistance to the acculturation working-class students often feel in academia and encourages working-class students to become "subject[s] of hybridization…deeply implicated in the production of language," which can name and traverse identity rhetorics and materiality versus being "subject[s] of the politics of recognition" (LeCourt 198).

In *Facing the Center*, Harry Denny reminds readers "the distance between the margin and the center, in economic terms, is wider and more fluid than ever. At colleges and universities nationwide, the middle class is quickly dissipating, receding back into the ranks of the working class" (82). Doing the cultural work of exposing

how genres are derived from spatial-temporal contexts and authorized within disciplines is our ethical responsibility as composition instructors who are often faced with working-class students who cannot name why or how they feel displaced in a college environment. U.S. Census and National Center for Education statistics consistently show that these are the students who either drop out of college or graduate significantly later than their middle- or upper-class peers, often because of material constraints in their personal lives. The gaze from faculty and students alike that insists one cannot "be" a certain way or share/illustrate an experience that counters the "right" communicative theory and discourse fosters an episteme of violence that has material consequences for already vulnerable working class students (Spivak). A translingual approach in our composition classrooms offers our students a gaze that hails a *mestizo/o* consciousness, encourages them "politicize the personal" (Villanueva, "Politics"173) and take back the agency of communication that typically resides in academic discourse.

Notes

[1] For the purposes of this paper, I focus on two notions that characterize translingual orientations according to Suresh Canagrajah in *Translingual Practice*: The first is that communication transcends individual languages, dialects and registers such as Standard English; the second is that communication transcends words and involves diverse semiotic resources (6).

[2] I obtained students' permission through the Institutional Review Board at this institution in order to publish their work.

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