NEGOTIATING TRANSITIONS: A GENRE-BASED STUDY OF WRITING OPPORTUNITIES ACROSS HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

by

Brad Jacobson

Copyright © Brad Jacobson 2019

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

RHETORIC, COMPOSITION, AND THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2019

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Brad Jacobson, titled *Negotiating Transitions: A Genre-Based Study of Student Writing Opportunities Across High School and College* and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Christine M Tardy ______________________ Date: January 28, 2019
Christine M. Tardy

Anne-Marie Hall ______________________ Date: January 28, 2019
Anne-Marie Hall

Susan Miller-Coch ______________________ Date: January 28, 2019
Susan Miller-Cochran

Stephanie Troutman ______________________ Date: January 28, 2019
Stephanie Troutman

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

We hereby certify that we have read this dissertation prepared under our direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

Christine M Tardy ______________________ Date: January 28, 2019
Christine M. Tardy
Professor
Department of English

Anne-Marie Hall ______________________ Date: January 28, 2019
Anne-Marie Hall
Emeritus Professor
Department of English

ARIZONA ®

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not be possible without the support of many, many people. I want to thank you all, but I'm sure I will forget some. Please know I appreciate you.

I want to start by acknowledging the student participants without whom this project could never have happened. Hector, Hercules, Jain, and Lucy allowed me into their classrooms, texts, and lives, and trusted me with their writing and their stories. At the beginning of this project, I told them that the end result would be as much theirs as mine; I hope I lived up to that promise. To the student participants: you've taught me more than you know.

The high school and college instructors who participated in this project responded to an email or a knock on the door and offered me insights into their pedagogies and ideas about teaching and learning. Thank you for letting me in.

My committee has supported me in ways that go far beyond research. Christine Tardy arrived on campus when I was unsure of my research, my teaching, and my place in academia. She introduced me to genre theory and encouraged me to click "send" on my first publication proposal. You are the kind of scholar, teacher, mentor, and friend I hope to be. Anne-Marie Hall supported me from my first day on campus and offered to work on this project before I had a chance to ask. All graduate students should have a reader and cheerleader as thoughtful, insightful, and supportive. Stephanie Troutman's openness to new possibilities and commitment to educational justice continues to inspire. I expect to hear your voice in my head—in a good way!—for years to come. Susan Miller-Cochran is a model for mentors and administrators. You always treated me like a colleague and provided support and professional opportunities I could have never imagined. I also want to thank RCTE faculty members Aimee Mapes, Amy Kimme Hea, John Warnock, Cristina Ramirez for guidance and support along the way.

My friends and colleagues in RCTE have been sounding boards, writing partners, cat sitters, babysitters, and happy hour buddies. Special shout-out to Madelyn Pawlowski, Eric House, José Cortez, Al Harahap, Devon Kehler, Irene Jagla, and Anushka Peres, chosen family all.

Thank you to the Wildcat Writers Advisory Committee and Wildcat Writers teachers who have taught me so much about teaching, leadership, and community engagement. Maria Elena Wakamatsu, Rachael Wendler Shah, Kate Street, Barb MacDonald, and Taylor Johnson, you helped me feel at home in a new place and consistently reminded me what it means to be an engaged teacher and community member. Special thanks to Barb, whose advocacy helped get this project underway.

Individuals in the English Department who have supported my research, teaching, and community outreach over the years are too many to mention, but here's a start: Adela Licona, Maritza Cardenas, Jo Anne Behling, Sharonne Myerson, Sara Vickery, Sara Soto, Maribeth Slagle, Anne Shepherd, and Nick Smith. To those listed and not listed, I am forever grateful.

My OIA colleagues—especially Lindsay Hansen, Phyllis Brodsky, and Gretchen Gibbs—treated me like an expert when I felt like an imposter. Thank you for your friendship and your constant modeling of what it means to put student learning first.

The students in my First-Year Writing and Professional and Technical Writing courses have always been open to community-engaged learning and allowed me to try new ideas that emerged from this research. Your generosity towards each other and our community partners is a constant reminder that those who complain about "kids these days" are full of it.

Doug Smith, Chris Byrne, and Julius Schlossberg reminded me of the joys of music-making and offered me a life beyond academia. Thanks for inviting me into your worlds and for pressing on even when I hedged. Not to mention seven years of the best coffee in the southwest.

My parents have supported me at every step in my professional and academic career, even when they're not sure why I'm doing what I'm doing or why I had to move so far away to do it. I guess that's punishment for raising a curious son.

I couldn't ask for a better partner in all things than Elinora Price. You make me feel like my work matters. You have been a supportive and critical reader throughout this project, and an audience worth keeping in mind; if I can persuade you, I know I've achieved something. You allowed me to vent when I needed to and understood when I needed the space to transcribe a transcript or finish a draft. You stayed up later than you wanted to just so we could have some time together before bed. I love you.

Noah was born just before this project took shape and Evie was born at its conclusion. I was once told that having children would change the way I thought about teaching. It turns out you've changed everything. All of it is for you.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES………………………………………………………………….. 7

LIST OF TABLES………………………………………………………………… 8

ABSTRACT……………………………………………………………………….. 10

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION………………………………………………….. 11
    Writing is Not Neutral…………………………………………………... 15
    Rationale for the Study…………………………………………………. 17
    Overview of the Study…………………………………………………... 19
    Chapter Outline…………………………………………………………. 23

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: GENRE, IDENTITY, AND POWER 27
    Genre as Social Theory…………………………………………………. 28
    Genre and Academic Writing Development…………………………….. 30
    Genre and Identity: "An Affiliation Crisis" in Schools…………………. 42
    Genre, Identity, and Power……………………………………………… 48
    Summary………………………………………………………………… 55

CHAPTER 3: METHODS OF INQUIRY…………………………………………. 57
    Entering the Study………………………………………………………. 58
    Toward a Humanizing Research Approach……………………………… 60
    Research Questions……………………………………………………… 71
    Research Methods……………………………………………………….. 73
    Validity………………………………………………………………….. 94
    Limitations………………………………………………………………. 95
    Summary………………………………………………………………… 97

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS………………………… 99
    Community Context……………………………………………………… 99
    High School Context……………………………………………………… 100
    University Context……………………………………………………….. 105
    Student Participants………………………………………………………. 111
    Summary…………………………………………………………………. 121

CHAPTER 5: WRITING IN PRACTICE? WRITING OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE………………………………………………………………….. 123
    Writing Opportunities in High School and College……………………… 125
    Case Studies: Deep(er) Participation and Writing in Practice…………….. 146
    Summary and Implications………………………………………………... 163

CHAPTER 6: MAKING GENRES, MAKING WORLDS: NEGOTIATING IDENTITY IN GENERAL EDUCATION………………………………………………………… 169

Methodology……………………………………………………………………… 172
Case Study Context…………………………………………………………….... 173
Hercules: Applying Course Concepts…………………………………………... 174
Jain: Peoplehood………………………………………………………………….. 188
Discussion: Identity, Genre, and Social Motive in General Education…………… 201
Summary………………………………………………………………………….. 209

CHAPTER 7: “IT FELT LIKE HIGH SCHOOL”: JAIN’S WRITING AND SELF-EFFICACY ACROSS THE HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE TRANSITION………………………... 210
Methodology: Writing Development from a Textual Analysis Lens……………... 214
Findings: Rhetorical Sensitivity and Adaptation………………………………… 222
Attention to Resources in Use, Reuse, and Adaptation…………………………… 235
Further Considerations: Case Study as Interrogation of Power Relations………... 242
Implications: Individual and Institutional Responsibility………………………… 257

CONCLUSION: CULTURALLY SUSTAINING SCHOOL-BASED WRITING ECOLOGIES………………………………………………………………………… 261
Summary of Findings: All About Access………………………………………… 264
An Ecological Understanding of School-Based Writing………………………….. 269
Toward A Culturally Sustaining Approach to School-Based Writing Ecologies…. 273
Getting There from Here………………………………………………………….. 298

APPENDIX A: DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS…………………………………... 302

REFERENCES……………………………………………………………………….. 313

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Sample DBI question based on discourse markers…………………………….. 85

Figure 2: Post-interview reflection notes, August 24, 2016…………………………..... 92

Figure 3: Image demonstrating codes and subcodes in Dedoose………………………….. 93

Figure 4: First-Year Writing course sequence…………………………………………….. 108

Figure 5: Comparison of three tasks in the *SpringBoard* textbook……………………….. 139

Figure 6: Comparison of situated learning theories………………………………………. 152

Figure 7: Writing opportunities matrix……………………………………………………. 160

Figure 8: Writing opportunities matrix for Jain's writing over a two-year period………… 223

Figure 9: The first sentence of concluding paragraphs for Jain's texts in the data set through the first semester of college……………………………………………………… 234

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Summary of opportunities for genre learning…………………………………… 43

Table 2: Student participant overview from pre-college survey…………………………. 76

Table 3: College instructor participants, field of study, and general education identification………………………………………………………………………… 78

Table 4: Overview of data collection procedures………………………………………… 80

Table 5: Data collected from each student participant from August 2016 through June 2017……………………………………………………………………………. 87

Table 6: Student demographics of the participating high school…………………………. 101

Table 7: Student demographics at the university, 2016-2017……………………………. 106

Table 8: Focal student FYW graded writing tasks……………………………………….. 110

Table 9: Pre-college survey results………………………………………………………. 113

Table 10: Continuum of social motives in writing tasks………………………………… 133

Table 11: Writing tasks in *SpringBoard* textbook………………………………………. 136

Table 12: Purposes and genres of 39 thesis-driven writing tasks as described in the *SpringBoard* text……………………………………………………………………… 138

Table 13: Purposes named by students to describe their writing tasks in the first year… 140

Table 14: Overview of the concept application assignment…………………………….. 176

Table 15: Comparison of Hercules' introduction and a published piece of music criticism…………………………………………………………………………… 182

Table 16: The Peoplehood assignment from social sciences……………………………. 190

Table 17: Comparison of second paragraph topic sentence in two of Jain's general education writing tasks………………………………………………………. 193

Table 18: Comparison of thesis statements between Jain's academic essay and the published source text………………………………………………………………… 196

Table 19: Discourse features in Jain's writing over two years………………………….. 221

Table 20: Frequency of boosters and hedges, per 250 words, organized by frequency of boosters……………………………………………………………………………….. 228

Table 21: Frequency of stance markers in Jain's writing, per 250 words, organized by frequency of self-mentions…………………………………………………………… 231

Table 22: Frequency of relational markers in Jain's writing, per 250 words……………. 232

Table 23: Examples of textual borrowing and discursive borrowing in Jain's lab reports………………………………………………………………………………… 238

ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an ethnographically-oriented, 18-month study of four Latinx students' experiences across the high school to college writing transition. It contributes to a growing body of empirical research in writing studies that seeks to better understand the school writing experiences of students from historically underrepresented populations in order to intervene in inequitable education structures.

Building from sociocultural theories of literacy, genre, and learning, I develop a methodology that considers a student's academic writing development in terms of their opportunities to explore various genres and related disciplinary practices and identities. Drawing from monthly interviews with students, interviews with select instructors and administrators, and student-written texts and course materials from English Language Arts, composition, and general education courses, I explore these students' writing opportunities from three perspectives:

1) a comprehensive genre analysis of the four students' high school to college writing transition;
2) in-depth "text histories" of two students' writing tasks in General Education; and
3) a longitudinal case study of one student's writing and self-efficacy over a two-year period.

My analysis demonstrates the predominance of the rhetorically narrow "school essay" writing task and the limited opportunities for the participating students to learn in practice and contribute to knowledge production in school contexts. I show how the student writers are often sequestered from communities of practice and are consistently positioned as knowledge-tellers under examination. This positioning often constrains student abilities to take on new identities and engage in the knowledge-producing practices of thinkers and practitioners in the field.

This project illuminates the ways student writing opportunities are imbricated in broader education ecologies and offers recommendations for how educational institutions may better support students from underrepresented populations. I argue for a culturally sustaining future for school-based writing in high school and lower-division courses that positions students as contributors to public discussion rather than novices in academic fields, engages student in participatory learning contexts around issues that matter to them and their communities, and supports and rewards teachers for providing the academic and interpersonal support needed to sustain college writing success.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Like clockwork, the editorial and opinion pieces come in: “Why can’t college graduates write coherent prose?” (Selingo, 2017); “Why kids can’t write” (Goldstein, 2017). In my fifteen-year career as an educator I’ve become increasingly aware of the pattern and rhythm of these publications. Toward the end of summer right around the start of the new school year, or in the springtime when standardized test scores are released, our public discourse gets inundated with reheated “Why Johnny Can’t Read” articles that seek to explain the reading/writing/grammar/critical thinking problems of today’s students. Like prior iterations of perceived literacy crises, the current discussion of deficient writing assumes that if only students could write “better,” they would achieve more, and the United States would be on stronger economic footing. As misplaced as this assumption might be, this discourse is effective at placing blame on a litany of perceived factors: an inefficient, poorly managed school system, ill-prepared or ineffective teachers, lazy or unmotivated students, technology, or any other ills of the day.[1] At the same time, it neglects much of what scholars and teachers know and have demonstrated through research about the teaching and learning of writing. Too often, the over-simplified discussion of failing student writers leads to an over-simplified solution: they should be writing more.

---

[1] Labaree (2008) has described “educationalization” as a uniquely North American phenomenon in which the education system is tasked with solving structural social issues. As Labaree explains, when dealing with social problems like racism, (lack of) social mobility, or the U.S.’s economic standing in the world, looking for a solution within the schools is much tidier than addressing the core social issue. Educationalization thus gives public officials something to do (enact a new reform) and an institution to blame (public schools, universities, etc.) when the issue at hand inevitably persists.

Jeffrey Selingo's (2017) recent article in the *Washington Post* provides an excellent example. Drawing from Arum and Roska's (2010) *Academically Adrift*—a project that has itself been questioned, on methodological grounds and otherwise (e.g., Haswell, 2012; Lane & Oswald, 2016; Sternberg, 2011)—he writes, "Good writing takes practice, and it seems that many college students, especially outside of writing-intensive liberal arts majors, are just not being asked to write often enough" (par. 7). After acknowledging the structural and institutional challenges that might come with requiring more writing, like a greater workload for instructors and students, as well as the recognition that students may never have to write another five-page paper again, Selingo nevertheless continues:

> But training for any activity in life requires a level of practice that usually exceeds the tasks we will need to handle later on. This time spent on a task is sometimes called the 10,000 hours theory — that it takes roughly that amount of practice to achieve mastery in any field. Not every college graduate needs to be a novelist, but if college students become competent writers who draft clear prose, then they'll also be able to compose anything on the job, from PowerPoint slides to reports. (par. 10)

Embedded in this quote are claims that many with a passing knowledge of the last few decades of writing research would certainly dispute. For example, a "competent writer" in one situation may not be in another. I've seen some brilliant writers give pretty horrendous PowerPoint presentations, to borrow just one of Selingo's examples. By making this connection between "clear prose" and PowerPoints and reports, Selingo also assumes a faulty, linear model of writing transfer: if only students could "draft clear prose" in their college essays, then certainly they would be able to write *anything* in the future. Furthermore, "clear prose" often falls into the category of “I know it when I see it” rather than a rhetorically-sound evaluation (Hesse 2017; Lea & Street, 1998; Leki, 1995).

I began this dissertation, in part, to speak back to this over-simplified, instrumentalist discourse that surrounds discussion of student writers and writing instruction in educational settings. Whether or not Selingo’s (2017) claims have research-based merit—and to be clear, they do not—it is undeniable that they hold purchase in the nationwide discussion of writing and literacy education. Since these ideas about writing are tied up in policy, pedagogy, and school assessment in the U.S., they have become part of the texture of a student’s educational trajectory.

Take the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), a set of educational standards implemented in 43 states. The CCSS met some initial, if tentative, praise for its emphasis on writing in English Language Arts classrooms in the United States. Reflecting on his first reading of the standards, compositionist Bruce McComiskey (2012) noted his surprise that he “*didn’t* hate” the writing standards (p. 537). He pointed out that some of the central requirements—such as backing up claims with specific evidence and developing a style appropriate to purpose, audience, and task—would be appropriate in any college writing class. However, he worried about the ways the standards would be implemented. Sure enough, CCSS implementation has been the focus of much critique, including *over*-emphasis on argument and decontextualized treatment of writing in pedagogical materials and assessments (see also Beach 2011; Clark-Oates, Rankins-Robertson, Ivy, Behm, & Roen, 2015; DeStigter, 2015; Jacobson, 2015; Kelly-Riley, 2017). The CCSS focus on “college and career readiness” and its reliance on standardized assessment has concurrently supported the notion of writing as a set of general skills that can be applied to “anything.”

As Adler-Kassner (2012, 2014) has argued, those of us in higher education are not shielded from these forces that influence K-12 education. Some state legislatures and university systems have created articulation agreements based on the CCSS-related assessments, and calls to streamline time to degree and, in some cases, writing instruction are not going away any time soon. Echoing Trimbur's (1994) claim that a literacy crisis imbues writing educators with rhetorical power, Adler-Kassner (2012) suggests that this attention to writing provides us an opportunity to help to define what "readiness" means, and to guide the conversation around what counts and should count as "good writing."

Recent developments in higher education further emphasize the need for attention to writing instruction and assessment. At the large, land grant university in the southwest United States where I teach and conducted this research, concerns about student writing led to a writing requirement across the General Education program. According to the policy, "general education courses are writing intensive." Students must write at least 10 pages or 2500 words over the 16-week term, there must be at least one writing assignment of 750 words completed, and there must be at least one opportunity for revision based on feedback (ABOR, 2015). And we are certainly not alone. Recognizing the importance of writing in deep learning and critical thinking, the Association of American Colleges & Universities has advocated for writing-intensive courses as one of its "High-Impact Educational Practices" (Kuh, 2008), and over half of the 642 respondents to the National Census of Writing responded that their institution has a WAC program and/or another writing requirement beyond the first year, including over 60% of universities with over 20,000 students (National Census of Writing, 2017).

This renewed emphasis on writing across K-16 education means writing studies researchers and advocates have to remain attentive to the ways students experience writing in academic settings. Because writing is used to practice and assess learning at all levels, “writing development is bound up with questions of equity in access to higher education and to powerful roles in society” (Foster and Russell, 2001, p. 1). In our current educational climate, for example, some states have linked high-stakes assessments to admissions or writing placement. Some academic majors at my institution require a writing exam. In other words, writing is one of many factors linked to educational and economic opportunity.[2]

Writing is Not Neutral

When Selingo (2017) speaks of “competent writers who write clear prose,” he is implying that writing is a functional, neutral skill, generalizable to any situation. However, the conceptual shift heralded by the New Literacy Studies (NLS) over two decades ago has supported an understanding of literacy as a social, situated practice patterned by context. Importantly, NLS scholars and related researchers drawing from sociocultural theories shifted the focus of literacy from an individual cognitive product to a shared social experience. From this perspective, literacies are sets of practices that come together to organize a social group or domain of activity. In other words, literacies are different in different domains and social groups (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee 1991, 2008; Street, 1995). Different contexts require different literacies, and different literate practices (like writing) require specific sets of skills, knowledges, and associated epistemologies and identities that may not be so easily re-appropriated in another context. In public discourses surrounding education, including much education policy, literacy is often positioned as a neutral, functional skill free of ideology, but NLS scholars and others working from sociocultural perspectives have demonstrated that literacy is always contextual and bound up with power relations (Gee, 1991, 2008; Lea & Street, 1998; Russell, 1997).

---

[2] I qualify this statement because while writing is often viewed as a necessary form of cultural capital, it is clear that mastery of a certain form of writing or language does not in itself lead to academic or professional advancement. For example, Flores and Rosa (2015) have persuasively argued that the connections between race and language are so imbricated that a racialized person can speak a “standard” dialect and still be considered deficient. Luke (1996) similarly argued that mastery of cultural capital is important, but not enough for social access. That said, one cannot deny the gatekeeping role that writing plays throughout U.S. society.

The widely circulated neutral discourse of literacy-as-skill has consequences. Since this discourse makes it seem that academic literacy is a set of general skills that students should already have or should be able to gain in a semester or two of a writing class, writing instruction is often overlooked in higher education outside of first-year writing (Russell, 1991). And as Lea and Street (1998) demonstrated, faculty themselves may be unable to identify what it is that they are looking for when they assess student writing. They "know it when they see it," for example, but cannot explain what makes for "good" structure or argument (Hesse, 2017; Leki, 1995). Without a concrete acknowledgement of the epistemological nature of what makes for a strategy like cohesion in a certain genre or discipline, faculty feedback to student writers is thus frequently conveyed as critique of seemingly neutral, decontextualized skills of academic discourse (Lea & Street, 1998; Russell & Yañez, 2003; Soliday, 2004).

This line of reasoning suggests we need to shift our focus from *how much* students are being asked to write, to *what kinds* of opportunities to write are supported in educational contexts. As Russell (1997) writes, "gains in social equity due to writing instruction will not come primarily from raising the general level of writing…but from improving the ways writing is used within and among the activity systems of the disciplines and professions as they select and prepare neophytes" (p. 71). In other words, when writing is treated as a general, neutral skill, it is separated from the social and disciplinary dimensions that are essential for success. This decontextualized approach to writing instruction reinforces the "hidden curriculum" and the school becomes an institution of social class reproduction, as the students whose home discourse is closest to the target discourse of the academy will be most likely to succeed (Bernstein, 1975; Bourdieu, 1973, 1977; Delpit, 2006; Gee 1991, 2008; Russell, 1997). If one of the goals of literacy instruction is to help all learners navigate the symbolic world so they can succeed in personal, educational, civic, and professional contexts, then a functional, decontextualized view of general writing will not suffice.

Rationale for the Study

Because access to learning is not evenly distributed, scholars of writing and literacy have argued that a student's developmental trajectory should not be understood in terms of their perceived ability or skill, but rather in terms of their access to new communities, activities, and the related discursive resources (Hernandez-Zamora, 2010). Thus, to study student writing development, we must pay attention to more than the student's textual performance. Instead, we might consider a student's educational trajectory in terms of their opportunities to explore various genres (textual interactions), their access to mentoring and disciplinary practice, and their opportunities to develop an awareness of their rhetorical strategies and interactions.

This view of writing development is supported by a growing body of longitudinal research on student writers in higher education. As Rogers (2010) explained in his literature review of longitudinal studies on North American college campuses, the last few decades of case study research remind us that "writing is a complex-cognitive and situated-social activity" (p. 374), meaning all discussions of academic writing development are contextual. After reviewing prominent studies focusing on undergraduate writers, Rogers asserts a few general findings that emerge from the studies:

1. Writing develops in multidimensional and nonlinear ways in higher education.

2. Writing is not a single, general skill, and student writers continue to develop as writers both in and beyond the college curriculum.
3. Detectable change tends to happen when students move toward greater levels of participation in a particular community of practice, such as their disciplinary major.
4. Students develop as writers and people throughout their college experience through interactions with a variety of sociocultural inputs. (pp. 374-375).

This body of research supports long-standing criticism of the "myth of transience," the idea popular among content-area teachers that "problems" with writing will be fixed in a general writing course somewhere else, ideally in the English class in high school or the First-Year Writing (FYW) course at the college level (Rose, 1985; Russell, 1991). By emphasizing the ways student writers develop as they participate in distinct discourse communities, the research also calls on writing scholars, teachers, and administrators to pay attention to the ways writing is offered and discussed in classrooms across content areas.

Greater understanding of writing development has even led scholars with vested interest in FYW or ESL courses to question the potential impacts of a one- or two-semester general writing course (Beaufort, 2007; Carroll, 2002; Leki, 2007; Prior, 1998). These questions about the role of stand-alone writing courses in student writing development overlap with the focus on transfer of writing knowledge as one of the central questions of the field (Anson & Moore, 2016; Nowacek, 2011; Wardle, 2007, 2012; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014). Importantly, more recent theories of writing-related transfer have resisted the "carry and unload" metaphor that presumes students are a blank slate when they enter the writing classroom, instead theorizing student writing development as repurposing (Roozen, 2009; Wardle, 2012), recontextualizing

(Nowacek, 2011; Tardy, 2009), or adapting (DePalma and Ringer, 2011) prior knowledge to meet new expectations.

Considering student writing development as repurposing, recontextualizing, or adapting prior knowledge requires looking back to prior experience as well as forward to new contexts. For scholars interested in undergraduate writing, this means developing a better understanding of the high school to college writing transition. While sociocultural studies of the high school to college transition have led to important understandings of college retention and success (Gildersleeve, 2010; Harklau, 2001; Ruecker, 2015), studies of writing development across these institutional spaces have thus far relied mostly on retrospective interviews and surveys to understand the high school writing context (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011; Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak, 2014; Wardle, 2012; Wardle & Clement, 2016) or have lacked access to or focus on to the student writing or institutional context that would allow for a full understanding of college writing opportunities (J. Wells, 2012). Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) recognize this limitation and call upon scholars to “consider what it would take to study prior genre knowledge in its fuller complexity while also attending to the dynamic sociohistorical, cultural, and personal conditions that shape how and why students relate to and make use of their discursive resources" (p. 334). Others have similarly called for more research on “the actual high school-to-college transition” (Donahue, 2007, par. 6).

Overview of the Study

My project responds to these calls by offering an ethnographically-oriented study of four Latinx students’ writing opportunities in a high school and college in the southwest U.S.[3] These students share several characteristics: they attended the same high school, had the same Senior English Language Arts teacher, and they all went on to attend the same large, research-based land grant university. They all self-identify as Hispanic on institutional documents, and all self-report multilingual households. These students, in short, are somewhat "typical" of students least served by conventional educational structures: racial and linguistic minority students from a historically under-resourced school district. This participant sample may lend insight into the ways literacy trajectories of students are uniquely affected by both social conditions and agentive decisions (Hernandez-Zamora, 2010), and help to situate the study in a local K-16 educational context.

---

[3] Acknowledging the influence of feminist, critical, and postcolonial critiques of ethnography’s claims to holistically understand a culture, I choose to use the more preferred term

This descriptive study seeks to understand the writing opportunities offered to these students as they move from the same high school English class through their first year at a large research institution about an hour from the U.S.-Mexico border. The high school to college transition has vexed writing researches and teachers for years. Foster and Russell (2001) suggested that studying writing development across this transition should pay attention to the kinds of support students need, and should pay close attention to any mismatch in expectations of teachers across institutions and disciplines (p. 42). I developed a longitudinal research design in an effort to explore the writing opportunities the focal students were provided and how they were supported across the high school to college transition. Over the course of fifteen months, starting in the spring semester of their senior year of high school, I met monthly with each student to discuss their school writing experiences. I also collected their writing and the related course materials, and interviewed their instructors when possible. Given the prevailing attention to

---

"ethnographically-oriented" to describe writing research that adopts an emic perspective and attempts to take a more reflexive researcher stance (Chiseri-Strater, 2012; Cushman and Monberg, 1998; Paltridge, Starfield, and Tardy, 2016).

measurable outcomes and large-scale assessment in public and higher education in the U.S., this kind of research studying how students actually learn is important to be able to share with stakeholders in decision-making positions (Wardle & Clement, 2016). I aimed to privilege student perspectives on these school writing opportunities through an ethnographically-oriented approach.

By thinking in terms of access and opportunity, this project takes a critical perspective that assumes differentiated power relationships embedded in schooling and writing, and seeks to make visible the ways in which writing can be an inclusive classroom practice or serve to exclude students from the communities they try to enter. Writing is inextricably linked to questions of access and success, leading Russell (1995, 1997) and many others across composition, applied linguistics, and education to argue that attention to academic writing development is a social justice issue (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Gee, 2008; Goldblatt, 2007; Lea & Street, 1998; Wingate, 2015). As Caraballo (2011) suggests, in-depth case studies of marginalized student's experiences can help us to "begin to challenge historically constructed power relations and cultivate more dynamic conceptions of curriculum that take into account the experiences of students of color and lower income students" (p. 171). This study offers one response to this challenge.

As a researcher, I entered this study with a clear agenda. I first visited the high school as a partner teacher in a high school-university writing partnership that pairs university and high school teachers and their students. Our partnership began as the Common Core State Standards were first being implemented in our state, and I observed the implementation of a district-mandated English Language Arts curriculum that met CCSS standards but, to my reading, offered a limited understanding of what writing is and can be (Jacobson, 2015). I was skeptical of claims to "college readiness" made by the text and curriculum, but I didn't really know what kinds of writing first-year university students were being asked to do outside of their writing courses. As if challenging me to follow this line of thinking, I was hired to serve as a graduate writing support specialist in my university's teaching and learning office, where I would help to design and implement writing instruction workshops for faculty trying to meet the new general education writing policy. This position offered me an insider look at the university's General Education program and offered me access to instructors and materials that I may not have otherwise known existed.

In countless conversations with instructors, administrators, and even strangers at the local coffee shop, I've been asked versions of the literacy crisis question: *Why can't these students today write? What can we do to improve their writing?* As Trimbur (1991) has argued, crisis narratives grant teachers and education leaders rhetorical power. But what should we use this power for? What resources do students seem to want or need if they are to develop as writers in higher education, and is the current push for *more* writing creating opportunities for students to do so? Is higher education structured to support writing development for today's racially, economically, and socially diverse student body, and, if not, how could it be more inclusive? In order to begin to answer these guiding questions, I focus my analysis around the following research questions:

1. What identities are available to student writers in academic settings (high school, FYW, General Education classes)?
2. What resources do students draw upon as they write in high school, in their First-Year Writing classes, and in lower-level General Education classes? What resources are available?

3. What opportunities exist for “deep participation” or authentic access to communities of practice in the first-year experience?

Chapter Outline

In the next chapter I introduce my theoretical framework and elaborate upon my research questions. Drawing from a growing body of longitudinal research in writing studies and recent developments in genre theory and sociocultural approaches to studying teaching and learning, I will make the case for genre as a valuable theoretical framework for studying writing development and curricular decision-making. Using examples from theory and from writing studies research, I will show the ways in which a focus on genre lends itself to a rhetorical, situated understanding of academic writing layered with questions of identity, assessment, and power.

Chapter 3 offers an overview to my approach to the research and introduces my research methods. I begin with a discussion of how I came to the study before drawing upon critical scholarship in writing studies, Education, and related fields to discuss the “humanizing” research approach I brought to the project. Then I situate my research in the context of empirical research in writing studies, and I describe my own methods in detail.

Chapter 4 introduces the research settings and contexts that informed the educational experience of participating student writers and instructors. It begins with a description of the communities surrounding the high school and university before describing the respective writing pedagogies of the institutions at the time of the study. The chapter ends with a brief introduction to the participating student writers.

Chapter 5, “Joining the Conversation? Opportunities for Learning in Practice in High School and College” offers a capacious analysis of the writing opportunities provided to the focal students from high school through the first year of college. Using participation-based frames for understanding learning and writing development (Freedman & Adam, 2000; Harklau, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Prior, 1998; Roozen, 2009; Wenger, 1998), this chapter asks two questions: 1) What kinds of writing opportunities are provided to the focal students in high school English Language Arts (ELA), FYW, and general education?; and 2) What modes of participation are available to the focal students in their writing tasks across the high school to college transition? My analysis demonstrates the predominance of the rhetorically narrow "school essay" writing task and the limited opportunities for students to learn in practice and contribute to knowledge production. I then present two case studies demonstrating the possibilities for participatory, knowledge-making tasks that position students as contributors of knowledge in lower-level General Education courses. This chapter shows the focal students recognizing when their writing "matters," when it is serving a genuine purpose or meeting the goals of the course, or when they are simply "answering a prompt."

Chapter 6, "Negotiating Academic Identity," shifts the focus from *what* students were doing to *who* they were supposed to be. Scholars remind us that all writers construct themselves or are constructed by the genres that they write (Bakhtin, 1986; Bawarshi, 2003; Devitt, 2004). When a student sits to write an "essay," they assume a certain role. We also know that teachers are constructing their students as students are constructing themselves. This chapter dwells in this space of negotiation, conflict, and identity by offering two case studies in General Education courses. This chapter asks: What identities are available to two students, Hercules and Jain, as they write in general education?[4] By examining the assignment guidelines and rubrics, the teacher talk about the assignment, the student text, the student talk, and the teacher response, we can trace the dialogue that occurs across the timespace of a school-based writing assignment: the teacher constructs a positionality through the assignment guidelines, the student takes up a role or position, and then the teacher re-positions the student while reading, assessing, and offering feedback. In this case, we'll see that two instructors set up a role that they didn't even claim to want, and student "success" depends less on taking on the identity assumed by the task or genre, and rather on meeting an unspoken teacher expectation. This chapter demonstrates the dialogic action of "making genres" and destabilizes common perceptions that there is *an* academic discourse or identity for students to strive for. It points to the need for greater attention to genre in teaching and learning contexts across postsecondary institutions.

---

[4] All names are pseudonyms in an effort to protect participant identities. Student participants selected their own pseudonyms, and will be referenced with pronouns that reflect their self-

Chapter 7, "'It felt like high school': Writing in high school and college" traces one student's writing and self-efficacy across the high school to college writing transition. With his self-perception of writing ability influenced by his K-12 assessment experiences, Jain chalks up his early college writing success to "lenient grading," not his own writing development. But based on my own observations of Jain's rhetorically-aware writing, in this chapter I conduct a textual analysis to determine whether Jain's abilities may not be valued in the "over-determined and over-determining" (Kamberelis, 1998) social contexts that lead to graded writing. I ask: What textual features and strategies of stance and engagement does Jain reuse or adapt as he transitions to new writing contexts? What resources does Jain seem to be drawing on as he makes these writing choices in academic contexts? I suggest that Jain's college writing "felt like

---

reported gender identity. Jain selected his pseudonym based on the character Patrick Jane on the television show, *The Mentalist*; I have changed the spelling to ease potential confusion. Only one teaching team selected their own pseudonyms; all other teacher participants were assigned gender-neutral pseudonyms and will be referred to with the singular "they" throughout this dissertation.

high school" because in many ways it was, and I point to the ways in which Jain activates a sophisticated repertoire of writing choices dependent upon the writing task and context. The second half of the chapter connects Jain's self-efficacy judgments to the broader issue of racialized school writing contexts. I draw from critical race theories in education to argue that writing courses and assessments seem to reproduce a racialized space that alienates students from marginalized communities. Because this is not the result of malicious actors but rather occurs in the normal processes of education, I argue that to intervene in the processes that reproduce racialized writing spaces and working toward "a socially just educational organization" (Barajas & Ronnqvist, 2007, p. 1536) requires a reconfiguration of what it means to write in school, and what "counts" as learning.

In the Conclusion, I synthesize my findings and offer suggestions for research, pedagogy, and policy with an eye toward inclusive, culturally sustaining school-based writing futures. By mapping the connections between the chapters and case studies I demonstrate the ways in which student writing opportunities are imbricated in broader education ecologies, with classroom writing opportunities influenced by national language and edcuation policies, institutional approaches to writing, and disciplinary and classroom expectations. Viewing individual student writing experiences through this lens helps us to see the ways writing opportunities are constructed and enforced by historical power relations, and I draw from student and instructor interviews in an attempt to offer a way forward for a more humanizing writing education.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: GENRE, IDENTITY, AND POWER

Lucy explains that when she writes in college courses she tries to sound like her teachers.[5] “I felt like a teacher's voice is more powerful than a student's voice,” she said in an interview during her first semester of college, “and I wanted my essay to be powerful” (Interview, Nov 16, 2016). When Hercules is writing in a general education class, he chooses words that help him to “sound smart…to sound like I know what I'm talking about” (Interview, Dec 15, 2016). Jain often uses “furthermore” as a transition word, a way to connect his paragraphs. He learned this strategy in middle school and it stuck, but he doesn’t see the word as part of his personal discourse, saying, “I wouldn't want to talk like that” (Interview, Oct 28, 2016). These statements from Lucy, Hercules, and Jain, all first-generation to college Latinx students in their first semester of college at the time of these interviews, demonstrate the complex negotiation of identity always occurring in academic writing, and in all communication. These students intuitively know that they need more than decontextualized “writing skills” to be recognized as successful academic writers. They need to become a certain kind of person for a certain writing situation. Each of these student writers can point to specific words, phrases, or strategies they use for different purposes, and can consider the ways they are performing to meet the perceived expectations of their audience.

In statements like those above, Lucy, Hercules, and Jain remind us that writing is never just something that happens. Writing is always situated; it emerges when a person needs to address a situation using text. This recognition of writing as a situated practice requires a complex view of written production as an interdependent process including writers, readers, communities, activities, and context. As this view of writing has taken hold across literacy and writing studies, researchers have questioned the efficacy of writing instruction in classroom settings and have pursued a greater understanding of how developing writers gain the writing knowledge needed to succeed in a complex textual world.

---

[5] All names are pseudonyms in an effort to protect participant identities, unless otherwise noted. Student participants selected their own pseudonyms, and will be referenced with pronouns that reflect their self-reported gender identity. Only one teaching team selected their own pseudonyms; all other teacher participants were assigned gender-neutral pseudonyms and will be referred to with the singular “they” throughout this article.

In this chapter, I introduce the theoretical frame of genre studies as a social view of writing helpful for understanding this complex interaction, and for conceptualizing the ongoing academic writing development of Lucy, Hercules, and Jain in terms of access to opportunities for learning. First, I will explore rhetorically-based genre theory as a generative social theory of writing that has supported writing research and pedagogies for the last few decades. Then I will show how theories of genre and situated learning together provide a productive lens for viewing academic writing development, including discussions of identity, assessment, and power. While similar socio-rhetorical frameworks have been used to explore writing in academic disciplines and professional settings, there remain few studies that explore student writing opportunities in high school and the early years of university study. Throughout the discussion, I raise questions that guided my research in this unique context of teaching and learning.

Genre as Social Theory

As Wenger-Trayner (2013) has written, a good social theory allows its users to experience the familiar in a new way, to help name, explore, or explain a social phenomenon. It doesn't need to tell people something new. Instead, a good social theory is useful for people by "providing tools to make sense of what they already know through personal experience—and hence know it anew" (p. 106). Over the last few decades, genre has served as such a theory in writing studies, helping scholars, writers, and learners make sense of the typified ways writers approach situations across time, space, and cultural settings.

Since Miller's (1984) seminal "Genres as Social Action," scholars and teachers have been exploring genres as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations," cultural artifacts developed and adapted over time (p. 159). This line of rhetorically-influenced genre theory and research has explored genres as situated texts that emerge from and in social practice. Writing is always a response to a situation, and over time these situations come to indicate genres. As "typified rhetorical actions," genres are not defined by their form, but instead by the action or "social motive" they help to conduct. Because genres emerge from and help to conduct social action within communities of users, researchers have found that genres provide both agreed-upon expectations for discourse while allowing for individual creativity and agency (Bawarshi, 2003; Devitt, 2004; Hyland, 2004, 2015). In other words, writers use and adapt genres to concurrently achieve their own goals and the actions of a social group or community. From this perspective, genres are not formalized text types or sets of formal features as often discussed in popular discourse. Instead, genres are social practices: routinized, "stabilized-for-now" (Schryer, 1993) ways of communicating that develop over time to achieve certain goals for certain groups people.

This rhetorical approach to genre serves as a generative social theory for writing studies because of its fluidity and flexibility. For example, genre can lend insight into the goals and values of disciplines or organizations when studied as cultural artifacts and social products of communities (Berkenkotter, 2001; Paré & Smart, 1994; Schryer, McDougal, Tait, & Lingard, 2012). This line of study has served as a reminder that genres are always ideological because they emerge in social context (Coe, Lingard, and Teslenko, 2002; Devitt, 2009). At the same time, examining genre production in terms of individual uses and variations can teach us about the ways individual agents appropriate genres to meet both community and individual needs, leading to implications for education, identity, power, and change (Bawarshi, 2003; Devitt, 2004; Hyland, 2004; Soliday, 2011; Tardy, 2016). This perspective on genre offers explanatory power for discussions of school writing and academic writing development.

Genre and Academic Writing Development

In *Academic Literacy and Student Diversity*, Ursula Wingate (2015) describes an academically literate person as someone who both understands the sociocultural context of written interactions within a disciplinary community and commands the conventions and norms that regulate these interactions. Because these interactions are manifested in genres, she argues, communicative competence in an academic discourse can be understood as “the ability to understand these genres and express oneself through them” (p. 7). The production of genres is thus central to developing academic literacies.

From this orientation, we can think of academic writing development as an ongoing process of learning, comprehending, and performing the ways of interacting in genres in academic communities, including “an understanding of the culture, circumstances, purposes, motives, and epistemologies that prevail in particular academic settings and strategies [students] can employ to engage with them" (Paltridge, Starfield, & Tardy, 2016, p. 167). In other words, when students learn to write in new academic situations, they need opportunities to learn the ways of thinking, doing, and knowing that characterize the community of use. Since “learning to write in academic settings is about change in ways of thinking, using language, and envisioning the self” (Casanave, 2002, p. 36), and genres produce and are produced by those ways of thinking, languaging, and identifying, then genre can be a useful lens for exploring student learning and academic writing development from a sociocultural perspective.[6]

As Hyland (2015) explains, the repeated rhetorical decisions of genres don't just construct communities, they also construct individuals and their identities (p. 36). Student writers have to find their way into new academic communities through their communication in genres, and they will be recognized (or not) as members and will stand out (or not) as individuals by the ways in which they choose to appropriate those ways of being. When Lucy tries to "sound like a teacher," she is both seeking membership in an academic community and trying to construct her own identity as a "powerful" thinker and writer. Hercules saying he wants to "sound like I know what I'm talking about" is a subtle acknowledgement of the rules of the game, that the assigned school genre requires a certain discourse in order to be recognized. And Jain similarly acknowledges the ways he maintains distinct discursive identities as he negotiates his home and academic communities.

Of course, while these student writers are making these efforts to construct their own relationships to school genres and academic writing, their instructors are evaluating their work and positioning the student writers in terms of their own understandings of generic, disciplinary, and personal expectations (Hyland, 2002; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Prior, 1998). A rhetorically-sound understanding of genre reminds us that genres exist in the writer-reader interaction. Our understanding of genre production, therefore, must be situated in practice.

---

[6] I use "languaging" in its verb form to represent varying ways of making meaning through language. For Shohamy (2006), language is both individual and social: language varies from person to person, but communication is achieved in social contexts. The term "languaging" seeks to represent the dynamic and evolving nature of language and acknowledges other means of communication beyond words and linguistic markers (p. 21). Shohamy's use of languaging aligns well with current Writing Studies theories of genre and language that point to the dynamic, social, and evolving nature of all forms of communication (Canagarajah, 2006; Horner & Lu, 2010; Prior, 1998).

Genres-In-Use

Some theorists have come to see genres as tools-in-use, as routinized actions that facilitate the achievement of goals or actions. Emphasizing the situated nature of genres, Russell (1997) suggested that genres are tools used by groups or collectives to achieve certain goals. By reframing the goals of a genre in terms of a collective and not the individual speaker, Russell helped to shift the analysis away from the formal features of genres that may lead to a static conception of genre, and instead focused on the dynamic ways in which participants recognize a text as a genre when it is "operationalizing the actions of participants" (p. 518).

This view of genres as "tools" has been critiqued by Devitt (2004), who argued that the tool metaphor creates a sense of genres as "static, material object[s] that people can pick up and use or just as easily set aside" (p. 48). Instead of viewing genres as things that people act upon, or as "material objects" that help people to achieve certain goals, she instead called upon scholars to understand genres as human constructs that are both created by people and influence people's actions. For Devitt, people take action *through* genres rather than with genres, an important distinction that maintains a view of genres as social structures that are produced and reproduced by the actors who appropriate them.

While I value Devitt's critique for undertaking genre analysis or even for discussing the challenges of writing pedagogy, I think her reading of Russell (1997) is too narrow for a discussion of teaching and learning. Russell's view of genres as mediating tools aligns well with situated theories of literacy, practice, and learning that emphasize the contextual nature of tools-in-use. The learning theorists Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) described knowledge itself as a set of tools that can only be understood through its use. All knowledge, they explain, indexes the situation in which it is arises and is used; knowledge does not exist separate from its use. In writing studies, Prior (1998) used the metaphor of a hammer to explain this concept of a tool-in-use. The hammer on its own can be a paperweight or an art piece. But to use a hammer as a tool implies physical material (nails, wood), certain hammer skills, and a sociocultural history that engendered the use of hammer, nails, and wood to build things. Over time, hammers became familiar and more accessible, and as new contexts emerged, the hammer was improved and re-appropriated to meet new needs (p. 181). This discussion of a hammer helps us to see the ways that tools-in-use are dynamic and situated, not static objects. And just as the use of a hammer suggests certain abilities, materials, and even cultural-historical understandings, so does a written genre.

Genre and Situated Learning

To view writing as situated activity, and genres as tools-in-use, raises important questions for how people learn genres. Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) argued that learning happens in “ordinary practices” or “authentic activities,” which they define as “coherent, meaningful, and purposeful activities” of a culture (p. 34). Just as a hammer takes its meaning in the act of its use, they suggested, so too does language, writing, and mathematics. The authors remind us that a learner doesn’t need to learn only the skill involved in the activity, but they must “gain access to the standpoint” that allows experts to act meaningfully and purposefully (p. 36). In other words, participating in the authentic activity may allow a learner to understand how more experienced members think about and act around the activity.

This process of learning in practice is more fully elaborated by Lave and Wenger (1991), who described multiple forms of apprenticeship and cultural learning in their theory of situated learning. As the writers explained, “practice concerns the whole person acting in the world” (p. 49), and “learning, thinking, and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the culturally constructed world” (p. 51). Learning in practice, then, is about more than just completing a task or learning a skill. It’s about learning who is involved, what they do, how people walk, talk, dress, work, and conduct their lives, and more (p. 95). Learning is also a matter of transformation, of becoming a new kind of person who relates to the world in new ways. Like Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989), Lave and Wenger (1991) have cautioned against educational models that posit knowledge as something that can be transmitted from teacher to student outside of its context of use. Especially germane for our purposes is their discussion of language.

Lave and Wenger (1991) recognized the centrality of language to practice, noting that learning to participate in a community involves learning shared communicative practices. They made a distinction, however, between talking *about* a practice and talking from *within* it. Typical language instruction, they explain, actually creates a new linguistic practice, but not necessarily the language of the practice itself (p. 108). School writing serves as an excellent example. When school forms like the five-paragraph essay are taught, they create an opportunity for students to learn how to “do school,” not to achieve a social action. Wardle (2009) examined this lack of meaningful context in her critique of the “mutt genres” often taught in First-Year Writing classes. These mutt genres—interviews, travel narratives, reflections, rhetorical analyses, etc.—mimic the genres found in other communities, but they take on different purposes in the FYW setting. For example, the act of observation is an important method in some academic writing, but in these contexts, observation is usually used toward a purpose, not as a goal in itself as in an “observation” assignment (Wardle, 2009, p. 774). From Lave and Wenger’s (1991) perspective, the students writing these mutt genres have not had an opportunity to learn the genres in practice; they have learned to write for school. Writing scholars have found similar conflicts between genre and motive in professional programs like nursing (Parks, 2001) and architecture (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999).

Discourse, Literacy, and Genre

This situated view of language and learning shifts the focus away from the popular discourse of literacy learning as the acquisition of a set of decontextualized skills. Instead, learning is understood as gaining a certain ability to participate in the practices of a community. Gee (2008) has persuasively argued that literacy is “always more than language” (p. 156). For Gee, in a socially situated view of language or literacy, language use requires a fit between words and actions. A “big ‘D’ Discourse,” in his framing, includes not only the words that make up a language, but also the ways in which they are used, an understanding of the contexts of their use, and the ways of thinking, acting, and being of the people within that community of use.

In this framework, Gee (2008) has argued that literate development means learning more than just how to read and write. He makes concrete connections between Discourse and identity, reminding his readers that language use is as much about recognition as expression. As Gee (2008) writes, Discourses are “*ways of recognizing and getting recognized* as certain sorts of *whos* doing certain sorts of *whats*” (p. 156, emphasis in original). What’s important in language use is the language *plus* being the “right” who (kind of person) doing the “right” sort of what (activity) (p. 154). Echoing Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989), Gee (2008) recognizes that language only gains its meaning in context and calls for a pedagogical approach to language instruction that acknowledges this situated view. He suggests that learners need to learn “inside the procedures, rather than overtly about them” in order to take on the “right” perspective and identity that the language-in-use requires (p. 167). This pedagogical approach would seem to contradict common teaching and assessment methods, which focus on what the teacher *teaches* rather than what the student does or learns (Biggs, 1999). Gee (1991) has argued that schools need to balance explicit teaching and learning-by-doing approaches if they really want to provide greater access to dominant discourses to those who want it.

From Discourse to Genre

As may be clear at this point, Gee's (2008) description of Discourse and the rhetorical view of genre as social action overlap in meaningful ways, including a focus on situated practice and recognition of the social nature of joint activity. However, Discourse and genre can be distinguished by boundaries, or a lack thereof. For Gee (2008), Discourses are expansive, "ways of being in the world" (p. 3). A Discourse will include many language practices, including ways of reading and writing, and will thus include many different genres. In academic life, for example, an engineering Discourse will include ways of thinking through problems, developing solutions, use of technologies, and even ways of talking. This Discourse will also include associated genres, the "frames of action" (Bazerman, 1997) that help to achieve certain goals. As opposed to the form-less, expansive view of Discourse, genres are bounded, they have beginnings and ends. Following Bakhtin (1986), a genre is an utterance with boundaries determined by a change of speakers (p. 71). A generic utterance presupposes a response, even if that response is just for the reader/listener to have read or heard or understood the utterance; an utterance is always directed to someone (p. 95). An engineer, for example, may write a project proposal in order to gain approval for their plan of work. In this case, the project proposal (the genre) becomes the "frame" for the action they want to achieve. In order to write in this genre, this engineer will need to draw upon their community Discourse—the ways of thinking, being, acting, and languaging—and will also need to draw on the conventions of the genre.

From educational perspectives, genres have been considered entry points into dominant discourses (Cope and Kalantzis, 1993) and "keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community" (Miller, 1984, p. 165). Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) summarized the educational appeal of genres well, writing, "If what we want above all is to *belong* to a particular group but do not know what specific things we ought to do in order to act as members, the genres of the group will tell us both what to want to do as member and how, rhetorically, to achieve it" (p. 21, emphasis in original). Implied in this discussion of what to do and how to achieve it is also *who* to be, emphasizing the role of identity in situated practice that I will return to later in the chapter.

Genre Learning and the Importance of Access

Because learning happens in practice, scholars of situated learning theory have long argued that *access* to those practices and to the members of the communities of those practices is the key to learning (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014). As Lave and Wenger (1991) write,

> To become a full member of a community of practice requires access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers, and other members of the community; and to information, resources, and opportunities for participation....in a sense, *all that we have said so far is about access* (p. 101, my emphasis).

In other words, one cannot become a "full member," a valued participant in a field of study—or any kind of community, for that matter—through reading and lecture alone. A novice learner requires some level of access to the real work of the community in order to understand not only the tools and processes, but the ways of thinking, being, and acting that constitute membership.

As we have already discussed, communication in academic communities happens through genres. Experimental lab reports, literary analyses, or even listserv emails all serve as examples of the ways academic writers are constantly working to be "recognized" as the kinds of people who do the task they are trying to accomplish. The process of learning genres, then, has proven to be much more complex than simply learning to follow its features or conventions. Like literacy scholars who remind us that literate development requires access to literate communities (Gee, 2008; Hernandez-Zamora, 2010), genre scholars have emphasized that access is central to developing a complex, rhetorical understanding of genre.

The question of what kinds of access are helpful for genre learning has been a major focus of genre studies in educational settings. Perhaps most intuitively, scholars have argued that exposure and repeated access to genres and generic texts can help developing writers begin to recognize patterns and conventions as they build their genre repertoires (Casanave, 2002; Tardy, 2009). Even young children demonstrate a greater "general awareness" of genres and their varying conventions and functions with exposure to different kinds of written genres (Kamberelis, 1998). Since repeated practice can help writers recognize and internalize the patterns and conventions of a genre, Tardy (2009) has suggested it may be beneficial for students to practice the same genre multiple times in a single course in school rather than taking a more exploratory approach. For my research purposes, the principle of exposure and repetition encouraged me to keep track of the genres student writers were exposed to, and to ask whether or not they had repeated practice in that genre.

Of course, student writers are not entering school classrooms without prior genre experiences that influence their writing development. They are exposed to various genres both in and out of school, and their practice may have already begun before they enter a particular class. For this reason, genre scholars have recently interrogated the ways in which a student's prior genre knowledge may affect their appropriation of new genres.[7] In their study of first-year college writers, Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) found that students who were more confident in their writing seemed attached to their prior genre success, and they were less likely to recognize new expectations and adapt their writing to new contexts. The authors suggested that these "boundary guarders" might benefit from more explicit discussion of their prior genre experience in the classroom, so that they may better identify similarities and differences. Hannah and Saidy (2014) similarly drew upon the idea of "boundaries" in their study of high school student writers. They found that students had language to describe their writing and their role as writers, but this language did not often align with writing studies terminology. In order to help student writers see and explore the boundaries between genres and disciplines, the authors recommended that teachers work with students to actively draw from student language and prior experience as they define the writing they have done and will do in the future. These two studies, in particular, influenced my research process, as I always asked student writers and their instructors to name the genre they were using. Chapter 5, especially, reflects this approach.

---

[7] In some ways, there has been a similar recognition in discussions of transfer of writing knowledge. As Wardle (2012) noted, transfer scholars need to move beyond the "carry and unload" model that treats students as blank slates toward an understanding of writing development as a sociohistoric process. This theoretical frame is evident in recent scholarship on recontextualization and reconstruction (Nowacek, 2011), remixing (Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak, 2014), and repurposing (Roozen, 2009; Wardle, 2012), which all seem to use the prefix re- to suggest the importance of understanding the ways student writers use "previous writing experiences" when they encounter new writing situations.

Genre learning can also happen when novice writers begin to see the ways genres and their conventions reflect the goals and values of their associated discourse communities. Especially in the school setting, students may benefit from gaining insight into disciplinary roles and perspectives so that they may begin to see the rhetorical domain of disciplines (Adler-Kassner, Majewski, and Koshnick, 2012; Beaufort, 2007; Nowacek, 2011; Shay, Moore, & Cloete, 2002; Soliday, 2011). For example, Tim, the first-year focal student in Beaufort's (2007) longitudinal study, struggled to recognize the disciplinary reading and writing expectations in his history course, leading Beaufort to argue that instructors should be more specific about their disciplinary expectations (see also Nowacek, 2011). For example, Tim misunderstood the disciplinary expectations for evidence and reasoning, instead believing that his history teacher merely wanted "regurgitation" of the facts (Beaufort, 2007, p. 68). To help make these expectations visible, some argue that it benefits novice writers to explore specific writing conventions in their disciplinary contexts rather than as part of a general writing course like FYW (Johns, 1999; Olinger, 2014b; Soliday, 2011). Hopefully such an approach would help students to see that expectations of quality and correctness are not universal. With these suggestions in mind, I was interested in the various resources student writers utilized and had access to in order to learn new genres, and whether or not the student writers' ideas of quality and correctness reflected their disciplinary learning.

If student writers are to be able to connect their understanding of conventions to the rhetorical dimensions of disciplines, they must also have access to the ways of thinking and working within the communities. How students can access these roles may vary. In their respective studies of L2 graduate student writing development, Tardy (2009) and Prior (1998) both emphasized the role of disciplinary mentorship, and relationships more broadly, as a resource for gaining access to disciplinary knowledge and practices. These interactions with more experienced members of a community can be formal or informal, face to face or intertextual. Tardy (2009) found that advisor feedback was a major factor in one multilingual international graduate student's developing rhetorical understanding of the thesis genre. Paul's initial drafts of his thesis belied a formal approach to style and organization. However, in later drafts he demonstrated a more rhetorical understanding of both language and structure, acknowledging a growing sense of audience and purpose related to the genre. As a result of the feedback, Paul began to see the thesis as more than a teacher-oriented project he had to complete for a degree; instead, he began to understand it as a persuasive genre in his disciplinary community. Prior's (1998) case studies of Mai and Teresa—also multilingual, international graduate students—similarly demonstrated different modes of participation students may access depending on their level of social interaction. While Mai's literature search included a proximal scan of a library stack and she made changes to her text upon explicit recommendations by her committee, Teresa's process reflected a deeper level of participation. Her search for literature included consultation with others, and Teresa fine-tuned her thesis over the course of three months with a professor and another graduate student. As Tardy (2009) argued, writing solely in class—or, like Mai, writing solely independently—does not constitute access to disciplinary practice because the constraints such as articulated task guidelines, the presence of a single reader/evaluator, and the goal of a letter grade remove the task from the actions of the discipline.

Genre learning is clearly a complex process that requires access to the people, resources, ideas, and values of a community. As such, it is not surprising that the student examples above come from studies of graduate students who are enmeshed in their disciplinary community. In fact, few scholars have conducted empirical studies in classroom contexts in high school or undergraduate education from a genre perspective (Tardy, 2006).[8] By working closely with four student writers over 18 months, I hoped to be able to identify the opportunities for access students were provided (see Table 1). What resources were available, and how were they used? What opportunities for access and participation existed, and in what kinds of communities? What genres were made available to students, and how were they described? I soon realized that many of these questions were inevitably related to questions of identity.

Genre and Identity: "An Affiliation Crisis" in Schools

As previously discussed, genre learning has been theorized as inextricably related to the level of access students have to the roles and situations that give rise to the genres they write. To paraphrase Gee (2008), a person can't learn to write X genre in Y way until they've been in the setting where texts of type X are written in Y way (p. 44). Developing writers thus need access not only to the genres, but to the various roles and situations that that motivate the genres. From this perspective, the process of genre learning for developing writers must include considerations of identity.

To demonstrate, let's return briefly to the examples from the previous section. In the successful stories of Prior's (1998) Teresa and Tardy's (2009) Paul, each graduate student was afforded opportunities to take on new roles: Teresa was able to take on the role of a scholar in her thesis project, and Paul began to see the purpose of his thesis beyond a credential through his interactions with his advisor. Gee (2001) has focused much of his education-related research on the question of why some students, like Teresa and Paul, are offered these opportunities in

---

[8] See Beaufort (2007), Leki (2007), and Nowacek (2011) for empirical studies of undergraduate student writing development that explore access to genre learning among other related questions of writing development and transfer.

Table 1.

Summary of opportunities for genre learning

Principle of Genre Learning	Questions for Identifying Access Opportunities
Exposure and repeated access to generic texts (Casanave, 2002; Kamberelis, 1998; Tardy, 2009)	What genres are students exposed to in different institutional and disciplinary contexts?
Make visible the rhetorical domain of disciplines by exploring the relationships between genre expectations and disciplinary purposes (Adler-Kassner, Majewski, and Koshnick, 2012; Foster & Russell, 2001; Nowacek, 2011)	What resources do student writers draw upon to understand the rhetorical domain of disciplines?
Make disciplinary roles and identities explicit and visible (Beaufort, 2007; Nowacek, 2011; Shay & Moore, 2001; Soliday, 2007; Wardle & Clement, 2016)	What roles and identities do student writers perceive to be available in academic settings? What roles and identities are available to student writers in academic settings? How do instructors position student writers in academic settings?
Mentorship and relationships with more experienced members (Prior, 1998; Tardy, 2009)	What kinds of mentorship and relationships with more experienced members are available to student writers in their first-year of university study? What opportunities for genuine participation exist?
Make prior genre knowledge visible (Artemeva & Fox, 2010; Devitt, 2004; Hannah & Saidy, 2014; Reiff and Bawarshi, 2011; Roozen, 2009)	What kinds of genre knowledge do student writers bring with them to academic writing settings? In what ways do academic writing tasks draw from or contradict the prior knowledge student writers already have?
Discuss conventions in context (Johns, 1999; Olinger, 2014b; Soliday, 2011)	How are students introduced to discussions of genre conventions? How are issues of “correctness” addressed in the first-year experience?

educational institutions, while others are not. Reflecting on the literacy crisis discourse common in the U.S., Gee wrote, "In my view, we do not have a reading crisis in our schools. Rather, we have what I would call an affiliation crisis" (p. xviii). In other words, a major problem in literacy instruction is the lack of opportunity students have to inhabit the roles and identities essential for learning and success (see also Buck, 2018).

Gee (2001) argued that students need opportunities to take on the values, roles, and attitudes a literacy practice such as reading or writing demands. As they take on these roles and take advantage of various resources, students should learn how members of a community act, speak, think, and write—through genres. Through this ongoing process, student writers must choose how much (or whether) to take on that identity in their own communication patterns (Russell, 1997). As Bakhtin (1986) explained, all speakers inevitably draw on the utterances of others in order to gain recognition from their audience, as it is the social history embedded in the utterance that allows for understanding. Any single communication is a “link in the chain of speech communication in a particular sphere of human activity or everyday life" (p. 83). There is room for individuality and creativity in any given utterance, but this agency comes up against the audience expectations. When I run into a colleague in the hallway, there are only so many ways our greeting can go. From experience, I know that, “Hey, how’s it going?” requires a certain kind of response. I might tell a joke or offer a platitude in jest (“Best day ever!”), but if I stopped and narrated the reasons why my day was going poorly in this hallway conversation, I may not be invited into this conversation again.

A similar process of recognition and response occurs for student writers. When a student sits down to write, their options are limited by generic expectations. The “genre function,” as Bawarshi (2003) has called it, creates boundaries around what the student can write about, how they can write it, and, importantly for this conversation, *who* they can be as they are writing. Echoing Bakhtin, Bawarshi (2003) explained that the genre itself carries potential social motives, limiting an individual writer's freedom to create based on their own sense of creativity or expression. The writer's agency resides "within the discursive and ideological space of genre" (p. 79), and the genre itself exists at the intersection between a writer's self-motives and the social motives of the genre (p. 92). It follows that academic writing in genres requires knowing, understanding, and appropriating the social motives of a genre.

For this reason, Bawarshi (2003), Russell (1997), and others (Johns, 2008; Reiff and Bawarshi 2011; Soliday 2011) have challenged writing scholars and teachers to help make the social motives of genres more visible to student writers so that they might be better able to place them*selves* (or not) in their writing. For some writing scholars, the struggle to negotiate an expected discursive identity with one's own perceived self-identity lies at the heart of academic writing development (Ivanič, 1998; Tardy, 2009), and there is a large body of research discussing the challenges student writers face reconciling the identities and commitments students bring with them as they negotiate new contexts (Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988; Casanave, 2002; Leki, 2007; Prior, 1998; Roozen, 2009). A few case studies from the literature will help us to see the ways this negotiation can impact a student writer's learning trajectory.

Virginia's Struggle for "Coherence"

Casanave's (2002) case study of Virginia, a Ph.D. student navigating her first year in a prestigious sociology program, helps us see how the unique expectations of a discipline or program can create tension with a developing scholar's personal motives and understanding of self. A native speaker of both English and Spanish from a working-class Puerto Rican family in

New York, Virginia felt alienated from the community of sociologists she was supposedly trying to join. She wanted her work to matter for the communities and schools she grew up in, and when faced with her first writing tasks Virginia had immediate reservations about aligning herself with the theoretical, abstract terminology that seemed unexplainable in everyday practices. Virginia was frustrated by the writing assignments that asked her to translate real lives into abstract knowledge claims and realized that the theoretical language selected by her professors privileged certain ways of knowing at the expense of others. Casanave (2002) writes that learning these "academic literacy games" involves "unfamiliar language, ways of knowing, and roles and relationships of power among players, and often require that students paradoxically both adhere to convention and pursue complexity, skills of critiquing, and originality" (p. 176). The genres of her graduate program asked Virginia to take on a role and relationship to power that she could not align with her self-identity. When Virginia chose to leave her program, Casanave recognized this choice not as a failure of enculturation, but as an agentive decision; Virginia recognized that disciplinary writing required a self that she did not want to become.

Angelica Negotiating Her "Voice"

An undergrad in Roozen's (2009) longitudinal study, Angelica similarly found disjunctures between the "kind of writing" she was asked to do in her English classes and the "'other ways' in which she wanted to write" (p. 558). Born into a multilingual family in Chicago where Spanish was the primary language in the home, Angelica was an avid reader and writer from an early age. Roozen describes writing as a "favorite activity" of Angelica's, and journaling was a central literate practice in her life beginning in the fourth grade. Angelica's love of reading and writing led her to matriculate as an English major, where she hoped to continue developing her love of reading and writing, imagining herself as a professor someday.

However, Angelica was put off by the distanced analytical style asked of her writing. As a writer, she valued imagery and description, but when she attempted to repurpose this practice in the opening of an analysis essay, her instructor “read it as a failure to conform to the privileged conventions of the literary analysis” (Roozen, 2009, p. 557). A savvy student and writer, Angelica was able to adapt her writing to meet those expectations and earn As in her introductory course, but she felt doing so left her with “no voice at all,” a compromise she was not willing to make (p. 557). Like Virginia, Angelica was “unable to envision a way of being that might successfully encompass these competing literate practices and, more broadly, these different conceptions of what it means to be a writer,” so she left the English major to explore other options (p. 559).

In these case studies, the researchers demonstrate the challenges student writers may face negotiating their own motives and desires for writing with the social motive of the genres that organize the work of their disciplinary communities. Challenges like those faced by Virginia and Angelica have led Ivanič (1998) to call writing a “site of struggle” in which writers are constantly negotiating an identity (p. 332). Tardy (2009) has similarly reminded readers that individual writing development is marked by the ways writers resolve tensions between their discursive identity they present on paper and their more personal self-identity. As the stories of Virginia and Angelica show, these tensions are not always resolved. Rather than compromise valued elements of their own self-identities, these learners found other trajectories that would allow them less conflicted modes of identification. Another student in their position may more willingly allow their personal self-identity to be subsumed, while others might take risks in their writing—blending languages in an academic essay, for example—that challenge the expectations of the genre and their readers.

These studies and our understanding of genre as an agent of identity lead to a few central questions I will explore as I describe the research findings: What roles or affiliation opportunities are available to students in writing contexts like high school, FYW, and general education? What roles or identities do students take on in their school writing? What roles or identities do student writers perceive?

Genre, Identity, and Power

While it is true that writers face choices about whether or not to take on the roles and identities circumscribed by the genre, it is also true that students in school contexts may or may not have access to those identities or an understanding of what those identities entail. A Bakhtinian perspective reminds us that genres are jointly created and as reliant upon the reader as well as the writer. In other words, in order for a student to successfully communicate through academic genres, they must be recognized by their reader as the right kind of person writing the right kind of text. In this way, genre and identity are inextricably bound with power relations.

Power has long been central to genre theory and discussions of genre pedagogy. In his activity theory analysis of genre systems, Russell (1997) explained that genres are mediating tools of activity systems.[9] He suggested that as newcomers seek to engage in a new activity system, they need to appropriate at least some genres to “expand their involvement” with others in the activity system (p. 521). As mediating tools, genres thus maintain the social practices of the community, in the process allowing power to be exerted by maintaining boundaries and interactions and participating in the social reproduction of the system (p. 521). When we study genre use in practice, we must remember that social groups are steeped in power, and learning genres is in part about learning to work within and/or contend with that regime of power (Tardy, 2009).

---

[9] For the purposes of this discussion, we might consider activity systems as akin to an organizational structure or community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Russell’s central argument is that activity systems that share common goals or objectives also share similar genres, or meditating tools. For example, the activity system of academic biology is mediated by experimental lab reports, and so on.

Let's return briefly to the case studies cited in the previous section before moving into a fuller discussion of the power relationships inherent in the dialogic nature of genre and genre learning. Both Virginia and Angelica were writing in school contexts in which they were trying to meet instructor expectations in an evaluation context, or, as Russell (1997) might say, they were seeking to expand their involvement in their academic communities. However, both student writers recognized that their agency was limited by the unequal power structures represented through genres as represented by their professors. Because the professor/evaluator reader knows more about both the topic and the disciplinary writing style than the student, student writers are not positioned as collaborators or peers, but as novices whose writing needs to be fixed (Geisler, 1995; Hanstedt, 2012)

As multilingual students from minoritized communities, Virginia and Angelica faced a clear double-bind: they felt that they had to either assimilate into a disciplinary culture and leave behind their home community or self-identity or leave. They did not see a way of maintaining both. Even though they were both clearly capable of excelling in their chosen fields, each of the learners made the agentive decision to leave what they saw as restrictive writing environments in order to better align their self-identities with the roles and responsibilities asked of them in academic and professional writing tasks. The tensions enumerated are clearly raced, classed, and gendered, with questions of epistemology and power relations becoming central to a complex understanding of genre, assessment, and schooling.

Writing and Symbolic Power

Whether or not a student writer meets or challenges the norms or conventions of a genre, it is widely understood that gaining recognition or symbolic power within an academic community relies at least in part on identification and receptivity, one's ability to demonstrate they are the kind of person who participates in that community *and* be recognized as such (Bourdieu, 1991). Especially in school situations where a student's writing is evaluated by a teacher, the dialogic creation of a text must be read through the lens of assessment and power.

Power has been central to the project of genre studies—and composition studies, in general—but not without controversy. Some of the early work connecting genre theory to pedagogy was specifically geared toward including historically marginalized populations in school writing (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993). However, Luke (1996) criticized these efforts for an overly-simplistic view of power that presented genre-based instruction and acquisition as a neutral process. Drawing from Bourdieu's discussion of cultural capital and a Foucauldian understanding of power, Luke reminded readers that "genres of power" do not exist in and of themselves because power is always socially contingent. Teaching students to write "appropriate" school essays, in other words, will not change broader societal power relations.

This critique of appropriateness in language studies has been updated in recent theorizations of raciolinguistics, which explicitly seek to explore the interrelatedness of race, language, and power (Alim, 2016). Flores and Rosa (2015) have used a raciolinguistic perspective to question "additive" pedagogical approaches (like a "genres of power" approach) that seek to value minoritized languages while emphasizing that some variations are more appropriate for certain situations than others. Drawing from case study research, they argue that whether or not a person from a racialized community will be accepted is determined by the white listening subject, not by their actual speaking practices (p. 167).[10] To demonstrate, they share the story of a bilingual Ph.D. student who is nevertheless labeled “deficient” by instructors in a Spanish program. In this case, Anglophone students who learned Spanish as a second language in school were considered appropriate or proficient, while the language a bilingual student learned in her home and community were looked down upon. The authors argue that this classification is based on long-standing deficit-based conceptions of U.S. Latina/o family language practices which lead to a negative perception of bilingualism. This suggests that prestige is not actually related to the language practices of the speaker, but instead is assessed by the racializing ideologies of the white listening subject. In other words, “correct” language use is that which is recognized by whiteness.

Inoue (2015) has made similar arguments in composition studies. In his award-winning, *Antiracist Writing Assessment Ecologies: Teaching and Assessing Writing for a Socially Just Future*, Inoue outlines the ways in which race is connected to language and assessment. Building from compositionist critiques of monolingualism in FYW (Horner & Lu, 2010; Horner & Trimbur, 2002; Matsuda, 2006) and calls for more critical approaches to WAC (LeCourt, 1996; Villanueva, 2001), Inoue argued that race remains largely elided in writing assessment theory and practice. He suggested that even the current movement toward translingual approaches continues to overlook the ways race and language overlap, even as those occupying minoritized subject positions like African-American, Latinx, or Asian-American are often those marked for linguistic difference. According to Inoue, race functions through literacy assessments because most assessments only account for a dominant, white, middle-class discourse and are evaluated as such (p. 27). This phenomenon is visible in large-scale assessments that lead to predictable demographic score distributions that favor white students, and also in local classrooms, where an instructor's ideal text is often informed by a dominant white discourse.[11] For example, when a general education instructor says they "want students to be able to articulate themselves well" (Mason Interview, June 9, 2017) with no further description of what that means, we can probably assume they are hoping for something approximating what has become known as Standard Written English (SWE), a dominant style of discourse that has been "standardized" and marked as prestigious due to its hegemonic power.

---

[10] Rosa and Flores (2017) explain that whiteness is a subject position that does not correspond to a skin color and can be inhabited by individuals who are both recognized as white and nonwhite. From this perspective, whiteness depends on the circumstance. For example, Geraldo Rivera took on the white perceiving subject position when he critiqued a hooded sweatshirt as “thug” clothing following the killing of Trayvon Martin (p. 9). Inoue (2015) similarly interrogated “white racial habitus” as a discourse and set of expectations in writing, which includes a focus on the individualism and self-determination, rationality and logic, and clarity and consistency. In the context of writing assessment, this white racial habitus supports a deficit-based approach that blames students for their failure and creates racist effects in the classroom, even if a writing assessment is not racist in and of itself (pp. 49-50).

In fact, one of the prevailing myths about SWE is that there is an objective, universal standard of writing quality that can be assessed. Collins (1996) has demonstrated the ways in which such a myth supports a literacy paradigm that leads to prescriptivism and inequality. He describes "textualism" as the prevailing school-based literacy assumptions in the fixity of text, the transparency of language, and the universality of shared meaning. Under a textualist approach, he argues, the stratification that emerges in school classrooms is both naturalized and reinforced, as students identified early as "poor" and "good" are treated to different educational experiences, with the poor students offered a remedial education focused on surface features and the good ones treated as agentive thinkers and learners. In his ethnographic research in a third-grade classroom, Collins (1996) noticed that a teacher in the “low” reading group used questions as a comprehension check, whereas in the “high” groups that same teacher used questioning to encourage dialogue and recognize student interpretations of the text (p. 221). He explains that when reading and writing are treated as decontextualized skills to be learned and mastered on one’s own, then assessment and teaching become focused on “fixing” problems. In school literacy, Collins argued, "failure and success…are linked fates, constitutive dichotomies in a system that attempts to hierarchize and segregate the profound divisions of class, race, and gender that characterize our societies" (pp. 223-224). The ideology of textualism, a central feature of what Inoue (2015) calls white racial habitus, both constructs and reinforces a teaching and assessment program that rationalizes different success rates along class, race, and gender lines in that name of a seemingly objective standard.

---

[11] I encountered this phenomenon in this research project, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6.

This textualist ideology prevails even in the face of vast sociocultural scholarship demonstrating that what counts as “good” writing is inevitably contingent (Fox, 1999). For example, recent investigations into commonly used terms like voice (Ivanič and Camps, 2001; Matsuda and Tardy, 2007; Ramanthan and Atkinson, 1999) and style (Olinger, 2014b) have challenged Western ideologies of authorship and textual ownership, as well as textualist assumptions about an objective standard for writing. In contrast to a prevailing understanding of voice as representative of a writer’s inner self, scholars have recently theorized voice as a reader’s impression of the writer based on discursive and non-discursive choices (Matsuda, 2001; Tardy, 2012). From this perspective, writers certainly make choices in order to construct a discursive identity, but that identity is eventually ascribed to them by their reader. Matsuda and Tardy (2007) studied this phenomenon in academic peer review, and they found that individual readers of academic texts did construct an image of the writer—their voice—even though academic writing is considered less personal than other forms of writing. Importantly, even though the readers shared disciplinary expectations, they constructed the voice of a writer in different ways. Olinger (2014b) came to a similar conclusion about perception of style and suggested that there may be an element of personal preference that can't be explained by generalized discussions of disciplinary writing or discourse community expectations. Similar style descriptions, like "clarity," could be used to argue for different choices (p. 467), and even disciplinary terms indexed different meanings for individuals (p. 470). Other cross-cultural research on teacher response and assessment has similarly demonstrated differences in what counts as "good writing" (Li, 1996) or even an acknowledgement that teachers often cannot name what they are looking for, relying on intuition and an "I know it when I see it" approach to evaluation (Lea & Street, 1999; Leki, 1995; Soliday, 2004).

Genre, Power, and Assessment

The research described thus far in this chapter clearly shows there is not a universal standard for "good" writing. While writing is always an "act of identity" (Ivanič, 1998) and all writers make choices in order to create an impression of themselves, the choices student writers make will be read and evaluated by instructors who hold opinions about writing that are informed by disciplinary knowledge as well as personal and institutional literacy histories. If anything, this body of research supports Inoue's (2015) claims about problematic teacher approaches to assessment in which an ideal text enacts a raced, classed, and gendered classroom ecology.

None of this is necessarily news to writing studies scholars, who have long interrogated the ideological elements of academic writing and teaching. Devitt (2009), in particular, has emphasized the ideological element of genres, and has called for greater *instructor* genre awareness to help make implicit assumptions explicit for students. Since genre are languages, forms, and ideological constructs (p. 344), concerns about the racialized ideologies imbricated in academic reading and assessment must be further explored in order to better understand student opportunities for genre learning and writing development in academic settings. As such we need to add to the questions asked in the previous section: What roles or affiliation opportunities are available to students in writing contexts like high school, FYW, and general education? What roles or identities do students take on in their school writing? What roles or identities do student writers perceive? *What roles or identities do instructors ascribe the student writers?*

Summary

In this chapter, we have viewed genre as a social theory with explanatory power for understanding academic writing development in terms of opportunities. Because academic communication happens through genres, communicative competence in an academic discourse can be understood as "the ability to understand these genres and express oneself through them" (Wingate, 2015, p. 7). Genre learning in its full complexity is thus central to gaining academic literacy.

Importantly, we have seen that the dynamic, dialogic nature of genre as joint activity means researchers must take access into account in any study of learning. Genre is both expansive and local: while certain genres share similarities, any individual generic text co-produced, requiring alignment between the writer and reader (Prior, 1998). This focus on reader recognition and receptivity is important for considerations of access, identity, assessment, and power. The research described in this dissertation will continue to foreground the sociocultural nature of genres and genre learning as it explores student writing opportunities across the high school to college transition. To this point, there are few in-depth studies that interrogate student writing opportunities across the first-year experience in terms of genre. This study seeks to fill this gap. In the next chapter, I discuss my methodological choices to reach this goal.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS OF INQUIRY

Empirical research has been central to a growing understanding of what writing is and does, and how people use writing in different situations (Roozen & Lunsford, 2011). Since the 1980s, in particular, naturalistic studies of writers have become increasingly situated and fine-grained, allowing writing studies scholars to take context more fully into account, and to see the ways that literate practices developed in one context can come to texture another (pp. 202-203). Systematic inquiry into writing development has also raised important discussions of the role of writing in higher education. For example, longitudinal studies of undergraduate student writers have led to greater understandings of student experiences and perceived challenges writing across the high school to college transition (Ruecker, 2015; Tremain, 2015; J. Wells, 2012) and writing across the curriculum (Chiseri-Strater, 1991; Leki, 2007; McCarthy, 1987), and have also lent insight into students' literate development over their college careers (Beaufort, 2007; Carroll, 2002; Herrington & Curtis, 2000; Sternglass, 1997) and the ways these classroom literacies are animated by and through extracurricular commitments (Fishman, Lunsford, McGregor, & Otuteye, 2005; Roozen, 2009). These situated, naturalistic studies have reaffirmed the field's understanding of the complexity of written communication.

This longitudinal study focusing on four Latinx students'[12] writing opportunities across institutional and disciplinary contexts builds from and adds to this growing body of empirical research. I have framed the project in terms of "writing opportunities" to highlight the ways in which writing development is a sociocultural process that requires access to literate communities. This chapter describes the inquiry process in greater detail. I will first offer a description of my entrée to the study and my approach to conducting the research, including a description of my own researcher positionality. I will then elaborate my research methods, including recruitment and data collection procedures, before discussing my methods of analysis. Finally, I will discuss the limitations to my study. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

---

[12] I am using the gender-neutral Latinx when I write about the students generally, and the gendered pronouns Latino or Latina when referring to them as individuals. While the student participants referred to themselves interchangeably as Hispanic, Latina/o, or by their national identity, their choices of school self-identification in our state were limited to Hispanic.

Entering the Study

The high school where I began this study is about a 15-minute drive from the local land-grant university. Palm trees soar high above three one-story, brick buildings visible from the visitor and faculty parking lot. Walking past the gym and the front office, the open-air campus includes a dozen or so separate buildings organized in a grid. Each building is long and narrow, with one row of classrooms on each side and lockers in between the doors. When the bell rings, students stream outside into the desert sun. It’s common to hear groups of students mixing Spanish and English in conversation as they stand in a circle or sit on picnic-style seating outside the cafeteria. Security and support staff also seamlessly transition between languages as they move students along in between classes.

I first visited this high school as a partner teacher in an outreach initiative that pairs high school and university teachers and their students. These partnerships facilitate writing exchanges, help to create a college-going culture in area high schools, and work to connect first-year university students to the city outside of campus. My First-Year Writing (FYW) class was paired with the high school writing center, which was run by the school librarian and Ms. Martin, a

Senior English teacher.[13] That year we collaborated with our students to present the first "English Night" in the library, an after-school event focusing on the value of writing in academic, professional, and civic life that drew over 100 students to the library.

Our partnership began as the Common Core State Standards were first being implemented in our state, and there were changes afoot at the school. From Ms. Martin I learned about *SpringBoard*, a College Board-published (2014) textbook and curriculum newly adopted by the school district. The district adopted this textbook in the summer and installed *SpringBoard* as the ELA curriculum for grades 6-12 for the 2014-2015 academic year, offering so little time to understand the text that the *SpringBoard* "program" became the curriculum. According to Ms. Martin, ELA teachers were provided a curriculum map and told to follow it for the first year, the better to see how well it worked. My interest in the effects of this curriculum led me to spend more time in Ms. Martin's afternoon classes a few times each month starting in the spring of 2015 (see Jacobson, 2015). When I arrived at each visit, Ms. Martin and I would first discuss the lesson of the day, and then I'd circulate around the room and offer support when students asked for assistance. I was not officially researching at this time, but I was observing and making notes to myself about the kinds of research questions I might want to explore.

In fall of 2015, I proposed a research project exploring student writing opportunities across high school and college, and Ms. Martin was an enthusiastic supporter. She had long expressed a desire to know how her students are prepared for college writing, and she saw this as opportunity to build a stronger connection between high school and college writing. This kind of project had long been an interest of mine, as well. I had recently returned to graduate school after four years working at a non-profit after-school program for first-generation to college students in the northeast U.S. Some of the students I had worked with were straight-A students, even valedictorians, but when I spoke with them after their first semesters of college, writing was often a concern. I imagined this project as a way to gain a more contextualized understanding of this transition.

---

[13] All names are pseudonyms in an effort to protect participant identities. Student participants selected their own pseudonyms and will be referenced with pronouns that reflect their self-reported gender identity. Only Ms. Martin and one university teaching team selected their own pseudonyms; all other teacher participants were assigned gender-neutral pseudonyms and will be referred to with the singular "they" throughout this article.

Toward a Humanizing Research Approach

My approach to the research is informed by scholars in writing studies and related fields like Education who have responded to feminist, postcolonial, and critical critiques of ethnographically-oriented research by calling for a more self-reflexive approach to qualitative inquiry that pays particular attention to issues of race, class, gender, and power relations (Chiseri-Strater, 2012; Cushman and Monberg, 1998; Motha, 2014; Paltridge, Starfield, & Tardy, 2016).[14] Some of these critiques take on Western assumptions of truth, validity, and bias, as well as concerns about the ways academic researchers appropriate the stories and experiences of minoritized populations for their own material gain. For example, Tuck and Yang (2014) have argued that social science research tends to commodify the pain of research participants. According to the writers, this “damage-centered research” seeks to document pain or damage in order to argue for some form of adjustment or additional resources but is essentially flawed because it positions disenfranchised communities as powerless, further Other-izing the research participants and their communities. Furthermore, the results of this kind research can cause harm, even if unintended, to the very communities the researcher(s) aimed to serve. Documentation of the achievement gap in U.S. schools, for example, led to the No Child Left Behind law and the testing and accountability movement that took control of education out of the hands of local communities (Ravitch, 2010).

---

[14] Due to these critiques of ethnography’s claims to holistically understand a culture, I choose to use the more preferred term “ethnographically-oriented” to describe writing research that adopts an emic perspective and attempts to take a more reflexive researcher stance (Paltridge, Starfield, and Tardy, 2016).

For these reasons and others, Paris (2011) has argued for an ethical turn toward "humanizing research" with youth and communities, especially when researchers are working with participants from minoritized or oppressed groups facing systemic social injustice. According to Paris, humanizing research is a methodological stance that counters the dehumanizing effects of colonial research practices by requiring "that our inquiries involve dialogic consciousness-raising and the building of relationships of care and dignity for both researchers and participants" (pp. 139-140). When taking such a stance, participants and researchers work together to think through the problems and issues that arise in the study, and the researcher resists a detached observer orientation. Offering an example from his own research practices, Paris critiques the common interviewing approach in which the interviewer refrains from sharing their own experiences or personal opinions, arguing instead that the researcher should be willing to share as well. He acknowledges the potential for bias that may come with the sharing of personal views, but he adds that "it is equally true that participants might *not* say something because we do not, because they do not know whom they are sharing with" (p. 144). In other words, a truly decentered, dialogic approach to qualitative research requires reciprocity and respect in its focus on relationship-building (Cushman, 1996; Green, 2014; Paris & Winn, 2014). Other principles to consider in humanizing research methodologies include a critical self-reflection on researcher positionality (Green, 2014), an emphasis on listening and learning as part of researcher consciousness-raising (Blackburn, 2014), and a refusal to play the social science research deficit-based blame game by instead highlighting structural issues that lead to injustice, including the ways the researcher may be implicated (Tuck & Yang, 2014). In the rest of this section, I highlight the ways in which I sought to address some these principles in my own research practices.

Researcher Positionality

Writing studies scholars have long acknowledged the futility of seeking any sort of big-T Truth in qualitative research of writing development, recognizing instead that "inquiry into a social process like writing…can contribute to tentative and contingent knowledge" (Tardy, 2009, p. 28). This tentative and contingent knowledge is inevitably influenced by the researcher's own positionality and identities, which must be accounted for in the description of the research. While I have made efforts to check my biases and assumptions, I recognize that my identities—white, heterosexual, male, native English speaking, middle-class, graduate student, instructor, faculty developer—all influence my perception of reality and my interpretation of the data.

My researcher positionality in this project emerged from a variety of personal experiences and interests as well as histories of learning and an intersection of multiple and always-developing identities. My family history may well be typical of white, upwardly-mobile metropolitan families in the post-war era. Both of my parents were born into the burgeoning middle class of the post-war 1950s. Their parents (my grandparents) came from little—all of my family are Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe—but after service in the armed forces and education in STEM fields, both of my grandfathers were able to construct more comfortable lives for their children than they had experienced, and my parents were able to do the same for me and my siblings. While my parents faced discrimination as minoritized Jewish children, I faced no outward bigotry growing up in a comfortable suburb. I attended high school in one of the state's most well-resourced public-school districts and I was a successful student, fully invested in (and oblivious to) the values and discourses promoted in my school and community, including the belief that education was a beacon of opportunity for all.

I did not question this worldview until I attended a large state university, where my interest in education research was formulated. Through both class experiences and related socioacademic relationships, discussion about public education was my gateway into activism surrounding systemic inequality. I became active in advocacy work, eventually leading a campus section of a state-wide organization fighting for equal public-school funding. For my undergraduate thesis focusing on No Child Left Behind and the accountability movement in school reform efforts, I had the opportunity to work with a historian of education who mentored me on social science research and writing practices. I now realize this socialization into academic discourse was facilitated by the preparation I received from my high school home community. As Gee (1991) might argue, my "home discourse" was well-aligned with the dominant discourse of the academy.

After graduation, I moved to rural North Carolina where I taught middle school through Teach for America. It was here where I developed a relational approach to teaching and learning that has sustained my professional trajectory. I invested myself in the school community, coaching the soccer and basketball teams, chaperoning dances, and even organizing an 8th-grade field trip to a local university. In these contexts, I got to run around with students, laugh with them, and hear their stories. They asked me questions about my home, my religion, and my family, and I asked about theirs. By participating in the extracurricular lives of the students, in-class teaching and learning opportunities flourished. This relational approach to teaching and learning continued when I moved back to my home town to work with a nonprofit after-school program supporting first-generation to college students. I worked directly with students and their families as they navigated high school and the college application process. Over my years of work with individual students, I occupied a role somewhere between teacher, advocate, friend, and counselor. I edited a student-written newsletter, attended meetings with school counselors, and was even invited to students' homes to see them off to prom. It was when my first cohort of students reported back from college with concerns about their writing experiences that I decided to return to graduate school.

I share this narrative to speak to my own interest in and approach to this research. With my previous experience as a teacher and advocate, how could I take a neutral or distant role? I have seen the ways that current institutional and pedagogical structures do not support many of the students I've known and those currently enrolling at my university, even though they supported me. The political theorist Iris Marion Young (2011) has argued that even when people act within accepted institutional roles and follow laws and norms, we are still responsible for producing and reproducing structural injustice (p. 106). In her "social connection model" of assigning responsibility for injustice, blame and punishment is not the end goal, but instead all of those who share responsibility must work to change the processes that serve this injustice. Therefore, as an individual I must analyze my relationships to injustice in both interpersonal and institutional relationships (p. 73). Following this lead, the research began as both a self-reflective and forward-looking attempt to learn more about how I may be able to intervene in the structural processes that create injustice in writing education. I entered this research project not as a passive observer, but as an active participant, seeking to learn what I can about student experience and writing opportunities and use it to better the experiences of others. As Wardle and Clement (2016) have noted, such student experience-focused research is needed "to find clear and persuasive ways to share the ways students actually learn with stakeholders who design tests, curricula, and funding models" (p. 177). From the start, my goal was to provide such narratives that can further a scholarly understanding of writing development and instruction, while at the same time challenge teachers, administrators, and policymakers to re-imagine what a socially just writing education might look like.

Relationship-Building and Reciprocity

I have struggled at times to describe my relationship to the student writers who participated in this study. I was not their teacher, but I did meet them in a classroom and was introduced to them as a teacher at the local university. I also worked on drafts at different times with Hector, Jain, and Lucy in similar ways as I would with a student in one of my courses. We were not necessarily friends—as Kirsch (1999) notes, friends don't usually use recording devices during conversation—but yet we discussed our personal lives. For example, Jain came to me for advice when he broke up with his girlfriend, and I texted with Hector when his mother was undergoing medical tests that fortunately did not indicate a cancer diagnosis. I often shared my own academic and professional stories with Lucy as we discussed her potential options. When there was a financial or academic issue, I tried to help where I could or point the student to the appropriate resources, like the time I sat with Jain to navigate the university's cumbersome course scheduling platform. This teacher-friend-advocate position came to remind me of my prior work in the after-school program. As in that work, I tried to bring a feminist approach that treated all participants with respect, acknowledged their experiences, and showed concern and empathy for their lives and stories (Kirsch, 1999).

As Paris (2011) has suggested, humanizing research also means creating more humane interactions, so I also shared my perspective, when appropriate. I realized the impact of such a reciprocal approach toward the end of the research year. I remember talking on the phone with Jain about a grade he received in a general education class, which I discuss in detail in Chapter 6. I was furious, but I resisted sharing my feelings with him. When he sent me a message after his next graded essay that said only, "I give up," I called immediately and told him why I was personally upset. These are my notes from that day:

> Jain sent me a text message today: "I give up." He attached a screenshot of the teacher comments. 66.7%. He said he still has an 80% and he needs a 100 on the final to keep a B, but he's going to keep working hard to get a C. I texted him, "I'm sorry," and he thanked me for my help and told me it's not my fault, that I actually helped him. But I called him anyway because I wanted him to know that I'm sorry for the experience he's going through. I told him there are different ways of reading student writing: one way is trying to learn from the student, the other is to look for what they're doing wrong. Obviously, this teacher is in the latter camp. He said that he understands, and we can only do what we can do. *One of the things he said we can do is make my research "really good"* (Field notes, June 1, 2017).

At this point Jain and I already had a friendly relationship, but I see this conversation as a turning point. Jain saw me a little bit more for who I am and what I believe in, and he came to see the ways this research could potentially help others. I have little doubt that conversations like these were part of Jain's decision-making process when he later came to me to talk about more personal issues.

Resisting Pain Narratives

Tuck and Yang (2014) have suggested that social science research can commodify the pain and humiliation of minoritized or oppressed individuals or communities, even in the name of decolonization. In an article seeking to present ways to “refuse” this kind of dehumanizing, colonial research, they present a few examples of researchers and artists who have found ways to emphasize the social structures that facilitate injustice rather than the pained bodies of individuals. In one example, a visual artist who collected images of lynchings in California removed the victims and the ropes from the pictures, leaving just an image of the viewers in the aftermath. They explain that in this case the refusal to focus on the victim shifts the gaze from the victim to the “violating instruments—in this case, the lynch mob, which does not disappear when the lynching is over, but continues to live, accumulating land and wealth through the extermination and subordination of the Other” (p. 240). As a result, analysis of the image changes from an analysis of the event itself to an analysis of the structural injustice that is produced and reproduced by people acting within normally functioning institutional structures (Young, 2011).

In this project, I have attempted to focus on the social structural processes that influence writing education by emphasizing the "writing opportunities” afforded to participating students. By emphasizing the dialogic role of genre production and bringing a sociocultural approach to writing development, I have attempted to focus on the systems and structures that help to create the student experience, rather than on the individual student’s abilities.

At the same time, I seek to not only focus on the negative experiences but also highlight the innovation happening in schools and classrooms (Tuck & Yang, 2014). It would be typical, for example, to only describe the negative aspects of the high school attended by the participating students. After all, it is a traditionally underperforming school that faces structural problems that I will discuss. But to only tell that story would ignore a lot of what I’ve seen. For example, in the five years I’ve known Ms. Martin and the school librarian they have continually demonstrated their commitment to students. They have hosted an all-night “lock-in” for their writing center students at the students’ request, and they have continued to hold English Nights offering scholarship essay assistance, college awareness activities, and poetry appreciation. They have received a $1,200 grant to buy culturally relevant books for the library and a $30,000 grant to purchase digital readers and support the work of the writing center. The librarian’s interest in technology has led to the purchase of a 3D printer and the development of a music studio in one of the library conference rooms. During lunch hours or after school, it’s common to hear muffled bass sounds as student producers make new beats or mix their friend’s new song. These teachers seek to create spaces for students to succeed both in and out of class time, and while their work may not be easily quantifiable and is often dismissed by school administration, they are appreciated by students who use the library as a quiet space after school and those who have created lasting socioacademic relationships in the writing center.

Taking Responsibility

In her critique of the propensity of academics to “speak for” others, Alcoff (1991) allowed that a full “retreat” in which researchers can only speak from their own experience would be similarly problematic. In situations like mine—a white, middle-class, male researcher working with self-identifying Latina/o students from a marginalized community—Alcoff suggests that if the retreat comes from fear, from an avoidance of criticism and the possibility of making errors, then my retreat would come “perhaps not from a desire to advance collective goals but a desire for personal mastery….wherein one cannot be undermined or challenged and thus is master of the situation” (p. 22). I know I cannot retreat from these stories, even as I recognize the challenges. My work with high school teachers and university faculty has too often devolved into deficit-based discussions of what students *can’t* do, and I always conceived of this project as one that can be used to speak back to these discourses. In my role in the university's teaching and learning center, for example, I am consistently in front of majority-white teacher audiences that need to hear these stories.[15] If I do wish to take on an "activist" stance that seeks "change and disruption" (Motha, 2014, p. 152), then I need to be willing to accept the possibility and responsibility for any problematic interpretations or representations I may make.

Writing studies scholars have also argued that issues facing minoritized students cannot only be studied by minoritized scholars. In his argument against the "division of labor" that separated Second-Language Writing (SLW) and composition research, Matsuda (1999) called for composition scholars to draw from SLW research in their work and include multilingual student writers in empirical research. In doing so, this scholarship and these students can become part of the research, rather than serve as outliers or exceptions. Matsuda referenced Valdéz (1992), who made an argument 35 years ago that as changing demographics of the university make diversity the norm, research on bilingual, minoritized students should be conducted by both mainstream and minoritized researchers. She suggested that if these mainstream researchers have spent time with both language and writing theory, then such a research program can help to expand research in the field beyond the assumption of monolingualism. Pimentel (2013) has made a similar argument focusing on race in writing classrooms, suggesting that the long-overlooked questions of race and racism in composition need to be a "mainstream issue," not a cause taken up by only scholars of color (p. 100).

---

[15] The lack of diversity among the teachers and faculty in many institutional spaces is one structural issue that will be discussed in the concluding chapter of this dissertation. It is important to also note that the white listening subject, such as the teacher reading writing, can be situationally inhabited by individuals recognized as white or nonwhite (Flores & Rosa, 2017).

This attention to race, language, and minoritized communities must be met with careful consideration of research methods and researcher positionality. Some scholars have called for researchers to make concrete efforts to decenter authority based solely on status, and “openly negotiate their interdependent relations [with participants] using dialogic interaction” (Cushman & Monberg, 1998, p. 172; see also Motha, 2014; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012). With this need for dialogic relations in mind, practices like member checking are important not only for triangulating interpretations, but also for maintaining participant agency. In one example of this approach, Motha (2014) attempted to disrupt the researcher-participant hierarchy in her study of K-12 teachers through a critical dialogic practice, centering her study around group conversations over tea in her home. While my relationship with the student participants did not allow for the same kind of intimacy, I made efforts to engage in dialogic interaction as much as possible across the study. The monthly interview structure I describe below allowed me to discuss my initial interpretations with students, and I sent drafts to instructors for comment.

Regardless of the relationships I developed with the student participants and the efforts I have taken to limit my biases and assumptions, I cannot erase the power relations that exist in ethnographically-oriented research. In the end, this study will exist as my interpretation of what I see, hear, and read. I made choices about what to focus on as I immersed myself in the data, and I sat in front of a computer drafting and revising the work on my own. It is my name on the cover page. This project will most likely help me to earn employment, and maybe even some level of job security. In some ways, I cannot control how I will be read by others, nor how this project will be received. However, as Paris (2011) writes, “I can control how I represent the youth as I argue for change and understanding as a result of what I learned from them” (p. 147). I can do my best to be a part of the movement that humanizes through research. I can continue to get better as a teacher and scholar by acknowledging the ways Hector, Hercules, Jain, and Lucy have changed me and helped me to recognize my role in the processes that perpetuate structural inequality in education and beyond.

Research Questions

In this section, I shift to a discussion of the methods I used to conduct this dissertation project. As discussed in Chapter 2, genre has proven to be a generative theoretical framework for understanding opportunities for academic writing development. As such, empirical, situated studies of student writers have often included genre as a primary focus of the study, or have found genre to be part of the sociocultural context of learning. Through this empirical work, scholars across writing studies and related fields have identified some of the resources and qualities of access that enable student learning and development in social settings, including exposure and repeated access to generic texts, opportunities to see the rhetorical domain of disciplines, mentorship and relationships with more experienced members, and explicit and visible roles and identities (Nowacek, 2011; Prior, 1998; Tardy, 2009). Genre-related research has also focused on the role of identity, or affiliation, in academic communication, as genres concurrently mediate an individual's actions and a socially defined context (Devitt, 2004). As students learn to write in new genres, they make choices about whether and how much to take on the identity or role ascribed to that generic position (Gee, 2008; Hyland, 2015; Russell, 1997). Of course, student writers also need opportunities to learn about those identities they may need or want to take on (Bawarshi, 2003).

Prior (1998) reminds us that locating a text in a genre is a socially distributed activity, as the reader must recognize the text with a genre they have in mind. As such, the dialogic nature of producing recognizable generic texts reminds us that academic communication is never neutral, and always embedded in asymmetrical power relations. Student writers make choices in their writing, but in school contexts their readers (instructors) must also recognize their choices as effective. These readers are positioning the student writers, determining whether they are the “right” kinds of people creating the “right” kinds of texts (Gee, 2008). In school contexts, the “right” kinds of identities and languages expected in academic genres are often racialized, meaning assessment and evaluation expects a white, middle-class norm (Inoue, 2015). Since genre are languages, forms, and ideological constructs (Devitt, 2009), these concerns about the racialized ideologies that undergird much academic reading and assessment must be further explored in order to better understand student opportunities for genre learning and writing development in academic settings.

Based on this large body of research and my interest in exploring the writing opportunities of students across the high school to college transition, my research questions evolved to become:

1. What modes of participation are available to focal students across the high school to college writing transition?
2. What resources do students draw upon as they write in high school, in their First-Year Writing classes, and in lower-level General Education classes? What resources are available?
3. What opportunities exist for “deep participation” or authentic access to communities of practice in the first-year experience?

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 provide data and findings for more refined versions of these questions.

One of the challenges of using genre as a frame for studying writing opportunities and development lies in the unseen aspects of genre knowledge and the nonlinear process of genre learning. As Tardy (2009) theorized, genre knowledge includes the integration of at least four domains—rhetorical knowledge, formal knowledge, subject-matter knowledge, and process knowledge—only one of which, formal knowledge, is clearly visible in textual form. In other words, just because a person can produce a genre does not necessarily mean they have access to full genre knowledge. Furthermore, like writing development genre learning is not a linear process. For example, a student might be able to describe the genre before producing it, or vice versa. For these reasons, among others, triangulating from multiple data sources is essential for understanding genre learning and academic writing development. While it is true that the final text is the product up for evaluation in a school setting, no single text or set of texts will be enough to show genre learning on its own. Furthermore, because genres are joint activities, it is necessary to speak with both the writers and readers of the genre. In order to attempt to study student writing in its full complexity, I collected data from a combination of semi-structured and discourse-based interviews with both students and instructors, rhetorical and textual analysis of student texts and classroom materials, and classroom observations.

Research Methods

Recruitment of Student Participants

This study used purposeful sampling to focus on a limited population of students and gain some sense of the “typicality of the settings, individuals, [and] activities selected” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 71). Of the four student writers who became central participants, all self-identify as Hispanic on demographic forms and all reported multilingual households, with two of the students speaking primarily Spanish in the home. In short, these students are part of demographic groups least served by conventional educational structures: racial and linguistic minority students from a historically under-resourced school district.[16] It is my hope that this participant sample may lend insight into the ways literacy trajectories of students are uniquely affected by both social conditions and agentive decisions (Hernandez-Zamora, 2010), and help to situate the study in a local K-16 educational context.

After receiving IRB approval, I proposed the study to two of Ms. Martin's Senior English Language Arts (ELA) classes, the mainstream (i.e., not AP) course for 12th grade. At the time of initial recruitment, I read aloud a letter describing the research and offered copies for students to bring to their parents written in both English and Spanish, translated by a bilingual friend. The letter explained that participating students would respond to a questionnaire and have an opportunity to continue working with me if they chose. I offered writing tutoring starting immediately for any participating students, and I shared my university email and cell phone number in the recruitment letter and on the class white board, where it stayed for two weeks. A few students took me up on my offer for writing assistance immediately, as they were revising writing assignments for Ms. Martin or writing personal statements for scholarship opportunities at the time. In the two classes, 37 students received parental assent to take the introductory questionnaire about their high school writing experiences.

Following the survey, I was interested in speaking with students who intended to go to college. Of the students who indicated a plan to continue to post-secondary education, 10 were open to being interviewed, and I conducted those interviews in the six weeks before graduation.

---

[16] These demographic characteristics are also underrepresented in longitudinal research in composition. In her overview of transfer-related research in composition studies, for example, Moore (2012) pointed to the need for more research at underrepresented types of institutions, in underrepresented geographic regions, and with student participants with underrepresented identities. Saidy (2018) has similarly called for more case study research to better understand the writing experiences of underrepresented students in writing classes and programs.

The participating students shared some of their writing with me, and I was able to collect assignment guidelines, rubrics, and other class materials from Ms. Martin.

During the summer following graduation, I contacted by email and text message eight of the students who indicated they planned to attend a local college or university in the fall. Three who had planned to attend the local community college did not enroll immediately but told me they planned to return later. I kept in touch with two of the three, giving a campus tour to one who was interested in my institution, and emailing frequently with another student who had worked with me closely as she revised a high school essay. One student enrolled at the local community college while working full-time as a teachers' aide in an elementary school. We met once to discuss the research project in the beginning of the academic year, but in the following months she told me she was too busy to participate in the study.

Of the five students who enrolled at the local four-year university, one did not matriculate and did not return my efforts at communication. The other four continued with me in the study and stayed with it through their first two semesters of university study. All of these students are in the first generation in their family to attend college. See Table 2 for a brief introduction to the study participants based on survey responses. I will offer more detailed descriptions of the research sites and student participants in the following chapter.

Table 2

Student participant overview from pre-college survey

Name	**Gender**	**language(s) spoken at home (primary first)**	**self-assessment of writing in English**	**Do you think you are prepared for college writing?**	**typical writing grades in high school**
Hector	M	English	extremely good	probably yes	mostly Bs
Hercules	M	English, Spanish	extremely good	probably yes	mostly Bs
Jain	M	Spanish, English	somewhat bad	maybe or maybe not	mostly Bs
Lucy	F	Spanish, English	neither good nor bad	definitely not	mostly Bs

Student consent and identifiability. Student participants were initially consented via the recruitment letter, which required parent/guardian signature due to school district policies. I re-consented the four focal student participants at the beginning of their college careers after I had earned a small research grant from the university's graduate student council and was able to offer payment for their participation. From this grant, the four focal students each received a $90 stipend ($45 at the end of each semester) for their participation during their first year of college study. The consent form asked student participants whether they would agree to be audio recorded during interviews and class observations, and whether or not I could reproduce their writing and class projects. In an effort to protect student identities, I offered all participants an opportunity to select their own pseudonym, or I would choose one for them. All student participants elected to choose a pseudonym.

Recruitment of Teacher Participants

The high school teacher participant, Ms. Martin, was involved with the project from its inception and was formally invited to participate immediately following IRB approval. College instructors were recruited based on student participant course schedules. During the first interview of the semester with each focal student, I asked for a list of their classes and instructors and asked them to identify the courses they found most exciting or interesting that involved any kind of writing. I then emailed these faculty members to invite them to participate in the study. If they responded to the recruitment email with interest, I made an appointment to visit them at their convenience. I tried to visit teachers who did not respond to the emails at their office where I introduced myself and the study and offered to set up a time to meet if they were interested in participating.

While recruiting instructor participants, I attempted to gain representation from different general education focal areas as designated by the university (see Table 3). Six teacher participants represented Foundations writing courses, four each taught courses designated Individuals & Societies and Traditions & Culture, and one taught a Natural Science course. I also interviewed two instructors who taught a specialized physics course and lab course for Engineering majors. This was the only major-specific course taken in the first year by any student participant.

Table 3

College instructor participants, field of study, and general education identification.

Teacher name	Field of Study	Gen Ed Identification	Interview	Class Observation
Carter	First-Year Writing (FYW)	Foundations	Y	Y
Jordan	FYW	Foundations	Y	Y
Bailey	FYW	Foundations	Y	N
Quinn	FYW	Foundations	Y	Y
Jamie	FYW	Foundations	Y	Y
Brett	FYW	Foundations	Y	N
Drew	Communications	Individuals & Societies	Y	N
Xena / Conan (teaching team)	Family Studies and Human Development	Individuals & Societies	Y (2)	Y
Taylor	Mexican-American Studies	Individuals & Societies	Y	N
Blake	Gender and Women's Studies	Individuals & Societies	Y	N
Mason	Nutrition	Natural Sciences	Y	N
Ray	Spanish and Portuguese	Traditions & Culture	Y	N
Glenn	Classics	Traditions & Culture	Y	N
Riley	Entomology	Traditions & Culture	Y	N
Mason	American Indian Studies	Traditions & Culture	Y	N
Casey	Physics	*not Gen Ed*	Y	N
Andy	Physics (lab)	*not Gen Ed*	Y	N

Note: Chosen pseudonyms are italicized; all others were assigned gender-neutral pseudonyms.

Teacher consent and identifiability. I consented each instructor before conducting the interview. The consent form asked instructors to specify whether I could audio record the interview and visit the class, if applicable. All instructors agreed to audio recording except for one of the Physics instructors, who preferred that I just take notes during our conversation. Some instructors requested that I not visit the class, or told me that they had already conducted all of the class sections related to the writing assignment in the course. I was unable to visit some other class sessions due to conflicts with my own teaching schedule. Due to these constraints, I was only able to visit one course outside of writing-specific courses. In an effort to protect instructor identities, I offered each participant the option to either select a pseudonym or to be assigned one. Only one teaching team accepted the offer to select their pseudonyms. In an effort to protect their anonymity, I assigned all other instructors a gender-neutral pseudonym, and I will use gender-neutral pronouns to describe all instructors. Using funding from the research grant, following the interview all teacher participants received a $10 gift card to Starbucks or Amazon for their participation.

Data Collection

To this point, I have described my methods of recruitment and attaining consent. In this section, I will describe my methods of data collection. Following naturalistic studies of writing development, genre learning, and transfer, I attempted to gather multiple data points and perspectives on student writing opportunities (see Table 4). Many of the methods described and questions asked were borrowed from other studies of student writing development (Freedman, 1987; Ruecker, 2015; Tardy, 2009; Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak, 2014). See Appendix A for a full list and description of protocols.

Table 4

Overview of data collection procedures

Phase 1: High School (last semester, senior year)	• Student questionnaire • Semi-structured interview with 10 students • Two semi-structured interviews with teacher • Student-written texts • Class materials (textbook, assignment guidelines, rubrics, etc.)
Phase 2: First-year university	• Monthly semi-structured interviews with 4 focal students • Semi-structured interview with instructors from 17 course sections • Student-written texts • Class observations • Class materials (assignment guidelines, rubrics, feedback, etc.)

Phase 1: High school. Data collection during the high school phase of the study took place during April and May of 2016.

Questionnaire. The questionnaire was completed by 37 students on April 20, 2016 using Qualtrics, a web-based survey program licensed by my institution. The questionnaire was split into three sections, each with distinct purposes. The first section sought to gather demographic information, including characteristics of self-identity (gender, race, etc.), educational history, and language practices in the home. Because of the similarity of research contexts, I borrowed many of these questions from Ruecker's (2015) study of Mexican-American student writing transitions in the southwest U.S. The second section featured mostly open-ended questions about school writing experiences and attitudes about writing. Through these questions, I hoped to learn a bit about the writing lives of students both in and out of school. I also hoped to get a sense of what Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak (2014) have called the "point of departure," the knowledge and attitudes students have about their own writing practices that they will bring with them to college writing (pp. 104-105). In the final section, I asked students about their post-graduation plans and their expectations for college writing, if appropriate. This section served as a way to understand the prior knowledge of college and college writing students would bring with them. It also served as a recruitment tool, as students were asked whether they would be willing to participate in an interview to discuss their writing further.

Student interviews. In the weeks following the questionnaire and before high school graduation, I interviewed 10 students who had indicated willingness to engage in further discussion. We met individually to discuss their high school writing experiences, attitudes about writing, and college writing expectations in semi-structured interviews. Most of the interviews took place in a small conference room in the school library, either during Ms. Martin's class, during lunch, or after school. A few interviews took place in the classroom next to Ms. Martin's, where the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) teacher allowed me to interview participating students during their class sessions in an adjacent storage room used for school fundraising activities. These interviews lasted from 30-60 minutes and were recorded using the voice recorder on my phone and on my computer. After each interview, I reminded each student about my offer to assist them with their writing in any way, and I asked permission to contact them over the summer about further participation in the fall.

Student-written texts. I asked participating students to share with me any writing they had completed during their senior year, in particular the projects they discussed in our interview. I also reminded them that they had control over which data they wished to share. Students often shared texts with me as Google Docs, which they utilized for most of their ELA coursework on school-supplied laptops. Some shared an entire Google Drive digital folder of material with me, while others shared only one or two documents.

Teacher interviews. I interviewed Ms. Martin two times, once in April at the beginning of the study, and once at the end of the semester after final student projects. Each interview lasted a little over one hour. In these interviews, I sought to gain a better understanding of the school and curricular contexts from a 30-year veteran of the school. For example, we talked about the impact of district, state, and national policy on the classroom, and also discussed the ways curriculum was shaped by the newly-enacted Common Core State Standards (CCSS). We also discussed Ms. Martin's teaching goals and her rationale for offering different kinds of assignments and feedback. Finally, we discussed a few of the individual students I had interviewed and their performance in the class.

Classroom materials. Ms. Martin shared with me copies of the class textbook, individual assignment sheets, and assessment rubrics she used in class.

Phase 2: College. Data collection for the college portion of the study began in August 2016 and continued through June 2017.

Student Interviews. In order to focus my analysis around student participant experiences and understandings, I aimed to conduct one semi-structured interview each month with the four focal students. Questions were written in a non-specific way in order to allow for flexibility depending upon the time in the semester, the availability of writing to examine and discuss, and any other factors. This interview protocol also allowed me to build questions based off of prior interviews. For example, after Lucy told me that her concluding paragraph in a writing task wasn't "really a conclusion" (Interview, April 4, 2017), I was able to follow up in a future interview with a more general question about conclusions: "Last time you said that your conclusion in Gender and Women's Studies wasn't 'really a conclusion,' it was more personal. What is a 'real conclusion'? What options do you have in a conclusion?"

The interviews took place in my office in the campus teaching and learning center, which lent some familiarity to the proceedings. I often had a snack in my drawer that I could offer, and we'd spend a few minutes catching up before the beginning of the interview. During this time, the student participants would also download any drafts or feedback they had received since our last interview. In some cases, I would print these out immediately for discussion; in others, I would save them and use them in later interviews. Each interview lasted approximately 45-60 minutes.

The interview protocols followed a similar structure regardless of the time of semester. The discussions began with more general, introductory questions about their lives in and out of school, followed by a few questions about their coursework that sought to understand their beliefs and attitudes about writing and/in their coursework. These questions about beliefs and attitudes, influenced by Saldaña's (2016) discussion of values coding, included: "How important is writing in this course? How important is this course for your education?"

After these general questions, I attempted to learn more about a specific writing task the student was working on at that time. These questions aimed to get at the student's understanding of what was being asked of them and their writing plans. By comparing student discussion about an upcoming task with the actual writing and a follow-up discussion about the task, I was hoping to be able to construct "microhistories" (Prior, 1998) or "text histories" (Lillis & Curry, 2006) of writing tasks (see Chapters 6). When an assignment had been completed, I set aside time during the interview to discuss the final draft, using similar questions as those that I asked before completion. In some cases, the student's understanding of the task had changed based off of class session or meeting with the teacher, or in the process of writing. I would also ask questions like, "What is your favorite part of this project?" or "What would you change if you had more time?" in an effort to identify textual elements to focus on in the future. If there was feedback, we discussed the student writer's perception of the feedback.

After I had accumulated a small corpus of each student's writing, I was able to ask a few Discourse-Based Interview (DBI) questions. Odell, Goswami, and Herrington (1983) introduced DBIs as a way to understand a writer's tacit knowledge about writing. In a DBI, the interviewer asks about specific features of the text after looking at variations among samples. The interviewer presents the text (or texts) with different options, and offers the writer choices, such as, "Here you do *X*. In other pieces of writing, you do *Y* or *Z*. In this passage, would you be willing to do Y or Z rather than X? What basis do you have for preferring one alternative to the other?" (p. 223). For example, after noticing a variety of stance-related discourse markers in Hercules' writing, I presented him with a few choices and asked him which he preferred, and why (see Figure 1).

Here you used #1. In other examples of your writing you used #2 or #3. In this passage, would you be willing to use #2 or #3? What basis do you have for preferring one or the other?

1. The message to take from this is that, there are plenty of different ways you can be a great father for your children.
2. What matters here is that, there are plenty of different ways you can be a great father for your children.
3. What I found interesting about this is that, there are plenty of different ways you can be a great father for your children.

Figure 1. Sample DBI question based on discourse markers.

Focus group interview. In an effort to create a space for participant-led conversation, I held one group interview session with the four student participants. Inspired by Motha's (2014) study of teachers, in which she used informal afternoon tea sessions in order to listen "to the teachers as experienced, knowledgeable practitioners" (p. 150), I was curious to see if discussion amongst the student participants would elicit different responses than our personal interviews. Using funding from a campus-wide initiative to create more opportunities for student and faculty interaction, I was able to provide sandwiches and iced treats from a local franchise establishment for an hour-long conversation. I had a few general questions to guide the discussion, such as, "What advice would you give to current high school seniors about preparing for college?", but I limited the number of prepared questions to encourage conversation among participants. I also presented some initial interpretations of the data and asked for reactions, which turned out to be a valuable opportunity for triangulation.

Student-written texts. I collected writing from students as they offered them to me. When we met for an interview, we would spend the first few minutes downloading completed writing assignments and drafts, and any related feedback. Sometimes a participant would discuss a peer review task or specific notes taken during class, and if they had them with them I would make a copy to preserve. At other times, a student writer might email me a draft or share a Google Doc with me for comments. It was not uncommon for Jain or Lucy to stop by my office to chat and drop off some drafts, or for Hector to ask me to print a draft and discuss it before going to a peer review session.

While I collected many different types of texts, including short homework assignments, I decided to only keep longer, graded writing tasks in my data set. With the understanding that genres are always jointly produced between the writer and reader, I wanted to focus on the writing tasks that would provide me a sense of that writer-reader relationship, even the instructor only provided a grade. On a practical level, there was also simply too much to keep track of if I included *all* writing tasks. I recognize this as a limitation of the research, which I will discuss in more detail below. See Table 5 for a list of student writing tasks included in the data set.

Table 5

Data collected from each student participant from August 2016 through June 2017.

Student	Interviews	Focus Group	High School ELA Tasks	FYW Tasks		Gen Ed Tasks	
Hector	6	Y	Literary analysis	Literacy narrative Genre analysis Community profile Portfolio	Rhetorical analysis Controversy analysis Public argument	Media analysis (Communication) Reading reflection (Leadership)	News review (Sciences)
Hercules	8	Y	Literary analysis Personal statement (2) Media analysis PowerPoint presentation	Personal argument Researched argument PowerPoint presentation		Research paper (Nutrition) Critical analysis (Cultural Studies)	Narrative (Classics) Reflective writing (Study skills)
Jain	9	Y	Literary Analysis	Literary journalism Profile Genre Analysis Portfolio		Reaction papers (Public Health) Critical analysis (Cultural Studies) Lab reports (Physics)	Analysis (Social Sciences) Research paper (Social Sciences)
Lucy	7	Y	Literary analysis Media analysis PowerPoint presentation	Narrative Literary analysis Visual/Textual analysis	Controversy analysis Rhetorical analysis Editorial	Research paper (Nutrition) Critical analysis (Cultural Studies) Analysis (Family studies)	Source analysis (Public Health) Research paper (German Studies) New media project (Public Health)

Note. Assignment descriptions are generalized from my own understanding of the task, and do not reflect the specific language used by instructors. When the tasks are discussed in-depth (see Chapter 6, for example), I will describe the task in more detail and refer to it by the instructor or student-designated name.

Class materials. I acquired class materials, like syllabi and other writing task "meta-genres" like task directions, rubrics, and general writing tips (Giltrow, 2001), from both student and teacher participants during interviews and class observations. During the pre-interview conversation with student writers in my office, they would share with me the guidelines and rubrics for the writing they were submitting as a way for us to frame the conversation around expectations. These same expectations would often come up during the teacher interview, and teachers would often share with me the same guidelines, updated guidelines, or, in some cases, rubrics that are shared among the TA graders but not shared with students. During class observations, I collected any worksheets or handouts distributed that day.

Teacher interviews. As discussed in chapter 2, a Bakhtinian approach to communication emphasizes ways in which every utterance gains meaning from both the speaker and hearer. This perspective has influenced recent discussions of voice (Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Tardy, 2012), style (Olinger, 2014b), and transfer (Nowacek, 2011), which have similarly emphasized the role of receptivity in successful academic writing. In order to explore this dialogic nature of producing texts in genres, I conducted at least one semi-structured interview with each teacher participant. These meetings took place either in the teacher's office or at a public place on campus, such as at a small table outside the coffee shop next to the main library. The interview protocol was designed to engage teachers in discussion of their goals for their course, how they see their course fitting into the general education program of the university, and their goals for assigning writing in their courses. We also discussed the main writing assignment(s) in the course, with a specific focus on their expectations and what was most important to them when assessing writing. In some cases, I was able to discuss a student's writing or their feedback with them, but most times we discussed writing in general terms. In the case of Xena (see Chapter 6), my prior relationship with the teacher allowed me to schedule a follow-up interview in which we discussed the student's writing and the feedback provided by the TA grader.

Administrator interviews. As I reviewed the data from student and instructor interviews, I began to recognize the layers of institutional context that impacted student writing opportunities. For example, many instructors discussed the challenges of large class sizes, and students described dissatisfaction with their general education classes. In an effort to gain another layer of perspective on student writing and a more ecological understanding of student writing opportunities, I conducted one semi-structured interview with an upper-level administrator with interest in student writing success. This interview focused on the development of the general education writing policy and their impressions of its implementation (see chapter 4 for more on this policy). We also discussed faculty development, challenges, and future goals of the general education program.

Class observations. In addition to conducting interviews and reviewing classroom materials and student-written texts, I attempted to observe class sessions when writing was being discussed, if possible. This was relatively easy to accomplish in the FYW setting as all but two of the participating FYW instructors invited me to a number of class sessions. I attended four FYW classes in total. When I attended these sessions, I tried to arrive about five minutes before the start of class and sit in the back of the classroom. I told the focal student I would be attending class but did not make my presence known otherwise. In some cases, the instructor introduced me or asked me to introduce myself, and I participated in activities, when appropriate.

Observing other general education classes was more difficult for a number of reasons. During the consent process, I asked instructors if I would be able to visit a class session in which they were discussing writing in any way. For some participants, my request was too late in the semester, and the major writing task had already been submitted and graded. However, a few of the instructors told me quite honestly that they would not be spending any time in class discussing the writing tasks. For example, one instructor told me that they talked about the writing task "for five minutes" and did not offer any workshopping in the class of over 500 students (Glenn, Interview, October 17, 2016).[17] The only general education class I was able to observe was Xena and Conan's co-taught family studies class. While the session I attended did not discuss the major writing project in great detail, they also shared with me a video recording of a previous "workshop" lecture in which they discussed the assignment and sample student writing.

For all class observations, I took extensive field notes during the session. I brought a digital audio recorder, a legal pad, and my computer, and I took cues from the students whether or not to take notes digitally. In Carter's FYW class, for example, no students used a computer or tablet, so I took my notes on paper. When I visited Quinn's FYW class, however, almost all students were on their computers throughout, so I audio recorded the session using Microsoft OneNote, which allowed me to connect my typed notes directly to the recording with a single mouse-click. After the observation, I expanded my notes more extensively as soon as I was able to find the time, always within a day. These fieldnotes were not coded as part of the data set, however I did use these notes to develop questions for students and teachers about the classes. Otherwise, the notes were used as "background," providing me with contextual detail for making sense of the specific academic writing contexts of the writing (Lillis, 2008).

Methods of Analysis

---

[17] The challenge of assigning writing in large classes was a common refrain among the teacher participants that I will address in the concluding chapter.

Data mean nothing in and of themselves, and all research findings are an effort at interpretation influenced by the interpretive approach the researcher brings to the data. I utilized a range of approaches to analyze the data, and I will continue to explicate these approaches in detail throughout this dissertation, especially in chapters 5, 6, and 7. In general, I tried to keep student experience at the center of the study, so I continually re-oriented myself to the data through student interview transcripts. For example, even as I acquired various texts and class materials in the data collection process, I prioritized interview transcription and initial coding before reviewing these materials. In this section, I focus mainly on my process for transcribing and analyzing the student interview data. I will then address other forms of data.

Analyzing student interviews. In the hours immediately following each student interview, I wrote brief notes in a process document I kept for each student participant. In these notes, I would summarize my immediate reaction to the interview, and include any notes about our interactions that were not included in the interview but may provide context. (See Figure 2 for an example of one of these notes.) I then transcribed each student interview using InqScribe, a digital transcription program. After transcribing, usually within one week of the interview, I engaged in a quick round of initial (open) coding, drawing from grounded theory and ethnographic approaches to analyzing data (Merriam, 2009; Saldaña, 2016). In this inductive process, my goal was to use a constant comparative approach to build categories that I could then compare within and across the data. While I tried to remain open to any interesting and relevant data, my initial coding was heavily influenced by my reading in genre theory and academic writing development that influenced my research questions. For example, the initial codes I wrote after my first round of interviews included such broad concepts as “genre learning,” “prior genre knowledge,” “good writing,” “writing strategies,” and “writing purpose.” Immediately after coding each individual interview, I wrote a brief analytical memo emphasizing the new codes that emerged and identifying specific areas of interest within that interview. These memos informed future interviews for each student.

Met with Jain for his first college interview today. We met by the English building and walked to my office. He complimented me on my office and said he heard from his 101 teacher about the old cubicles.

We chatted for a bit after the interview about how he's enjoying the social life so far. He said he has some friends from high school here on campus and he's looking forward to hanging out with them. One of them, he said, is a "party all the time" kind of kid, but Jain feels like as an engineering student he can't really afford to do that. He said in his Chem lab one of his classmates was out partying until 2 am on Monday and then went to the 8 am Tues lab; he said he can't figure out how people can do it.

We talked a bit about his finances. He cobbled together scholarships for this year—including one from the university that wasn't explained to him—but he's already thinking about how to get some more scholarships/grants together for next year.

The interview went well. He said at one point that he's really not that used to talking about his writing in this way; it's always been just something he writes and turns in to the teacher. After the interview, we talked a little bit about how doing these interviews might make him think about his writing more.

I'm interested to see how his ideas about writing change now that he basically claimed the 5-paragraph essay as his standard form and strategy. He has a number of 3-page papers to write in his Spanish pop culture class --- will he try to make those 5 paragraph essays, too?

Figure 2. Post-interview reflection notes, August 24, 2016

Coding methods. To organize and analyze my data I used Dedoose, a qualitative analysis software program. I became familiar with Dedoose during the data collection process, as I was simultaneously using the program in a collaborative research project with other faculty and graduate students. As we began using Dedoose for that study, I watched tutorial videos and studied the online technical documentation to learn about its tools and uses.

Dedoose allowed me to quickly and efficiently organize my codes and attempt different coding schemes. As discussed above, I began with general codes related to my research questions, like “genre knowledge” and “resources.” Once I found an excerpt that fit with that code, I highlighted it in Dedoose and added it to the code’s file. As I began to develop categories and themes in the second round of coding, I created a hierarchy of codes and subcodes as I drilled down further. As Figure 3 demonstrates, an initial code of “projecting audience” was eventually narrowed into four sub-codes: “peer audience,” “teacher-as-audience,” “no explicit audience,” and “non-classroom audience.” When I felt ready to write about the data, I downloaded related excerpts and worked with them to identify more patterns. For example, in the analysis that led to the findings in Chapter 5, I downloaded the excerpts related to identifying a task purpose and used them to create new taxonomies in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. As grounded theory methodologies recommend, I went back and forth between my codes and the data and used constant comparison to identify patterns and to check the usability of my coding schemes.

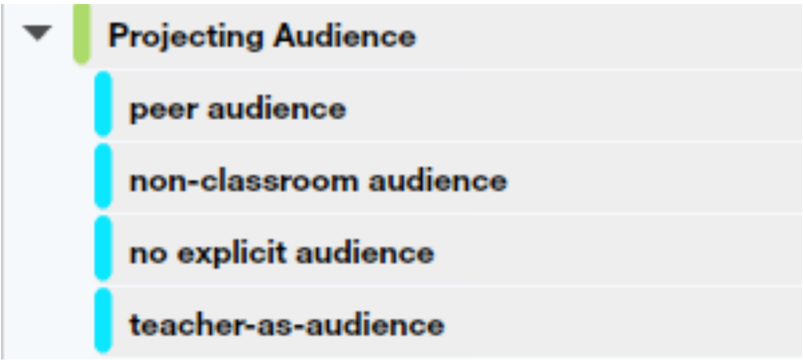


Figure 3. Image demonstrating codes and subcodes in Dedoose

Analyzing instructor interviews. After each instructor interview, I wrote brief reflective notes, similar to the note shown in Figure 2. I then used InqScribe to listen to the interview and take initial notes of the interview without writing a full transcription. The program allowed me to tag a moment in the audio and take notes about that moment. I tagged different specific questions and left notes when I heard statements that seemed especially salient. For example, my interview with Taylor included such tags as “course goals,” “task goals,” and “assessment expectations.”

Once I knew which instructor interviews would be most integral to the study, I transcribed a few by hand, and others I sent to the transcription services Scribie and Rev. When I received transcriptions from these services, I made sure to listen back and edit for correctness and to align the transcription with my own methods. Because the instructor interviews were primarily to be used as “background” to create context for student experience (Lillis, 2008), I only engaged in a rough round of initial coding, focusing on their replies to certain interview questions so that I would know where to return later.

Validity

All participants were offered an opportunity to read findings and to respond to them in writing. Teacher participants were emailed after a draft was written including data related to them. The only response I received was from Carter, Jain’s FYW teacher discussed in Chapter 5. Carter told me he enjoyed reading the draft and did not have anything to add.

Student participants were shown selections of findings before interviews and were also offered an opportunity to review drafts of data related to them and the entire project. After completing Chapters one through six, I emailed each student participant in August of 2018 with their pseudonym highlighted in each of the chapters they were featured. By this point I had lost touch with Hector and was unsurprised I did not hear back. Hercules wrote me an email that said, “I like it! There are some super smart words you use that I don’t understand but overall I like it!” Lucy told me she had received the drafts but did not have a chance to read them. Jain sat in my office for over two hours reading the entire draft. I left for a meeting and when I returned, we talked for a while about some of the notes he had written. He told me that all of my interpretations seemed accurate and he was happy with the way he was represented. He asked me what it means to "intervene in social processes" and we talked a little bit about the way everyone is implicated in the system, even those of us who don't want to be, and that we all have a responsibility to intervene. While he was reading the in-depth description of him presented in Chapter 4, Jain asked me if I thought it was necessary to have so much detail. I told him that in ethnographically-oriented research, sometimes you want to create a story. As he continued reading, he told me he could see how the research project became something of a narrative. I discussed Chapter 7 with Jain two times. First, I proposed the idea to Jain as I began the analysis. Then I shared with Jain a verbal summary and a draft of the text when I completed the first draft.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations worth noting in this study's methodology, some of which could be addressed in future research. These include: inconsistent contact with students and instructors; lack of data collected in face-to-face settings; and limited extracurricular writing.

Inconsistent contact with students and instructors

While I attempted to meet with focal students each month, Table 4 demonstrates a disparity in the number of times I was able to meet with each student writer. As a result, it is not a surprise that my discussions with Jain led to more in-depth understandings of his ideas and experiences with writing. The value of these more frequent conversations led me to question whether I would have been better off focusing on only one or two student writers and attempting to meet more often. For example, Leki (2007) and her research team met with her focal students every two weeks over four years of the study. However, without knowing which student participants would grant access and continue with the study, I believe it was the right decision in the end to offer participation to all four students.

Similarly, the project could have benefited from more interaction with instructors. While my prior relationship with Xena led to multiple interviews and a valuable discussion about Hercules's writing, it was more difficult to gain multiple opportunities to speak with other instructors. At the start of the project I wanted to cast a wide net and view a range of courses, however I was not able to gain access in the way I wanted to in all of them. In future studies, it might be valuable to gain a more intimate picture of one or two specific classes in addition to the broader picture offered by the group of instructors.

Lack of observations of face-to-face interactions

Along the same lines, opportunities to observe more face-to-face interaction, whether class observations, teacher office hours, or peer review activities, may have offered even more situated data to offer depth to project understanding. Olinger (2014b) used a special consent form for "one-time" participants in order to include peripheral actors in her situated study of academic writing. Use of a similar release form in a future study may provide an opportunity to capture interactions between student writers and classmates or TAs. More classroom observations may have also provided more insight into the reasons for student or instructor uptake of tasks and texts.

Limited Extracurricular Writing

It has long been acknowledged that student literacies extend beyond the classroom, and that personal and extracurricular writing is significant for writing development. While I often discussed social media and other writing with student participants in interviews in a general way, greater access to the student writers' social media accounts and other extracurricular writing may have lent different understandings of student writing knowledge and strategies. Even without specific examples, extracurricular writing was discussed in student interviews when a course project reminded student writers of another context. For example, Lucy referenced her own Instagram use when working on a new media project for one general education class, and we were able to discuss her prior knowledge of that genre.

Even with these limitations, I believe there is much value to be gained in the research presented in this dissertation. While these findings cannot be generalized beyond the cases described here, the depth and breadth of the data provides an opportunity for rich, contextualized interpretations that continue to lend insight into a social model of writing development and generate hypotheses for future considerations of theory and pedagogy.

Summary

This qualitative, longitudinal study focuses on four first-generation to college Latinx students' writing opportunities as they write in high school English and First-Year Writing and general education at a large research university. In order to better understand these opportunities from the perspective of genre as a social theory, I interviewed each of these students monthly, collected student writing, and interviewed their instructors at least once. In all, I conducted 31 interviews with student participants and 20 interviews with instructors, and I collected 50 samples of student-written texts.

Despite the limitations listed in the section above, this methodological approach provides a unique opportunity to understand the writing opportunities of a small cohort of students using a genre framework. Because any genred communication is a joint action between the speaker and reader, it is necessary to gain the perspective of both the writer and reader in academic writing. To account for school-based writing, this means gathering enough data to be able to triangulate an understanding of a student’s text using student and teacher perceptions: I interviewed student writers about their texts (instead of just analyzing texts) and interviewed the teachers who would be reading the texts (instead of just analyzing assignment guidelines, rubrics, and feedback). This approach has allowed me to move toward a broad, longitudinal understanding of student writing opportunities in different contexts (see Chapter 5) as well as to create situated microhistories of individual writing tasks and activities (see Chapters 6) and develop a longitudinal understanding of one student’s writing over time (see Chapter 7). In the next chapter, I will describe the research context in greater detail by introducing the community and academic contexts, the writing curricula in each institution, and the student writers who participated in the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH SETTING AND PARTICIPANTS

This chapter offers further context for the research by introducing the research setting and participants. I will contextualize the research by offering brief descriptions of the local community and the participating high school and university. I will then offer brief biographical sketches of the student participants before closing with a summary of the chapter.

Community Context

This study was conducted in a major metropolitan area about 70 miles north of the U.S.-Mexico border in what Vélez-Ibáñez (1996) has called the “Greater Mexican Southwest.” The city has a population of about 500,000, with one million in the greater metropolitan area, and its demographic breakdown along racial and ethnic lines reflects its historical roots as Mexican and Native American territories: about 42% self-identify as Hispanic or Latino, according to the most recent U.S. census (2017). Responses to the same census show that approximately 34% of households speak a language other than English at home. The land-grant state university is the city’s biggest employer, followed by a major defense contractor and a U.S. Air Force base (Rupkalvis, 2015). While recent efforts to revitalize the city center have led to a boom in downtown construction and redevelopment of the campus-downtown corridor, the city remains marked by economic inequality with around 25% of the population living in poverty.

While often framed as a progressive city by deeply conservative legislators in the state capital, the city’s draw as a retirement destination along with the influence carried by employers with ties to the military-industrial complex leads to a contentious political discourse around local, state, and national issues. As may be expected in such a politically divided city in a conservative border state, questions of education, language, and nationality can be found at the forefront of debate. Following California's controversial Proposition 227, voters in Arizona passed the similar Proposition 203, which effectively banned bilingual education in public schools by mandating English-only immersion instruction for English Language Learners (Zehr, 2000). A few years before this study began, the largest school district in the city was singled out by the state superintendent of education in an effort to dismantle its Mexican-American Studies curriculum. After the state superintendent's accusations that the curriculum fomented hate and the overthrow of the U.S. government among its Latina/o student population, the district was under state surveillance for several years until a federal court ruling blocked the state from imposing any financial penalties for ethnic studies courses (Fischer, 2017). Here then, as everywhere, education is a deeply political, polarizing issue. The following section provides more of the educational contexts in which this study took place, first focusing on the high school and then the university, with a particular focus on writing instruction.

High School Context

Phase One of the study took place at a high school in the second largest school district in the city. Located a short 15-minute drive from the university, the high school serves a community with a strong Mexican influence. Walking through campus one sees colorful murals with images representing the religious and indigenous roots of the southwest and motivational slogans encouraging academic and civic engagement. One west side wall features Our Lady of Guadalupe, a religious and cultural icon of the southwest. While the larger city school district is engaged in constant political struggle, this district maintains more of a low profile, perhaps reflecting broader support within its more demographically homogenous community: approximately 88% of district students self-identify as Hispanic or Native American, as do 95% of students at the participating high school (see Table 6).

Table 6

Student demographics of the participating high school (ADE, 2016)

Student Characteristics	**Percent of students**
Minority	96
Hispanic/Latino	93
American Indian/Alaska Native	2
Black/African-American	1
White	2
Unknown	1
English language learners	3
Qualify for free and reduced-priced meals	80

However, like many traditionally under-resourced schools with majority minority student populations, the high school faces challenges caused by external forces like state politics and education policy, and internal forces like teacher and administrator turnover. It has struggled to maintain local control in the face of changing national and state policies, some of the political forces that seek to “control schools” even in the face of a strong local agenda (Moll & Ruiz, 2002, p. 367). The implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) demonstrates this challenge well. While the state was initially part of the multi-state PARCC consortium of schools for Common Core testing, the standards met resistance within the highly conservative state legislature. In 2016, the state legislature decided to create its own standards and testing system, meaning that in a five-year span, K-12 schools in the state had cycled through three distinct accountability structures. This constant change left teachers at the whim of administrators and outside consultants. Ms. Martin, a 30-year veteran of the school, shared that sometimes she feels much like the students, just wanting to be told what to do so she can do it and get on with her day. She feels like she's become so "robot-ized," so beholden to other people's needs, that she forgets about some of the effective strategies she's used over time. "I used to do that!" she said, reflecting on a strategy discussed in a workshop. "What happened? I used to be like that" (Interview, April 20, 2016). Teacher and administrator turnover remains a central issue at this high school. The school is currently on its third principal in the five years I have visited its halls.

High School Writing Instruction

Ms. Martin has been teaching English Language Arts (ELA) at the high school for over 30 years and has seen curricular expectations evolve over many cycles, from a focus on literature to the recent, CCSS-influenced shift to "all argument, all the time" (Interview, April 20, 2016). Ms. Martin thinks this emphasis on argumentative writing in Common Core-aligned materials has drifted from the mission of an ELA education. Like many ELA teachers, she entered the profession with an idealistic vision to "build a better world," and saw the study of language and literature as a way to build empathy and authority. She fears that the imposed curriculum is taking away from student opportunities to develop a "voice" and engage fully with the class materials. Ms. Martin laughs talking about an especially poor professional development day, saying the teachers find themselves "in the same boat as the students. 'What do you want us to say? If we say it can we go back to our classrooms and do something different so we know it's gonna work?'" (Interview, April 20, 2016). In these questions, Ms. Martin seems to imply that the imposed curriculum conveys to teachers that the textbook writers or outside publishers know more about teaching than they do, damaging morale by limiting teacher agency. Such perceived constraints are common in the research on the effects of standardized testing on teaching and learning in middle and high school classrooms (Applebee & Langer, 2011; Hillocks, 2002; Ruecker, 2014).

The College Board-published (2014) *SpringBoard* curriculum mandated in Senior English introduced students to literary criticism, with simplified, uncited explanations of reader response, archetypal, historical, Marxist, and feminist approaches to reading a text.[18] Each theoretical perspective is paired with a combination of fiction, non-fiction, and media texts, including film, opinion articles, and photo essays. While students are asked to create a few multimodal projects, including a photo essay and documentary film, the majority of the writing tasks in the curriculum ask students to apply a specific critical lens to a text or choose the lens that best explores the text and explain why. These projects, framed as arguments, reflect the kinds of writing students are expected to perform on Common Core-related standardized tests (Jacobson, 2015). This combination of literary theory and analysis essays constructs a class much like an Introduction to Literature course.

While Ms. Martin does have content concerns with the *SpringBoard* curriculum, the challenges she identified most in our conversations were more structural, including a lack of time that leads to constant tension between maximizing learning and covering content. Because the teachers were asked to follow a common curriculum map and cover all of the content in the textbook book, Ms. Martin often felt like she did not have enough time to explore samples with students, to discuss theories, and, most important for our discussion, to conference with students about their writing.

---

[18] In the summer after I conducted the high school phase of this research, Ms. Martin attended a state-sponsored professional development conference on incorporating rhetoric and argument in ELA classrooms. She was so thrilled by the conference that she stopped using *SpringBoard* and developed her own curriculum using those materials. She was disappointed, however, to see the lack of enthusiasm among her colleagues, who chose to remain with the *SpringBoard* curriculum they were just beginning to get a handle on after a few years of use.

Even with these challenges and thoughts of retirement after teaching for over 30 years, Ms. Martin continued to seek new ways to engage her students. During the year I was observing her class, she adopted Scrum, a collaborative, project-based orientation to product development that began in the software industry and has made its way into education contexts (Schwaber, 2018). In the Scrum classroom, Ms. Martin no longer relied solely on explicit, direct instruction. Instead, she created sets of deliverables, called “sprints,” that students completed in a combination of individual and team activity. Each sprint lasted anywhere from a few days to a few weeks, usually including both low-stakes and formally graded writing tasks. Because students were more accountable to their teammates in Scrum, Ms. Martin hoped it would increase a sense of independence among students and provide motivation to complete their work. While students often complained to me that Ms. Martin “wasn’t teaching,” one of the focal students, Hercules, learned to appreciate the Scrum method during his first semester of college, saying it was good practice for the learning responsibilities of college where more is expected outside of class and teacher direction (Interview, Sep 23, 2016).

There is no explicit writing in the content areas program at the high school, although teachers are encouraged to include reading and writing instruction as appropriate. Student participants reported writing a few essays in classes like history and government and writing letters in Spanish language classes, and also recalled PowerPoint presentations in history and math classes. According to the students, most of their writing outside of ELA consisted of short answers on quizzes and tests.

University Context

The university is a public, land-grant university classified as a Doctoral University with highest research activity. With over 40,000 students, about three quarters of them undergraduates, the university is a small city unto itself. In August, the quiet streets and bicycle paths that traverse the campus become bustling centers of activity as students return to town. On football game days, the long narrow university mall turns into a parking lot, with RVs, pickup trucks, and temporary tent structures covering the green, well-manicured lawns. A sea of students and community members wearing school colors can be seen walking from the various parking garages and surrounding street parking on winter basketball evenings. A book festival and student-organized carnival bring the city to campus in the springtime.

The university has responded to plunging financial support from the state—our state is one of only two to cut over 50% of state funding from 2008-2016 (Mitchell, Leachman, & Masterson, 2016)—by taking a much more entrepreneurial approach, actively seeking corporate partnerships and attempting to increase the student population. Like other universities competing for student tuition dollars, the university has invested in construction of amenities including a gym and recreation center, private partnerships to provide off-campus luxury housing, and a recent renovation of the campus bookstore that positions the university more as a brand than an academic institution: the main floor now features university clothing and living supplies, with textbooks and supplies relegated to a basement corner past the computer and technology store.

During the year this research was conducted, about 26% of university undergraduate students self-identified as Hispanic or Latino, and over 50% self-identified as White. Nearly 7% of students at the university self-identified as Nonresident Alien (see Table 7). Reflecting the state legislature's antagonistic attitude toward Mexican immigrants, student with Deferred

Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) status were not eligible for institutional merit awards, state-based aid, or federal financial aid, even though the Board of Regents of the state university system had made in-state tuition available. This in-state tuition was recently struck down by the state Supreme Court after a lawsuit by the state attorney general (Fischer, 2018).

Table 7

Student demographics at the university, 2016-2017 (ABOR, 2018a).

Student Ethnicity	**Percent of students**
American Indian or Alaska Native	1
African-American or Black	4
Asian	5
Hispanic/Latino	26
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.3
White	51
Two or More Races	4
Nonresident Alien	7
Unknown	1

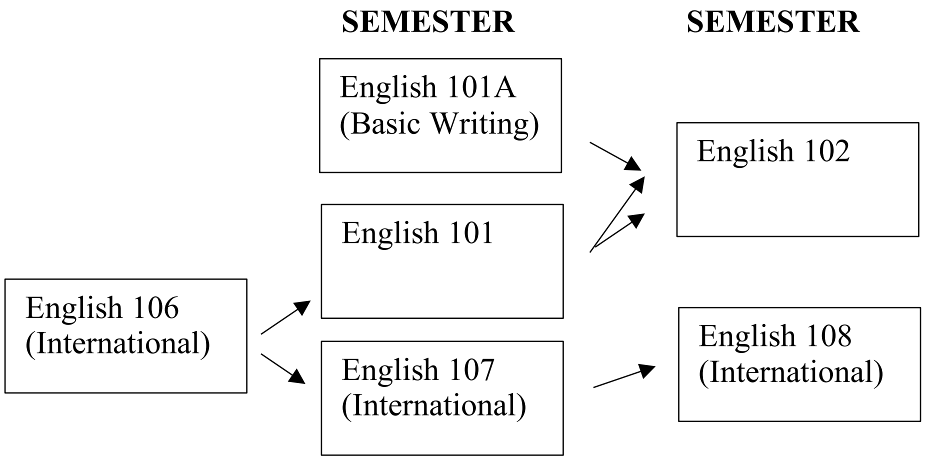
Note: Rounded percentages do not match 100%.

Writing Instruction at the University

As I write these sentences, writing instruction at the university is undergoing much change, both in the university Writing Program and across campus. Over the past five years the FYW curricula has been transitioning toward an outcomes-oriented approach that aligns with current trends in the rhetoric and composition discussions. Initiatives spearheaded by university provosts and central administration have also led to a campus-wide General Education writing policy that compels faculty to assign writing in all general education courses.

First-Year Writing (FYW). Housed in the English Department, the Writing Program's teaching responsibilities include FYW and a few upper-division writing courses. The program serves over 10,000 students each year, including international students, basic writers, and honors-level students. All incoming students are required to take the full sequence of FYW (6 credits), although some students are able to complete the entire sequence with a 3-credit honors course. While there is some flexibility in course placement, the majority of international students enroll in writing courses designed to support multilingual learners: English 106, English 107 and English 108. Domestic students needing additional writing support enroll in a studio model, English 101A, before English 102 (See Figure 4). More than 160 instructors teach Writing Program courses each year, about 70% of whom are Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) from graduate programs in Applied Linguistics, Creative Writing, Literature, and Rhetoric and Composition. The remaining courses are taught primarily by lecturers, some of whom are on newly negotiated multi-year contracts with benefits following years of advocacy and a much-publicized walkout.

As a former writing program administrator told me, directing a program this size is more like steering a cruise ship than a smaller, more nimble boat. At the time of this writing, that ship seems to be mid-turn. A year-long self-assessment in 2013-2014 in concert with university accreditation found that the textual analysis-based first course in the FYW sequence (often conducted as literary analysis) did not align with the revised program outcomes based on the WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (CWPA, 2014). Teachers in the first-semester course had traditionally taught three analysis essays before a final revision and reflection assignment. This curriculum was supported by a custom published textbook focusing on the writing process and typical writing assignments, as well as a custom-published reader featuring short fiction and non-fiction pieces organized into thematic chapters. I include this discussion of the "old" curriculum here because there are still veteran teachers using these models even as the curriculum changes, and the four participating students experienced a range of FYW tasks and approaches in the first semester. The second course in the sequence, with a focus on research and public argument, used the same custom textbook in addition to another custom text focusing on public rhetoric.


SEMESTER
SEMESTER
English 101A (Basic Writing)
English 102
English 101
English 106 (International)
English 108 (International)
English 107 (International)

Note: All students are required to complete the full sequence of FYW (6 credits). There is also an honors course (English 109) that fulfills the writing requirement in one 3-credit course.

Figure 4. First-Year Writing course sequence

This curricular change is clearly visible in the required syllabus language provided by the Writing Program to all teachers of FYW courses. Whereas the previous English 101 course focused on "close reading and written analysis of a wide range of texts," the new syllabus language describes the course as one that “familiarizes students with the social and situated nature of writing—that is, with the ways in which writing is tied to purpose, audience/community, and topic/content.” Based in part on Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak’s (2014) “Teaching for Transfer” model*,* the redesigned course focuses on keywords like genre, rhetorical situation, and context, and requires frequent reflection with each major assignment. To date, there have been two separate pilots of this genre-based curriculum for English 101 and 107, the most recent of which was performed by all incoming GTAs over a two-year period. In this course, teachers generally begin with a reflective writing task, either a literacy narrative or a creative non-fiction project based around observations of a public event, a somewhat common style of FYW assignment that Beaufort (2007) called “literary journalism” (p. 39). The other major projects include a profile of an individual or community, and a genre analysis of texts within that community.

While three of the four focal students in this study took the first course in the FYW sequence, they were each assigned different writing tasks (see Table 8). Lucy’s basic writing studio course was based more on the prior model, with a personal reflective narrative followed by a two analysis essays; Jain’s English 101 was taught by a second-year GTA teaching the first iteration of the genre-based pilot with a public event reflection as the first assignment; and Hector’s English 101 was taught by a first-year GTA teaching the newest iteration of the pilot, featuring a literacy narrative.

All four of the focal students enrolled in English 102 as the second course of the FYW sequence. This course “emphasizes rhetoric and research across contexts” as “students engage in rhetorical analysis, research, persuasion, reflection, and revision.” While not as dramatic an overhaul as the first course in the sequence, English 102 has also begun a transition under a new

Writing Program director toward a more WAC/WID focus. The prior curriculum focused on rhetoric, research, and public argument through a three-assignment sequence. Lucy and Hector's teachers used various iterations of the previous public argument-directed curriculum, while Hercules' English 102 instructor utilized a revised, argument-based approach, intended to help students engage with outside research in their argumentative writing.

Table 8

Focal student FYW graded writing tasks

Student	**Semester 1**	**Semester 2**
Hector	Engl 101 • literacy narrative • genre analysis • profile • portfolio with reflection	Engl 102 • rhetorical analysis • annotated bibliography • controversy analysis • public argument (academic essay) • portfolio with reflection
Hercules	Earned credit in dual enrollment class in high school (11th grade)	Engl 102 • argument from experience • argument from sources • public argument • portfolio with reflection
Jain	Engl 101 • reflection on an event • profile • genre analysis • portfolio with reflection	Engl 102 (Dropped course before completing any writing tasks)
Lucy	Engl 101A (Basic Writing) • ideological narrative (personal narrative) • literary analysis • advertisement analysis • portfolio with reflection	Engl 102 • controversy analysis • rhetorical analysis • public argument (editorial) • portfolio with reflection

Writing in general education. At the time of this writing there is not a formal Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program at the university, although recent administrative support of writing initiatives seems to point toward an eventual program. This study began during the second year of a campus-wide writing policy for general education courses. This policy, developed by the university-wide general education committee, required *all* general education instructor to assign at least 10 pages or 2500 words of writing over the course of the semester, with one assignment of at least 750 words and the opportunity to revise at least one assignment based on feedback before grading. To support this policy, upper administration facilitated the development of the General Education Writing Initiative, a faculty development program facilitated by the campus teaching and learning center, in collaboration with the Writing Program.[19] As probably should be expected, faculty interpret the policy differently, with some offering optional opportunities for revision, while others structured peer review in 200-person lectures. Many of the faculty I interviewed for this project saw value in having students write more for their classes, but their concerns around assessment, institutional support, and "content coverage" demonstrated both the potential and challenges of such a top-down initiative.

Student Participants

This study used purposeful sampling to focus on a limited population of students and gain some sense of the "typicality of the settings, individuals, [and] activities selected" (Maxwell, 1996, p. 71). The participating students in this study attended the same high school, had the same

---

[19] In this model, the administration supports one graduate TA from the Writing Program to work part-time as a Writing Support Specialist in the teaching and learning center. I have served in this role since fall of 2015, developing and implementing faculty development workshops and consulting with individual faculty on their writing pedagogy. This position has been influential to my interest in general education writing, and has granted me access to institutional history and instructor and administrator interviews I may not have had otherwise.

Senior ELA teacher, and matriculated to the same university. They all self-identify as Hispanic in school demographic reporting and all self-report multilingual households, even if the students do not all consider themselves to be fluent Spanish speakers (see Table 9). In this sense, these students are "typical" of students least served by conventional educational structures: racial and linguistic minority students from a historically under-resourced school district. At the same time, the individual stories of these students point to the challenges of generalizing based on demographic data. While all of the students self-identify as Hispanic or Latinx on school forms, their families have roots and relatives in México, Honduras, and Argentina. And while Spanish is a common language in their communities and maybe even in their homes, only two of the four students consider themselves fluent Spanish speakers. The student participants involved in this project thus serve as a reminder that the linguistically and culturally diverse students in college classrooms are not always markedly so. Descriptions of students as native and non-native speakers, first-generation immigrant, second-generation immigrant, or "generation 1.5" may not account for students who don't fit these descriptions but were raised where English was not the default community language (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2008). Scholars in writing studies and related fields have used examples of such diversity of language use and background to problematize the ways writing programs place college composition students based on language history or proficiency. Multilingual students like those in this study are also often rendered invisible by institutional constructs like First-Year Writing and Basic Writing which assume native, monolingual English speakers of dialects, and ESL, which assumes foreign students (Matsuda, 2006). As we will see in later chapters, this invisibility manifests across the curriculum as general education faculty tend to consider linguistic difference only when considering international students.

Table 9

Pre-college survey results

Name	**language(s) spoken at home (primary first)**	**self-assessment of writing in English**	**Do you think you are prepared for college writing?**	**typical writing grades in high school (self-reported)**
Hector	English	extremely good	probably yes	mostly Bs
Hercules	English, Spanish	extremely good	probably yes	mostly Bs
Jain	Spanish, English	somewhat bad	maybe or maybe not	mostly Bs
Lucy	Spanish, English	neither good nor bad	definitely not	mostly Bs

Hector

> *"There's different ways teachers view essays, like one teacher can say this essay is really good, and another one can say it's really bad. It's the same thing with peer editing. Like I've had that happen before when I do my peer editing. You know one friend will say it's really good and another will say it's really bad, so it has to do with that. So that's why I don't think grades, you know, show what your writing actually is, or worth." (Interview, May 4, 2016)*

Hector agreed to work with me even though we had very little relationship during my observations in his high school ELA class. He was generally quiet in class, rarely participating during class discussions, the kind of student who can go unnoticed because he is not causing any distractions. It was clear he was well-liked by his friends in the class, and he could often be observed laughing and joking around before and after class activities.

Hector comes from a bilingual family, but did not speak Spanish until college coursework. When his family gets together they often speak in Spanish, but he always felt like he didn't need it because he was a U.S. citizen living in the U.S. Hector can understand Spanish pretty well, but never felt the need to learn to speak it until he visited México with some friends and he couldn't communicate in a restaurant. In a literacy narrative he wrote in his first semester

FYW course, Hector wrote that he “felt embarrassed [in México] because I had felt that I was a disgrace to my culture and the people that were trying to sell me things already assumed I spoke Spanish when really I had no clue what they were saying.” He told me he sometimes gets frustrated when people—I was one of them—assume he is bilingual.

Family always comes first for Hector. He lived with his grandparents for his senior year of high school because his grandfather had knee surgery and he wanted to help them out, and their house was closer to the school. Hector’s mother was a pharmacy technician before she was diagnosed with scleroderma, a rare autoimmune disorder that affects the hands. Toward the end of his first semester of college, Hector decided to move back in with his mother because his grandfather had recovered and he thought his mother could use the help with his younger brother. He helped her with moving chores every day after classes, which had a negative effect on his grades, but Hector did not regret it or complain because he thinks helping his mother is important and he didn’t “wanna be that son that complains” (Interview, Dec 6, 2016).

Hector was conscious of his participation in this project and wanted to be helpful. He was visibly nervous during our first interview in high school, his leg shaking throughout our conversation, and he apologized the next time I saw him in class. Once, after an interview, Hector asked me how everyone else was doing. He seemed worried that he wasn’t answering my questions in the way that I wanted.

Hector has an active social life, and he values spending time with his friends and partying at the beach in México over breaks. He was surprised to find that students in college seemed to just go to class and leave, and he found it hard to make friends during the first semester. Hector participated in a leadership club to fulfill the engagement requirement of his scholarship, which provided a small community of likeminded students. He had a “group” for participating in team-building events like a lip sync contest, and they would get ice cream together sometimes after meetings. Hector could have used his merit-based scholarship to pay for campus housing, and he came to regret not taking advantage of that opportunity.

Hector brought to college a writing process that included brainstorming, outlining, and revising. For example, he wrote himself notes before he began an in-class essay test in his Senior English class in high school. He values this process-based approach to writing, and in high school talked about wanting his progress to matter more than the quality of his writing. He did not think grades were an accurate reflection of his writing ability, and saw teacher feedback as very subjective. Hector thought that teachers were too focused on format and "writing" (which I read as formal expectations) rather than on the content. At the same time, he does look to his grades to measure his own improvement. He takes teacher feedback seriously, and used it both to assess his own development and to critique himself.

Hercules

> *During group work today, I saw Hercules sneak up on another student and give him a bear hug. The student, a basketball player who I hadn't seen talk once in my visits to the class, turned and smiled at Hercules's exuberance and gave him a playful, almost brotherly push. Hercules seems to be liked by everyone. (Fieldnotes, May 18, 2016)*

When I asked Hercules to choose a pseudonym in our first interview, he chose quickly. As is often the case, Hercules had a broad smile on his face when he said the name—he was voted "Best Smile" in the school yearbook—and it almost seemed like a joke for him only. He said Hercules was the first name that came to mind.

In his personal statement used to apply for a local college scholarship, Hercules wrote about being diagnosed with a rare brain tumor with a 90% survival rate in January of his junior year of high school. Even through four rounds of chemotherapy and 24 rounds of radiation, he wrote, he never lost track of his schooling, moving up in class rank during the semester of his treatment. Radiation to the brain can disturb memory and thinking functions, and Hercules was on a 504 plan for a mental health disability during his senior year of high school. He enrolled with the campus disabilities resource center when he matriculated to the university and took advantage of testing accommodations during his first semesters. He found his accommodations helpful to allow him to take his time. In the personal statement for a scholarship opportunity, he explained that he never uses disability as an excuse, writing, "I just want to be able to show everyone anything is possible if you put your mind to it."

Hercules' commitment to his schoolwork and future goals can be seen in the variety of activities, academic and otherwise, he participated with in high school. Hercules was part of the high school TRIO program as well as the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program, a class focused on building college and career readiness skills. During his first semester of college he often referenced the skills he learned in AVID, like notetaking or studying skills, that he continued to use.

English is the primary language spoken in his home now, but Hercules remembers speaking Spanish more when he was younger. Now, Spanish is mostly used when he's in trouble. His mother is an office manager at a charter school near their house. She is an avid reader and tried to instill a love of books in Hercules, but it didn't catch. Hercules thinks his mother is a good writer, though, and she often checked his writing when he was in high school. Hercules has two older brothers, one of whom graduated from the university and lived across town during his first year of college. This brother often offers advice, especially related to math classes.

Just before graduating high school, Hercules identified himself as "not a really good writer" and someone who is "not very well suited to be a writer" (Interview, May 6, 2016). To him, a good writer is someone who can "get inside your head" and help you see things from a new perspective, "to be in their shoes," and he doesn't think he can do that. As an aspiring engineer, Hercules knows he will have to write on the job, but doesn't think it will include the kind of essay writing he has had to do in school situations. He mostly earned Bs on his high school writing, and complained that it was sometimes hard to know what teachers expected from him. Hercules also felt that his teachers paid too much attention to grammar errors. Hercules earned credit for the first semester of the university's FYW sequence when he completed a dual enrollment English class in 11th grade.

Jain

> *"Look what I got," he said as I walked over to Jain's table during English class. I probably looked at him with confusion, because then he turned and pointed out the earbud peeking out of his shirt. A few days earlier in class he was researching wireless earbuds so that he could watch movies while he's bored at work. This one was good: it strapped around his neck, and only if you saw his ear would you realize that he was wearing headphones. He seemed quite satisfied with himself.* (Fieldnotes, April 27, 2016)

Jain always greets me with a smile and a firm handshake. He is quick to joke around and keep things light. In fact, I created a keyboard shortcut to represent laughter as I was transcribing interviews because of our conversations. In text messages and emails he refers to me as "Sir" or "Señor," sometimes in the same message: "Yes Sir, Sorry Señor." I take this as both a sign of respect and friendship; there's a little bit of ribbing going on there, poking fun at the hierarchy between us as I gently prod him to send me his writing or meet me for an interview.

I first met Jain in January of his senior year of high school after he switched to Senior English from AP Language and Literature. He said he liked AP, but it was too time consuming with the college application process and his part-time job, and he felt like Senior English wasn't that much of a change. By the time I officially began the study, Jain was in the throes of senioritis. He bought wireless earbuds, and during the final six-weeks of his high school career, Jain could often be found in the library watching “El Patrón del Mal,” a Mexican-made miniseries about Pablo Escobar on Netflix. He selected “Jain” as his pseudonym based on the character Patrick Jane from the television show, *The Mentalist*. He said he likes the show and the character, and thought it would be a “cool” name.

In and out of school Jain proves to be dedicated and hard-working. He worked at a local convenience store through his senior year of high school, and continued to work on weekends when he began college. When his father was laid off at the beginning of the spring semester of his first year, Jain began to work 30 hours a week, managing his work schedule along with his more demanding courses for his Engineering major. Jain often referenced his position as a first-generation-to-college student, and saw a responsibility to his younger siblings, his parents, and his community to do well. The high expectations placed on him to earn good grades have motivated him to seek extra assistance when needed. When he talks about his work ethic, Jain references his parents and their sacrifices for him and his three younger siblings. In a FYW journal assignment he wrote that he “never [wants to] give my mom a regret to having me at the age of 16 and having to change her life around.”

Jain was born in the U.S. into a household in which Spanish was the primary language. While his mother “doesn’t struggle very often” to speak and understand English, Jain’s father speaks very little English. He buys cars from auctions, fixes them, and sells them on Craigslist, and sometimes Jain is called upon to write the posts. If the buyer is an English-only speaker, Jain might accompany his father to the sale.

Jain was the first in his extended family to graduate high school. Jain’s father was the youngest of seven kids, and the first to come to America. He met Jain's mom in the U.S., and she had Jain at 16. His father now has legal resident status, but is not a citizen. Jain’s uncles have tried to immigrate, but have not been as lucky. A few of his aunts work in North Carolina at certain times of the year pulling meat from crabs. Jain tries to make the 10-hour drive to visit his *nana* in Sinaloa, México when he can. They sometimes go for Christmas as a family; Jain went with some friends during the summer before he started college.

As he prepared to finish high school, Jain referred to himself as "not really a good writer" (Interview, April 27, 2016). He talked about feeling blocked and taking a long time to get started writing, and described writing as "really hard." He saw other people who were able to quickly and easily get their ideas to paper, and he felt like he was not up to their level. When I challenged him to consider himself a better writer, he often pointed to his grades (mostly Bs and Cs) or his test scores, like an average score on the ACT. Even as he earned As on nearly every writing assignment in his first year, he attributed his success to more "lenient" grading, not to his own developing writing abilities.

Lucy

> *"…a girl who came up poor, a girl who doesn't have everything as everyone else does, a girl who wasn't the smartest one, a girl who was put in really special classes when she was little. I was put in special classes and bilingual classes 'cause I couldn't understand English, 'cause I didn't know how to write, I didn't know how to read the same level as everyone else. And I felt like I've gotten to this point where I demonstrated so much and I can keep going and prove to people that I'm not that girl, you know? I'm much more than that. And people who are in the same situation can do the same thing as I am."*
> (Interview, January 13, 2017)

Lucy wants "to be someone…to do something," and as the quote above shows, she recognizes the social and political implications of her educational trajectory. Lucy sees education as an opportunity to change her life, and she has worked hard to create opportunities for herself. She was in the same AVID class as Hector and Hercules, and she took advantage of many opportunities to prepare for college. For two summers during high school, she participated in a

“Teen Institute” program sponsored by a national nonprofit organization that allowed her to spend a week on campus in the dorms. Lucy even saw the invitation to participate in this research project as an opportunity. When she found out I was a teacher at the university, Lucy asked if she could be in my class and she emailed me for feedback on multiple occasions during her first few semesters. Even as she playfully complained about my questions in our interview conversations, she seemed to enjoy thinking about her writing and about her ongoing development as a student, writer, and person.

Lucy demonstrated a sense of humor as well as a genuine intellectual curiosity throughout our interview conversations; this is probably why we get along so well. She called the highlight of her first semester her day off for Veteran’s Day and complained about how our interviews “make my brain hurt,” but did it all with a laugh. It came through clearly in all our conversations that Lucy was experiencing college as a transformative experience. She described college as an opportunity learn and gain new perspectives, not necessarily to earn the credential or get a job. For example, she saw her general education classes as opportunities to learn to work with others and to learn about and appreciate other cultures.

Some of this interest in culture might stem from Lucy’s family history. Her father is a U.S. citizen who was raised in Argentina. He lived there for 30 years, where he met Lucy’s mother and had two children. They brought the family to New York for his work when Lucy was four years old, and moved to the southwest United States, again for work, when Lucy was in middle school. Her mother was undocumented for much of Lucy’s childhood, and they lived in fear of her deportation. Lucy’s mother has been a permanent resident for the last six years, and is in the process of studying for the U.S. citizenship test.

Lucy visited her grandmother and aunt in Argentina during the summer before college, and she volunteered at her aunt's rural elementary school, located about a 15-hour bus ride from Buenos Aires. She saw barefoot students and a school that didn't provide lunch, and was struck by the differences from her own school experiences. She helped students with their worksheets—their Spanish was just about at her level, she said—and enjoyed the experience so much that she took the long bus ride back at the end of her visit to volunteer again. Perhaps motivated by this experience, Lucy visited an information table for the Peace Corps at a university information fair during her first semester of college and has considered applying as she nears graduation.

In my survey distributed before high school graduation, Lucy assessed her own writing as "very weak," even though she mostly earned B's on her high school writing assignments (Interview, May 20, 2016). She did not feel like her high school experiences had prepared her for college, and believed there was a big gap between her own knowledge and the knowledge of college students. In our initial interviews she talked frequently about the five-paragraph essay format, something she had done so many times that she'd just "automatically assume" that's what the teacher wanted. She said, "When I write an essay or when I write anything—it could be even a diary—I feel like it has to have a hook, obviously, and it has the three body paragraphs, and a conclusion… I've learned how to write a certain way so I just automatically write that. It comes naturally now, you know?" (Interview, August 30, 2016).

Summary

This chapter has offered a description of the research setting and an introduction to the focal students. The study took place in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands of the Southwest, in a city where linguistic diversity is the norm, yet still politically contentious. Research procedures began at a high school in a predominantly Mexican and Mexican-American area of the city, about a fifteen-minute drive from the large, land-grant research university where I teach. All of the four focal students in this inquiry maintain familial connections in México, Central, or South America, and all four have multilingual households. They are each in the first-generation to attend college in their families.

The Latinx-identifying student participants in this inquiry attended a historically low-performing high school in a predominantly minoritized community where outside sociopolitical pressures influenced curricular decisions, especially in English Language Arts. These common features of schooling for Latina/o youth contribute to poor pedagogical conditions and outcomes (Moll and Ruiz, 2002; Ruecker, 2014; Valenzuela, 1999). Limarys Caraballo (2011) has suggested that exploring student individual experiences in classrooms can help us "begin to challenge historically constructed power relations and cultivate more dynamic conceptions of curriculum that take into account the experiences of students of color and lower income students" (p. 171). The following chapters will take up Caraballo's challenge, sharing individual and collective classroom experiences that impact academic writing development in classrooms across institutions. In the next chapter, I examine the opportunities for students to take on the practices of new communities in an analysis of the audiences and purposes students are writing for in high school and the first-year of university study. This chapter will offer an entryway into discussion of the roles and identities available to student writers.

CHAPTER 5

WRITING IN PRACTICE? WRITING OPPORTUNITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE

For his first major writing assignment for English 101, the first in a two-course sequence of First-Year Writing (FYW), Jain was tasked with visiting a public event and writing a reflective essay. Jain chose to attend the "midnight drag" at a drag racing course on the county fairgrounds. Jain grew up in a home where cars were essential to the household income, and he drew from these "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Soto-Santiago, & Schwartz, 2013) as he wrote fluidly about horsepower, tire burnout, and flatbed haulers. He also made insightful observations about the audience in attendance, viewing the entire night as a social experience and hypothesizing about why people might attend these events. Reflecting on this task later, Jain said, "It felt like being a journalist" because he "was gathering information from an actual event, actual people" (Interview, December 13, 2016). He told me he could imagine an essay like this appearing in a magazine. In this school writing opportunity, we see Jain taking a situated view of the task: he is considering the kind of person the writing asks him to be (a journalist), where such a text might circulate (a magazine), and he is making choices about his research process, the content, and writing style accordingly.

While Jain was able to clearly identify his role and a potential audience for this writing task, it was one of only a few writing opportunities for him or the other student participants that elicited such a situated response across the high school to college writing transition. As I continually returned to the interview transcripts over the course of data collection, I was struck by how rarely the student participants named an audience outside the teacher or a purpose beyond the stated goal of the task (i.e., analyze a text) for the writing opportunities we discussed.

These students seemed to be experiencing writing as decontextualized and arhetorical, as a skill and an end in itself. But as I discussed in Chapter 2, scholars of writing and learning have long-emphasized the ways in which knowledge, literacy, and writing are situated in practice. As Freedman (1995) explained, “You cannot write writing. You have to write something to somebody” (p. 137). From this practice-based perspective, writing as a tool-in-use only takes meaning in context, and learning these tools-in-use happens in practice, even if acquired without direct instruction. For this reason, scholars have argued that literate development requires access to literate communities (Gee, 2008; Hernandez-Zamora, 2010), and that broadening access to disciplines and professions that have historically excluded marginalized groups requires broadening access to such communities (Russell, 1995).

In this chapter I explore the ways in which the focal students of the study were granted access to or sequestered from school-based literate communities by analyzing data collected from student and teacher interviews as well as classroom materials like textbooks, assignment guidelines, and grading rubrics. The questions that guide this exploration include:

- What kinds of writing opportunities are provided to the focal students in high school English Language Arts (ELA), First-Year Writing (FYW), and general education?
- What modes of participation are available to focal students across the high school to college transition?

To date, these types of questions have been primarily explored in graduate or undergraduate major writing contexts, often focusing on disciplinary enculturation (Prior, 1998; Roozen, 2009; Tardy, 2006). However, studying the high school to college writing transition through a genre and opportunities lens is important because students do have to write, and they will be evaluated as writers and offered or excluded from opportunities, at least in part based on experiences during this timeframe (Foster & Russell, 2002). At the institution where this research took place, for example, a new university policy requires students to write in all of their general education courses. The writing assessment that happens in these courses will impact a student's individual academic trajectories in some way.

I begin this chapter with a brief overview of the literature related to writing and learning in practice before describing the students' writing opportunities in high school and the first year of university study broadly, focusing on the genres, purposes, and audiences identified in class materials and student talk. While this analysis paints a somewhat disappointing picture of writing opportunities offered to these students when compared to the literature on writing and learning, through case studies I also highlight a few writing opportunities, like Jain's example above, in which students did engage in practices of a community. The chapter closes with considerations and implications for practice-based writing opportunities across institutional contexts.

Writing Opportunities in High School and College

Methodology: Writing, Genre, and Learning in Practice

Since the "social turn" in literacy studies, writing scholars have understood writing to be a social practice. As Roozen (2015) explained in a recent edited collection identifying central concepts of writing studies, writers are never simply "writing an email" or "writing an essay;" instead, writers are always "engaged in the work of making meaning for particular audiences and purposes, and writers are always connected to other people" (p. 17). This social and rhetorical view of writing reminds us that literacy is not a decontextualized skill, but instead is social, contextual, and always imbued with relationships of power and authority (Barton & Hamilton, 2000; Gee, 2008; Street, 1995). From this perspective, writing and other forms of semiotic production can only be understood in context. This understanding requires the development of pedagogical approaches that recognize the situated nature of writing and learning in practice.

In what follows I examine the writing opportunities of the participating students with this social practice framework in mind. Since a practice-based writing pedagogy relies upon learning by doing and a social process (Freedman & Adam, 2000), and purpose, audience, and genre are central to a writing task that reflects a social practice epistemology (Newell, VanDerHeide, & Olsen, 2014), exploring these features of writing opportunities can help us to see the ways in which these students were provided access to literate communities. Drawing from high school and college class materials as well as interviews with students and teachers, I provide a broad understanding of the high school to college transition through the lens of situated writing opportunities.

Practice-based learning theorists have suggested that artifacts can be valuable analytical tools because they lend insight into the cultural values and ideologies of a people, group, or institution (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Artifacts—semiotic tools like words, texts, and images—have their own developmental histories and serve as both instruments and communal forms of memory, whether organizational, institutional, or cultural (Holland et al., 1998; Prior, 1998). From a situated learning perspective, Lave and Wenger (1991) argued that artifacts of a practice are good indicators of participation because an artifact can be more or less “transparent” to a newcomer, meaning that the movement toward fuller participation—deeper, more authentic participation as a member of the community—should include not only use of the artifact but also an understanding of its significance which forms part of the cultural-historical knowledge of the practice. Genre theorists have similarly argued that genres are both produced by and reproduce social structures, practices, and values

(Bawarshi, 2003; Berkenkotter, 2001; Devitt, 2004; Russell, 1997). From this perspective, genres are “keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community" (Miller, 1984, p. 165) because they “tell us both what to want to do as member and how, rhetorically, to achieve it" (Dias et al., 1999, p. 21). My methodological approach to this chapter brings these theoretical frameworks together, examining the genres students are engaged with—the artifacts of practice—in order to understand the modes of participation available to participating students and models of teaching and learning promulgated by educational institutions.

Transparency, sequestration, and the “banking model.” Lave and Wenger (1991) have suggested that the relative transparency of an artifact—the ways in which users come to not only use, but also understand the significance of the artifact in practice—can be an indicator of participation. Moreover, this access to artifacts and their underlying cultural knowledge can be constrained by the organization of the community. For example, employees in a hierarchical organization may learn to fill a form or complete a task without much opportunity for understanding (Wenger, 1998). Similarly, students in a school Physics class are often “sequestered” from the work of actual physicists (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Russell, 1997). One of Jain’s Physics professors, Casey, made this very point to me when discussing student lab reports, and the lab requirement more broadly. Casey was generally frustrated by the lab requirement, explaining to me that experimental physics “is a very creative process,” but the introductory labs are just busy work. For this reason, Casey “disagree[s] that what [students] do in the lab in Physics [class] has anything to do with what a Physicist does in everyday life” (Interview, March 22, 2017). Dias et al. (1999) have similarly suggested that school and professional writing opportunities are governed by different social and institutional motives. While workplace writing is generally practical, a means to get something done, school-based writing is “epistemic,” providing an opportunity for students to take a stance on an issue or demonstrate knowledge or understanding to a teacher evaluator (p. 44). In school writing, in other words, the learning itself is the goal, often demonstrated through writing.[20] These divergent social motives imply different reading and writing processes. For example, university writing must be produced, read, and graded in a specific time frame, is generally only read by one reader, the teacher-evaluator, and any feedback is often used to justify a grade rather than suggest revision. Conversely, workplace writing often occurs over long periods of time with multiple readers reviewing for specific purposes.

This problem of access to artifacts of practice—and the ways learners in school settings are often sequestered from that practice—has been especially salient for scholars interested in school-based learning and writing development. As Freedman and Adam (2000) explained, theories of situated learning displaced prior notions of learning that assumed a more passive role of the learner (p. 34). For example, Freire's (1970/2000) description of the "banking model" of education is a long-standing critique of how assumptions about passive learning have been applied in classrooms. In his memorable metaphor, Freire suggested that that students in traditional education structures are seen as empty vessels waiting for teachers to "fill" them with content. For Freire, this banking model "isolates" students from the world around them (p. 81) as it "transforms [them] into receiving objects. It attempts to control thinking and action, leads women and men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power" (p. 77). Rather than encourage students to produce new knowledge or engage with their world, the banking model calls on students to reproduce the information they've already been taught.

---

[20] Drawing from activity theory, Russell (1995) made a similar point in his argument against General Writing Skills Instruction (GWSI) in writing courses. Dias et al. (1999) are making an analogous claim about the social motive for university writing, in general.

Audience, purpose, and the writer's role. Many large-scale studies over the last four decades have demonstrated the ways this passive, transmission model of education plays out in writing instruction and assessment. For example, the education researcher Arthur Applebee and his collaborators have focused on the amount of writing students do in schools, the kinds of writing students do, and the audiences they write to. They have consistently found that students in U.S. K-12 settings infrequently write more than one paragraph, even in English courses, and the majority of writing students compose is written for the narrow audience of the "teacher-as-examiner" (Applebee, 1981; Applebee, 1984; Applebee & Langer, 2011). Melzer's (2014) study of over 2,000 assignments across the curriculum in postsecondary settings similarly found that the most common audience was the teacher-as-examiner. The teacher-as-examiner construction helps us to see the ways in which this writing reinforces the passive learner assumption; the student writing is intended for the purpose of evaluation or knowledge-telling, not knowledge-making. For example, Melzer found that the majority of student writing was intended for students to demonstrate that they know the "right" or "correct" answer. Importantly, he did not find a difference between writing opportunities in upper- and lower-level courses. Rather, Melzer argued that contrary to assumptions about changes in writing opportunities as students advance through their undergraduate education, it's "just as likely that students' writing is dominated by informative writing to the teacher-as-examiner throughout their entire college experience" (p. 104; see also Graves, Hyland, & Samuels, 2010).

For Geisler (1995), this emphasis on writing for a teacher-as-examiner audience is emblematic of a broader institutional ideology in which General Education has been construed as the sharing of already-constructed knowledge with the goal of creating a common set of knowledge or values (pp. 116-117). She described two distinct modes of writing that emerge in academic contexts depending on the writer's positionality: while academics generally practice "knowledge-making" writing, exploring new ideas or constructing independent arguments, students are "knowledge-transmitting," showing that they've learned what their teacher has taught them (p. 106). Ivanič's (1998) study of discursive identity connected these differing purposes or social motives with the positioning of a student writer's role or identity. Like Geisler's (1995) "knowledge-making," Ivanič (1998) identified the predominance of the available "student role," assessed on the writer's command of the knowledge or discipline, in contrast to a more practice-oriented "contributor role," which assumes a different social purpose of contributing to ongoing knowledge production. Such distinctions are important for a discussion of writing opportunities because each of these social motives or writing positionings can imply different approaches to the writing task at hand. For example, Ivanič pointed out some of the specific discursive qualities that seemed to be characteristic of the contributor role, including more use of first-person pronouns, unattributed assertions, and shared terminology (p. 301). This body of research helps us to see the epistemic, knowledge-transmitting, student role in writing tasks as a reflection of the banking model and an ideology that positions students as passive learners rather than active contributors.

It is important to note, however, that researchers and teachers have long advocated for more knowledge-transforming approaches to writing instructors. For example, the New London Group (1996) argued for a literacy pedagogy of "design" that emphasized meaning-making opportunities rather than transmitting knowledge, influencing a multimodal turn that has emphasized goal-oriented activity (Shipka, 2005, 2011; Yancey, 2004). The Council of Writing Programs Outcomes Statement (2014) also underscores the social and rhetorical dimensions of writing that should be addressed as part of an FYW curriculum. This disconnect between the disciplinary knowledge and classroom practice is reflected in Applebee and Langer's (2011) disheartening suggestion that even "if notions of good instruction have changed, for a variety of reasons the typical classroom does not provide much of it" (p. 24).

The "school essay" and problems of naming. Perhaps most telling of the ways student writers are sequestered from knowledge-making practice is the predominance of what I'll call here the "school essay," also known as the "academic essay," the "college essay," the "argument essay," a "research paper," or simply an "essay," or "paper" in U.S. education contexts. This typified, "almost templated" form of writing (Melzer, 2014, p. 56) is characterized by a thesis in the opening paragraph that introduces the writer's main claim or idea followed by support for this thesis in succeeding paragraphs before ending with a conclusion that restates the thesis and sometimes extends the thesis or seeks to introduce new questions or connections (Geisler, 1995). The common school essay as described here (often taught and learned in a 5-paragraph template) is defined more by its conventions than its communicative purpose or its rhetorical situation, which means it is best described as a form, not a genre (Soliday, 2011; Tardy, in press). As Tardy (in press) explains, "Genres are forms that *arise as a result of a community's need to carry out specific goals,*" but a school essay is a pre-existing form often applied for a variety of purposes across multiple educational contexts (emphasis in original). For example, the students in this study were asked to write an "essay" or "paper" to analyze a novel in English class, offer an opinion in Public Health, and apply course concepts to a popular song in family studies, among other uses of the form. Because instructors tend to frame school writing as "rhetorically narrow and formulaic as compared to their own scholarly work" (Melzer, 2014, p. 57), Soliday (2011) has suggested that the "college essay" is difficult to produce because students are sequestered from the roles and focus that would typically be associated with the artifacts or genres of a given discipline or community.

The sequestering effects of the 5-paragraph form or the school essay form are compounded by naming practices that allow nearly all writing assignments to be framed as “essays” or “papers” (Johns, 2011). This problem was evident in Graves, Hyland, & Samuels’s (2010) study of 485 undergraduate writing assignments at one Canadian institution that found the majority of assignments characterized as “papers,” regardless of the genre. The use of this vague terminology across content areas can make it difficult for both teachers and students to become aware of genres and genre-related expectations (Johns, 2011; Nowacek, 2011).

Situated learning and “argumentative epistemologies.” Recent research by Newell, VanDerHeide, and Olsen (2014) offers a valuable lens to understand the connection (or lack thereof) between school writing and social practice. The authors explored the “argumentative epistemologies” of 31 high school ELA teachers as they taught argumentative writing. These argumentative epistemologies—"constellations of beliefs about argumentative writing, beliefs about teaching and learning such writing, ways of talking about argumentation, and approaches to teaching and assessment” (p. 97)—can lend insight into the relative transparency of school essays because they illuminate the frameworks teachers are drawing from as they design writing tasks and implement their pedagogies. The researchers identified three main epistemologies from their study: a structural epistemology focused on developing a coherent essay structure, with assessment emphasis on formal features like structure; an ideational epistemology focused on idea development, with an assessment emphasis on using argumentative frameworks; and a social practice epistemology focused on the rhetorical context of the argument, with assessment geared toward rhetorical awareness and sensitivity (p. 97). I bring these categories forward and extend this framework in my discussion of student writing opportunities, focusing on whether the written assignment guidelines, assessment processes, and even classroom activities the focal students experienced seemed to support a structural, ideational, or social practice framework.

My analytical approach. In one of my more productive interviews with university teachers, a communications instructor with a background in both news media and L2 language instruction told me they wanted to help their students feel "better valued in terms of producers" because "there is something to be said for producing communication" (Drew, Interview, December 20, 2016). This struck me as a valuable metaphor: are students consuming knowledge or producing communication? For the rest of this chapter, I will use this language and the language of the scholarship described above to describe the writing opportunities presented to the student writers in this study (see Table 10).

Table 10

Continuum of social motives in writing tasks

Consumer of knowledge	Producer of communication
Knowledge-transmission	Knowledge-transforming (Geisler, 1995)
Epistemic	Practical (Dias et al., 1999)
Student role	Contributor role (Ivanič, 1999)
Banking model (Freire, 1970/2000)	Design (New London Group, 1996)
Structural epistemology	Social practice epistemology (Newell et al. 2014)

Writing Opportunities in High School English

To examine the writing opportunities offered to participating students in high school, I focus primarily on the English Language Arts (ELA) textbook and curriculum used in Ms.

Martin's Senior English class.[21] This College Board-published (2014) textbook, *SpringBoard*, was adopted in the summer of 2014 by the school district and installed as the ELA curriculum for grades 6-12 for that school year, offering so little time to understand the text that the *SpringBoard* "program" became the curriculum. This appears to be a common occurrence in traditionally underserved schools in the age of school accountability. In New York City, for example, Monahan (2015) found that low-performing schools are more likely to buy published textbooks because they are under pressure to improve test scores and cannot wait to see if other alternatives might be better. The adoption of *SpringBoard* in this school district seems to reflect these same conditions, as the text makes its connection to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) prominent. The text was advertised as "fully aligned to college and career readiness standards" (SpringBoard, 2015) on the publisher website, and it includes a full reprint of the Common Core grade-specific standards for reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language in the introductory section of the text (College Board, 2014, pp. xii-xvi). Each student in Ms. Martin's class received a copy of the textbook to use for the school year, and all students also had access to a digital version of the text with workbook-style questions. The year I observed for this study was Ms. Martin's third academic year working with the text, so while she continued to draw from the text and use the major assignments as written, she was also experimenting with other ways of conveying and assessing the material.

---

[21] In the questionnaire offered to 39 students in Ms. Martin's classes as well as in-depth interviews with the focal students, it became clear that the majority of graded writing was happening in ELA classes. Students reported writing arguments and PowerPoints in History class and letters in Spanish class, but otherwise said that they mostly (or "only") wrote in English. This seems to align with the general experience of first-year writers at my institution, who reported in a survey that most of their high school writing was 2-3 pages in length and took place in ELA or Social Studies classes (Kimme Hea, Mapes, Ribero, & Peres, 2015).

Data collection and analysis. I began my inquiry process by closely reading the *SpringBoard* textbook from start to finish. I read each page of the book and copied all of the writing tasks into an Excel spreadsheet, where I then categorized each prompt based on the description offered in the text and my own interpretation. The writing tasks in the text were organized into four named categories of writing tasks: “assignment”, “check your understanding”, “timed writing”, and “writing prompt” (College Board, 2014). As a reader may infer from these task titles, “assignment” represented a more in-depth task, often with an associated rubric. On the other hand, “check your understanding” appeared to be more informal responses to content, sometimes in the form of a question for discussion with peers. “Timed writing” and “writing prompts” seemed to fall in between, with some calling for a more involved, thesis-driven essay, whereas others were more informal (see Table 11). These tasks were not associated with evaluation rubrics, which implies they were to be used more as practice or responses to readings rather than as formal, graded writing. In order to explore the writing opportunities offered—more specifically, the purposes and audiences that might lend insight into the “argumentative epistemology” of the textbook—I removed the “check your understanding” prompts from the dataset, leaving me with 53 total writing tasks in my dataset. In the Excel spreadsheet, I then characterized each task based on the prompt’s named genre, purpose, and audience.

Table 11

Writing tasks in SpringBoard *textbook (College Board, 2014)*

Type of writing prompt (# of tasks in the textbook)	**example(s)**
Assignment (11)	• Write an argumentative essay that clearly identifies your perspective on a controversial issue about which you would like to bring about change (p. 45) • Write an analytical essay applying the Feminist Critical Perspective to a short story (p. 160) • Construct an argumentative essay that defends the critical lens that you feel provides modern society with the most compelling view of literature (p. 230)
Check your understanding (15)	• Discuss Reader Response Criticism with a partner, and create a comprehensive summary statement for each part (p. 13) • Write a short summary of the portion of reading you have completed thus far. Then describe the critical perspectives you have applied to understanding the text (p. 344)
Timed writing prompt (3)	• Write an interpretation of this advertisement using the lens of cultural criticism (p. 59)
Writing prompt (39)	• Write an essay analyzing the rhetorical strategies Kincaid uses to convey her attitude or point of view toward England (p. 44)

Findings: High school writing tasks and a structural epistemology. The student participants seemed to see their writing in high school as teacher- and grade-oriented. In interviews, students often mentioned “analysis” as both a genre and a purpose. Jain described the purpose of analysis as an opportunity to show “how good of a reader I am and how well I can analyze the book or the work that they gave us” (Interview, April 27, 2016). Discussing the final project of her senior year in which students were to apply a critical lens to a graphic novel, Lucy thought the goal of the task was “to show [Ms. Martin] what we learned, and how much we learned, and how much in depth we knew about each lens” (Interview, May 20, 2016). In both of these cases, we see the students seeing their writing as testing opportunities rather than as communicative events. They see themselves as knowledge-telling, not knowledge-making.

A closer look at their textbook and writing tasks seems to support this interpretation. For grades 11 and 12, the Common Core stresses argumentative writing as part of its "college and career readiness" standards, and the *SpringBoard* (College Board, 2014) text certainly reflects this emphasis.[22] As their teacher, Ms. Martin, told me, it felt like "all argument, all the time" (Interview, April 20, 2016). Of 52 tasks labeled as either "writing prompts" or "assignments," nearly all of them appeared to elicit what Geisler (1995) called a "school essay," a text that introduces the thesis in opening paragraph, provides support for this thesis in succeeding paragraphs, and restates and occasionally comments on this thesis in a closing paragraph (p. 104). For example, the first assignment in the textbook asks students to "write an argumentative essay that clearly identifies your perspective on a controversial issue about which you would like to bring about change" (College Board, 2014, p. 45), and the guidelines provide further expectations for an argumentative thesis, the use of supporting details, and a conclusion. As I have discussed elsewhere, this framing of "argument" as an arhetorical, decontextualized five-paragraph essay perpetuates a notion of school writing that emphasizes the structural parts of a successful text deemed successful in large-scale assessments (Jacobson, 2015).

It's important to note that it's not only the writing tasks labeled as "arguments" that take on the school essay expectations of a thesis-driven, argumentative text. Of the 53 tasks identified as writing prompts, assignments, or "timed writing" in the textbook, 39 called for a thesis-driven response (74%). As demonstrated in Table 12, these thesis-driven tasks encompassed multiple purposes and text-types, including the “essay” and “paper.” Johns (2011) has argued that the broad use of these terms can constrain the ways students understand genre and how writing works. For example, if a paper, an argument, and an essay all refer to the same form (usually the 5-paragraph essay) rather than a rhetorically contextualized expectation, then students may begin to see all writing as the same.

---

[22] See DeStigter (2015) for a critical examination of the assumptions behind the prominence of argumentative writing in the CCSS.

Table 12

Purposes and genres of 39 thesis-driven writing tasks as described in the SpringBoard *text (College Board, 2014)*

Purpose		**Genre**	
Analyze	9	Analysis or Analytical essay	5
Argue	8	Argumentative essay	6
Compare/Contrast	4	Essay or “paper”	7
Explain	8	“Interpretive response”	6
Other (including evaluate, identify, express)	9	Other (including documentary, letter, paragraph, photo essay)	4
		No genre named	10

This problem of naming is also evident in the ways the terms used to identify genres seem to be interchangeable in the textbook. For example, the three prompts re-printed in Figure 5 seem to be asking students to use the same processes (applying a literary theory to a text) and create a similar written product (a thesis-driven school essay), but they use different terminology. As these examples demonstrate, the textbook seems to be approaching writing from a “structural epistemology” that focuses more on the parts or elements of a school essay than a rhetorical context (Newell et al, 2014). Furthermore, the writing tasks generally lack any rhetorical context, implying a teacher-as-examiner approach: of the 53 total writing tasks examined for this chapter, only four named any audience (8%). Of those four tasks, three were intended for an audience of "peers," while the other was for a student-selected "target audience." In short, there is little attention to the audience outside of the teacher-as-examiner role.

- Write an **interpretation** of this advertisement using the lens of cultural criticism (p. 59)
- Write an **analytical essay** applying the Feminist Critical Perspective to a short story (p. 160)
- Choose a critical perspective and write a well-organized **essay** explaining how that critical perspective applies to *The Arrival* (College Board, 2014, p. 342)

Figure 5. Comparison of three tasks in the *SpringBoard* textbook (College Board, 2014). Note how these tasks seem to be asking students to use the same processes (applying a literary theory to a text) and create a similar written product (a thesis-driven school essay), but they use different terminology.

Writing at the University

As outlined in Chapter 4, the first-year writing experience for the student participants included FYW and a variety of general education courses. This section explores their writing opportunities across the first-year experience before discussing one individual case study in FYW and one in general education in which Jain and Lucy seemed to have clear opportunities to take on contributor roles.

Data collection and analysis. During each of my monthly interviews with student participants I asked about individual writing tasks in terms of their purpose, audience, and genre (see Appendix A). I began this analysis by compiling all of the responses I had coded as "Writing Purpose" into one document. I then extracted the terminology used by students to describe the purposes of writing tasks (i.e., to analyze, to understand, to persuade) they had named in their first year of college study. This *in vivo* approach drawing from student language echoes transfer-related studies of genre and discourse knowledge that have emphasized the importance of drawing from students' shared language as they enter new writing situations (Hannah & Saidy, 2014; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011). I then organized the student-named purposes into categories and themes. I also reviewed 34 college writing tasks (17 from FYW and 17 from general education) shared with me by the students and their teachers and used the same categories to see how student naming lined up with the instructors' written expectations in the prompts.

Findings: College writing tasks and knowledge-telling. The majority of writing purposes named by the student participants were epistemic, opportunities for students to demonstrate what they know or have learned (see Table 13). As I grouped these student-named purposes, I noticed what seemed to be two kinds of epistemic purposes. The first, "writer-oriented," were purposes that focused explicitly on the writer's learning as the main purpose. For example, Jain said the purpose of a writing task in a general education course was "to actually express that we understand the theories and we're learning" (Interview, September 28, 2016) and Hector said one of his tasks was intended "to get a better understanding of animals (Interview,

Table 13

Purposes named by students to describe their writing tasks in the first year

Writer-oriented	School-oriented	Action-oriented
to understand	"to see if we're learning"	prevent people from making mistakes
to express	showing the difference	"to unstigmatize the media"
to know	compare different sides	to spread the word
to "see different views"	to use the theories	to educate people/teach the public
to think more about	to analyze	
to see how it correlates	to summarize	
reflecting		

October 26, 2016). In both of these cases, the student writers are seeing the purpose as writer- or learner-focused.

The other kind of epistemic purpose identified by student participants was more teacher- or school-oriented, in which students identified an occasion to write based on practicing something taught or showing that they could do something asked of them. For example, Lucy explained that in one assignment the purpose was "to show [the teacher] how we were able to understand one specific concept that they taught in class, and understand the outside source" (Interview, April 5, 2017) and Hercules explained the purpose of one assignment by saying it was "to show that we've learned in class" (Interview, December 15, 2016). These examples both indicate a teacher-as-examiner role, in which the student is writing to demonstrate learned knowledge, not to create new knowledge or communicate an idea. In fact, "to show" and "to analyze" were the two most frequent purposes named by students. Less frequent were more pragmatic or knowledge-making purposes, what I'm calling "action-oriented" here. Only two of the student writers named action-oriented purposes (and each for only one task). These cases will be described in more detail below.

My *in vivo* coding was corroborated by a review of the writing assignments shared with me by students, which predominantly focused on knowledge-telling and decontextualized writing. Nearly 60% of the assignments (20 of 34) were named analysis, essay, or paper (or a modification such as analytical essay), with no other descriptor of genre, indicating a school essay. Common terms used in writing tasks appear to align with the students' view of the epistemic role of writing tasks, including descriptors like "demonstrate," "explain," and "analyze" that serve as both means and ends of the assignment. On the surface, these terms do not indicate knowledge-telling in and of themselves. However, in these assignments these descriptors were the stated goals of the task and were more often than not unconnected to an audience. For example, an FYW rhetorical analysis assignment tells students that the goal is to "demonstrate your ability to conduct a particular type of analysis." This task as designed clearly limits potential modes of participation by focusing on the examination rather than the communicative event. Furthermore, only three of 17 reviewed general education tasks mentioned any audience at all; one of those was the task named by Lucy and discussed further below. Of 17 FYW assignments reviewed, nine named an audience in the assignment guidelines. However, these audiences included a "general academic audience," or asked the student to identify their own audience for an "Argument" paper.

Discussion: Knowledge-Telling in High School and College

As Tables 11-13 show, the writing opportunities offered to the four students in this study were relatively similar in high school and the first year of college from a social practice perspective. In fact, my findings were consistent with decades of research showing the majority of school-based writing is geared toward a teacher-as-examiner (Applebee, 1981; Applebee & Langer, 2011; Melzer, 2014). The students saw themselves in the "student role" (Ivanič, 1998), "showing" their instructors what they've learned rather than communicating an idea or constructing new knowledge. With few exceptions, the writing opportunities seemed to reflect a "structural" epistemology that valued the necessary parts of a text (i.e., thesis, introduction, conclusion, integrating quotes), leading to an emphasis on correctness rather than rhetorical awareness (Newell et al., 2014). This is compounded by the common writing task names like "argument," "essay," and "paper" that seem to indicate a decontextualized school-based essay, perhaps inhibiting the growing genre awareness of student writers (Johns, 2011).

Analysis as a decontextualized task. The focus on “analysis” in student-talk and their writing opportunities seems important for this conversation. The student participants in this study often named analysis or “analyzing” as the purpose or genre of the writing they were completing, but at the same time struggled to explain the purpose of analyzing outside of the examination. When I asked Jain about his genre analysis assignment in FYW, for example, he responded, “It's like analyzing a book, like, why would you do it?” (Interview, December 13, 2016). When prodded, Jain explained that his teachers in high school often asked him to analyze a story or characters for meaning or symbolic importance, but never provided a reason beyond the task at hand. When we looked retrospectively at an analysis assignment from high school, Jain’s response reflected this approach as he described the purpose of analysis: “In general it’s just to see if I understand what the reading, the work, is trying to say…trying to express” (Interview, August 24, 2016). Here Jain is clearly connecting analysis to examination: for this task, he sees analysis as a way to report back to the teacher what she already knows about the story. When pressed, Jain was able to describe some possibilities for analysis in his life, as demonstrated in the following excerpt:

> **Brad**: So why would you analyze a book? Why would you analyze anything?
>
> **Jain**: [sigh] Anything that's not my life doesn't really matter [laughs].
>
> **Brad**: Well why would you analyze your life?
>
> **Jain**: 'Cause it's my life, so like I need to like know what I'm doing and what I need to do. [laughs]
>
> **Brad**: So when you say, "analyze my life," like what do you mean by analyzing your life? Like what are you doing when you're analyzing your life?

> **Jain**: Like from when I was born what have I done? And like what do I regret? What should I do differently? That's analyzing. I'm trying to become better. (Interview, December 13, 2016)

It's instructive in this last utterance that Jain finds a purpose for his self-analysis, saying, "I'm trying to become better." At the same time, he struggles to locate a purpose beyond analysis itself in his school writing.

Jain's uncertainty about the potential purposes of analytical writing in school was shared by the other student participants in this study. Describing a high school literary analysis task, Lucy said, "I just feel like she really wanted us to show her what we learned, and how much we learned, and how much in depth we knew about each lens" (Interview, May 20, 2016). Talking about the same high school task, Hector said, "The goal of that writing? To make you understand? I don't know." He continued, "It's stuff we need to learn. Like I don't know… like they're given stuff to teach at grade level, so we have to know that before we graduate" (Interview, May 4, 2016). In these excerpts, Jain, Lucy, and Hector seem to be getting at the heart of the sequestering effects of school genres. In "real-life" situations, there are many different genres and purposes of writing that utilize analysis. A marketing executive might analyze survey data in order to determine a product rollout. A History professor might analyze primary documents to investigate the role women played in the development of the U.S. Constitution. In the process of writing this chapter, I am analyzing interview transcripts and assignment sheets in order to describe the writing opportunities of these students. But in all of these cases, analysis is the means to an end, not the end in itself.

Limited audiences and purposes. The student writing opportunities and the writing task epistemologies described here thus seem to align with Applebee and Langer's (2011) research on writing in middle and high school. They explained that the typical classroom writing assignments haven't changed much even though notions of good writing instruction have evolved in the last 30 years: the teacher-as-examiner remains the most common audience and writing assignments are "not providing students with opportunities to use composing as a way to think through the issues, to show the depth or breadth of their knowledge, or to go beyond what they know in making connections and raising new issues" (p. 16). They write that even when teachers have knowledge about what makes for good writing instruction, they often feel pressured to stick with more traditional approaches (see also Ruecker, 2014). Ms. Martin seemed to express a similar sentiment, describing how she used to use school writing for more social and rhetorical purposes in her high school ELA classes before the mandated curriculum. She explained:

> We wrote letters to the editor, we wrote for grants because we needed money to do a project. If we needed to convince the school board or somebody… it became a whole reading-writing-communication-speech kind of— it all worked together so people were aware of that writing could make a change. I loved it because that's where kids could see a result, they could see how what they were doing made an impact or didn't make an impact and why through activism. Becoming a youth activist." (Interview, April 20, 2016)

What strikes me about this quote is not just the clear contrast between this approach and the textbook approach, but in the way that Ms. Martin ascribes a role (activist) to specific genres (letters, grants) that have specific purposes and hold potential to "make a change." Ms. Martin is demonstrating the connections between genre, social practice, and social motive, and calling for a writing pedagogy that positions students as contributors or producers of communication in a public setting with a real audience. I do not interpret Ms. Martin's frustration about the argument-driven curriculum or her desire for a more social approach to mean that there is no value in argumentative writing. Similarly, I am not arguing against any value in demonstrating learning to a teacher, nor am I suggesting that *all* assigned writing needs to have “action-oriented” purposes. However, it seems clear that for the four students in this study, writing in high school and the first-year of college was primarily teacher-focused, limiting their opportunities to see themselves as contributors or knowledge or producers of communication.

I could stop here and lament the state of writing instruction and the limited opportunities offered to the participating students who deserve and desire opportunities to develop as writers and learners in the most effective possible educational contexts. And while this would be partially true, it would not tell the whole story, as not all writing opportunities were described in this way. In a few cases, the students in this study talked glowingly about their writing opportunities and the ways in which their instructors helped them to succeed as writers in new writing situations. As I make an effort to highlight the ways in which innovation is happening in classrooms, I want to draw from two brief case studies to point to the ways in which teachers in FYW and general education created the kinds of rich, discursive contexts that allowed for a more practice-based writing experience. First, I offer a brief discussion of learning in practice to frame the student writing experiences.

Case Studies: Deep(er) Participation and Writing in Practice

Because learning happens in practice, situated learning theorists have long argued that access to those practices and to the members of the communities of those practices is the key to learning (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2014). However, how that learning happens and what role more advanced members play has led to differing applications of these theories in school settings.

For Lave and Wenger (1991), learning happens in the course of participating in the practices of a community. Their influential theory of situated learning based on “legitimate peripheral participation” described multiple forms of apprenticeship and cultural learning. According to these researchers, learning in practice is about more than just completing a task or learning a skill, and cannot be learned solely from a textbook. By participating in the practices of the community, they argued, a newcomer can learn not only the technologies of that practice, but also who is involved, what they do, and how people walk, talk, dress, work, and conduct their lives (p. 95). As such, learning within a community is a process toward “full participation,” which implies a certain maturity in practice, including the ability to reproduce the community of practice and eventually replace the old-timers in the field (p. 57). While Lave and Wenger (1991) were clear that their theory was *not* a theory of schooling, their work—and Wenger’s (1998) elaboration of “communities of practice”—has been taken up by scholars and practitioners in fields from business administration to education. For example, scholars in Composition and Rhetoric and related fields have drawn from this practice-based understanding of learning to explore academic writing development, often describing challenges student writers face reconciling their multiple identities as they negotiate new contexts (Berkenkotter, Huckin, & Ackerman, 1988; Casanave, 2002; Prior, 1998; Roozen, 2009).

In Prior’s (1998) longitudinal study of L2 graduate students, he drew from Lave and Wenger (1991) to identify different modes of participation in disciplinary settings. Two M.A. students, Mai and Teresa, were achieving the same graduate credential but seemed to be developing along different trajectories in relation to the practice, exemplified in their approach to their thesis work. For example, Mai’s literature search included a proximal scan of a library stack and she revised her final text based upon explicit recommendations by her committee. In contrast, Teresa's search for literature included consultation with others and she fine-tuned her thesis over the course of three months with a professor and another graduate student, reflecting a deeper level of social engagement that indicated movement toward full participation in the disciplinary community. From the year-long case studies of Mai, Teresa, and others, Prior (1998) theorized three modes of participation that may be afforded to or created by participants in a school-based learning setting:

- *Passing* refers to the institutional definition of learning in terms of programmatic requirements, grades, and certifications (Prior, 1998, p. 101). This institutionally-sanctioned participation is often what "counts" as students seek employment or professional advancement. For this reason, passing may be the dominant mode of participation for many students. The Education historian David Labaree (1997) has similarly argued that the emphasis on credentials is a disincentive for "real" learning, as schooling becomes an accumulation of things (i.e., grades, credits, diplomas, etc.) prized for their exchange value rather than the use value associated with learning (p. 67). Both Labaree (1997) and Prior (1998) emphasize the ways in which passing or "credentialism" is socially constructed and influences the actions of students, teachers, and institutions.
- *Procedural display* is described as the collective and individual ability to participate in a specific cultural event (like a class discussion) or literate event (Prior, 1998, p. 102). According to Prior, procedural display is a joint activity coordinated among all involved that can open up different opportunities for learning, but it can also be an end in itself in some classroom contexts. For example, he considers Mai's ability to

complete the Master's thesis to be a limited mode of participation based on passing and procedural display (p. 132).

- *Deep participation* relates to Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of "centripetal participation," which represents forms of participation that can lead to full participation. For Prior (1998), deep participation describes "centripetal participation marked by rich access, to, and engagement in, practices" (p. 103). This mode of participation can be visible in the role(s) a learner takes on, their relationships to others, or their appropriation of certain practices. Teresa's richer appropriation of the thesis displayed some evidence of deep participation through her strong relationships to others in the community of practice and engagement with the research practices of the discipline.

Because we know that literate development requires access to literate communities (Gee, 2008; Hernandez-Zamora, 2010; Tardy, 2009), it is important to highlight Prior's (1998) description of these modes of participation as "ascending levels of *access to* and engagement in disciplinary activity" (p. 100, my emphasis). If students do not have access to the practices or members of a community, for example, then they will not be afforded opportunities for deep participation.[23]

---

[23] While I am limiting my discussion of access to school contexts, I do recognize that access to literate communities outside of school also influences writing development. There is a large body of research documenting the ways in which a student's home culture and language use may influence their appropriation of school discourses (Delpit, 2006; Gee, 1991; Gee, 2008; Heath, 1983). For this reason, this discussion of access in school-based settings gains salience for students from historically underrepresented populations. At the same time, I am not advocating for an uncritical acceptance of the status quo or of dominant writing conventions (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Fox, 1999; Luke, 1996). I will touch on these themes in greater detail at the end of this chapter and in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

While Prior's (1998) adaptation of Lave and Wenger (1991) assumes centripetal movement towards full participation in the community of practice (such as a disciplinary community), many school writing and learning contexts are not as neatly aligned with the practices of a community as writing an M.A. thesis. Moreover, many students in school situations will not seek full participation in the field or discipline represented by the class they are taking. U.S. students are raised in an educational and economic system that encourages efficiency and "time to degree," making passing or credentialism seem to be the most logical—and valuable—option (Blum, 2016; Labaree, 1997). Moreover, in U.S. postsecondary settings the early undergraduate years are marked by general education which is in direct conflict with the specialization that might be required for centripetal participation. The differing social motives of school-based and academic or workplace writing—such as the institutional grading requirements and the epistemic or learning-focused motive of writing in school situations—have led some scholars to question whether and how much a student can truly participate in the practices of a literate community while in the school setting, or even if they'd want to (Carroll, 2002; Dias et al., 1999).

Undergraduate university learning contexts also differ from workplace or even graduate study contexts because of the relationships between learners and more advanced participants. As Freedman and Adam (2000) helpfully explained, newcomers and old-timers in a workplace setting typically work together on the same tasks with the same ends and share an understanding that the newcomers will eventually take over from the old-timers. By contrast, in a classroom setting the instructor creates the writing opportunity that students produce in order to be evaluated and then move on to the next course, especially in general education settings in which the student is not expected to become a member of the disciplinary community. Due to these social and institutional realities, Freedman and Adam argued that an apprenticeship model as described by Lave and Wenger (1991) could not be adopted in school. Instead, they drew from Rogoff's (1990) notion of "guided participation" to describe "facilitated performance" as a more appropriate way to understand situated writing in university contexts. Guided participation referred to the ways in which middle-class caregivers create a learning process geared to their child's cognitive development; facilitated performance similarly offers an analytical frame for understanding the ways in which an instructor orients classroom activity "entirely to the learner and to the learner's learning" (Freedman & Adam, 2000, p. 38). While this kind of participation clearly differs from the apprenticeship model, Freedman and Adam suggested that instructors can construct a situated learning environment through scaffolding and the development of an appropriate discursive context.

Casanave (2002) seemed to acknowledge this possibility when she suggested that a class can become a "mini-community of practice" (p. 75). Writing about two advanced undergraduate English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses in Japan, Casanave suggested that even though students were not engaged in "authentic activity," they were also not simply "absorbing bodies of codified knowledge or learning only the formal mechanics of writing" (p. 77). The instructors, both academic writers themselves, used class activities to emphasize the reading and writing strategies that they utilized in their own practice, providing an example of "facilitated performance" (Freedman & Adam, 2000). Both instructors wanted students to participate in knowledge construction, so they used class time to model reading published work as a process of interacting with texts, authors, and ideas, and one instructor assigned an ethnographic fieldwork task for students to engage in some of the research and writing processes of expert academic writers (Casanave, 2002). Even though the students were being graded, they had to engage "in one sense or another as novice academic writers," investing in reading, discussion, writing, and research activities in social interaction with peers and their instructors (p. 75).

I am persuaded by Casanave's (2002) argument, and I draw on this research and Prior's (1998) to explore the two case studies that follow. Taken as a whole, these studies remind us of a few important principles for instructional design when considering the situated nature of writing: First, learning happens through "doing," not by receiving knowledge; learning processes are social with instructors and students collaborating, to some extent, to help learners do something at the end they were unable to do before; and learners do not *fully* participate, which provides the space for learning (Freedman & Adam, 2000. p. 34). This chapter draws from these principles to explore school-based writing opportunities in the participating students' high school and first year experiences (see Figure 6).

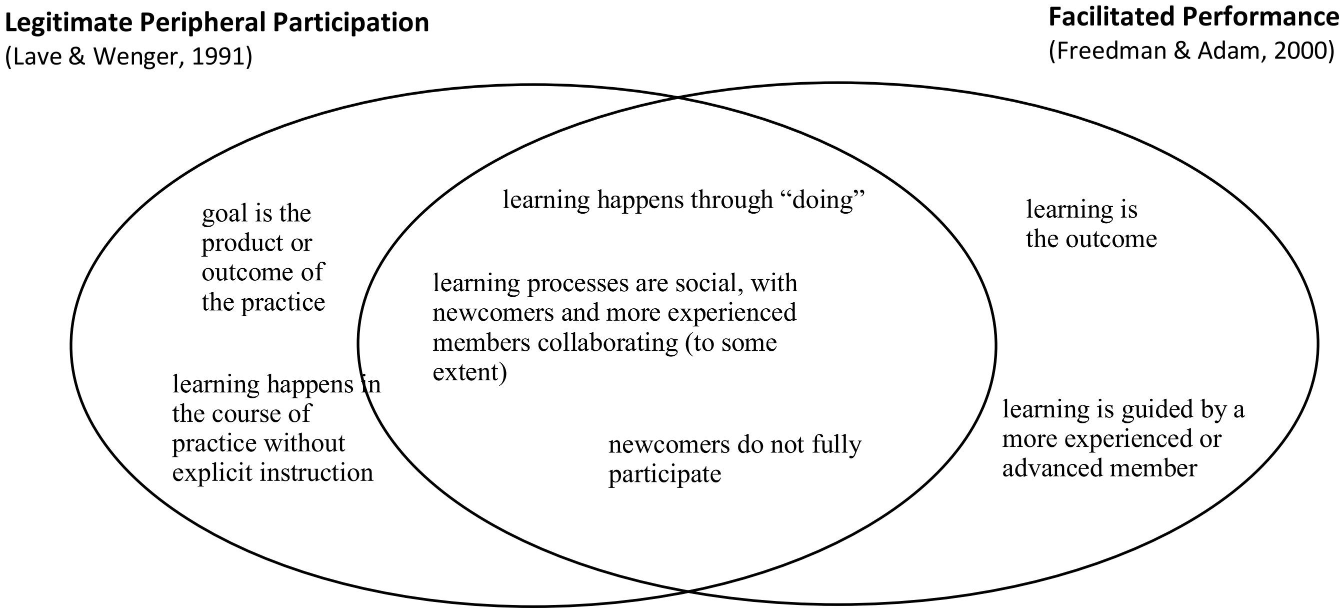

Legitimate Peripheral Participation
(Lave & Wenger, 1991)
Facilitated Performance
(Freedman & Adam, 2000)
goal is the product or outcome of the practice
learning happens in the course of practice without explicit instruction
learning happens through "doing"
learning processes are social, with newcomers and more experienced members collaborating (to some extent)
newcomers do not fully participate
learning is the outcome
learning is guided by a more experienced or advanced member

Figure 6. Comparison of situated learning theories

Jain: "Felt Like Being a Journalist" in FYW

This chapter began with a brief description of Jain's first writing assignment in FYW. The "writing to reflect" assignment was the first in a four-assignment sequence introduced as part of a pilot FYW curriculum revised to meet new outcomes focused on a more socially situated understanding of writing (see Chapter 4 for more about these curricular changes). His instructor, Carter, a second-year M.A. student in Creative Writing, had taught the course once before, and he used the assignment guidelines the writing program shared with all new GTAs.[24] In an interview discussion, Jain explained his interpretation of the task like this:

> The assignment was to go to an event, and I chose a drag race here. We could choose whatever event we wanted and just look at it, like observe everything… like focus on the people instead of the event… For my example, instead of the race look at the people and like what kind of people were they, who they were, like, just observe them… [then] in the essay try to use my observations to explain the event in a critical perspective. (Interview, September 28, 2016).

In this description of the writing task Jain touches on his goal ("explain the event in a critical perspective") and his research process ("observe everything").

In fact, it was this research process that appeared to be most meaningful to Jain as he discussed the project. On multiple occasions in our conversations, Jain talked about specific activities he did during class that benefited the project such as a class activity observing the classroom space and another class session spent observing the people walking on the campus mall. His instructor told me that this observing activity was modeled during GTA training prior to the start of the semester. In our interview, Carter explained:

---

[24] Carter was introduced to the curriculum and assignment sequence as part of the cohort of new GTAs in fall of 2015. I also taught this curriculum as an "experienced" GTA to give feedback on the pilot curriculum, so I am familiar with the materials provided by our writing program.

> [the activity was] a way of getting [students] to realize, 'Oh, I noticed 20% of these things before. I've been in this room 10 times, how have I not realized that the shutters don't work? Or that this particular window has this weird blue stain between the panes of glass?' (Interview, November 7, 2016)

Carter saw these activities as a way to get students ready for their event observation, so they could begin to "connect their emotions to their observations." Jain seemed to agree about the utility of these activities. Looking back on the assignment at the end of the semester, Jain saw these activities as helpful to "open [his] mind a little bit more and think of things more critically," and to change his "mindset" when he attended the event (Interview, December 13, 2016). Jain noted a difference with the kinds of writing assignments he was used to from high school, saying, "*I was being more like a journalist*, kind of, in some way, so I was gathering information from like an actual event, actual people and stuff. *It felt like being a journalist*" (Interview, December 13, 2016, my emphasis).

Here Jain is identifying himself as participating in a recognizable practice "like a journalist." Like the teaching and learning experience described in Casanave's (2002) study, the classroom activities Jain experienced served as an opportunity for guided participation in a "mini-community of practice" (p. 75). Guided by the structure set up by his instructor, Jain took on a mode of observation and analysis that led him to see his writing task as part of a broader ecosystem of writing, in which he imagined this writing task as a magazine article. In multiple interviews, he compared this writing task to his high school writing opportunities. Jain said:

> I just think of it as an *article* or something because like my previous essays [in high school] I wouldn't be able to put it into a magazine, you know what I mean? Like the essays were just analyzing a book and, you know, just criticizing the book, but like they [the teachers] give us what to criticize, you know? They give us a prompt. But for this essay it was more like there was really no prompt... You just go to an event and do an essay about it. (Interview, September 23, 2016, my emphasis)

In this comparison, Jain highlights the task design and implies a difference between a teacher-oriented prompt that positions him as a student and one that's open to his own interests and interpretation, positioning him in more of a contributor role.

This contributor role also emerged in our discussions of genre, as Jain referred to this task as either an "article" or a "review," in both cases mentioning how they might be found and read in a magazine. This assignment was one of only two in which Jain was able to imagine writing for an audience outside his teacher; the other was a "profile" he wrote in the same FYW class. Perhaps because this writing task wasn't "typical writing I used to do" (Interview, December 12, 2016), Jain took some risks in his writing that reflected the expectations of the genre and task. Jain's father is a long-time car mechanic and earns a living buying cars at auction and refurbishing them for private sale, and it seems that Jain drew from that knowledge as he reflected on his observations. He wrote about observing a friend work on cars in the drag race pit, and concluded the paragraph by writing, "Seeing the huge trailers, I also wondered how much money one of those cost and if it was worth buying one instead of just using a simple flatbed car hauler to transport the car." In this example he also acknowledged his own perspective and participation in the event through the use of the personal pronoun *I*, which seems to be an appropriate rhetorical strategy for this genre. His instructor, Carter, agreed, writing brackets around this sentence with a comment in the margin: “Smart observation—You’re doing a thorough job personifying a reporter, explaining everything you say and attempting to explain what it all means.”

This comment from Carter situates their assessment practices as aligned with the “social practice epistemology” described by Newell et al. (2014). Rather than identifying the “parts” of the writing (“structural”) or even the relationships among ideas (“ideational”), Carter is responding to the ways Jain is writing to a rhetorical context, including the kinds of evidence he uses and the ways he presents that evidence. While this task was clearly a school-based assignment with the goal of learning and the institutional requirement of a grade, the task design and the instructor’s approach to teaching and assessment created an opportunity for Jain to see the writing as social and context-informed. While this may not be “deep participation” in Prior’s (1998) terminology—after all, Jain is not training to become a journalist, nor was he learning from or with other journalists—it does include some aspects of learning in practice, from the practice-based process to the instructor’s guided participation. In this “facilitated performance” (Freedman & Adam, 2000), Jain was offered an opportunity to learn about the ways writing works in different situations by experiencing the practices of a more journalistic approach to writing. Moreover, because he was the one who attended the event, interpreted his observations, and wrote a “review” or “article” that he could imagine being found in a magazine, Jain was positioned more as a producer of communication than as a student under examination.

Lucy: “Activist” in a New Media Project

In her second semester, Lucy enrolled in a general education course focused on sex and AIDS from a public health perspective. During the semester when this data was collected, Lucy’s instructor, Blake, introduced a “New Media Project” as the final project in the course. For this task, students were to create a digital project educating an online audience on a topic of their choosing related to the course material. The assignment was loosely designed in terms of both content and formatting by design. As Blake explained in an interview, evaluation would not focus on whether or not the project met formal expectations, but on whether the content included was understandable to an intended audience. Blake continued,

> That's the big difference is that this one is for an audience. If they're writing stuff that's really obscure to people, and it's not coming across, that's a problem. But if it's like, "Oh, you've clarified a point that people are probably confused about," that's what I'm hoping for here. (Interview, January 30, 2017)

As this quote demonstrates, Blake sought to create a real-life situation for the students to write to, and the task also clearly positioned the students as educators teaching their audience about the topic. Blake's evaluation rubric for the new media project reflected this audience-oriented goal by incorporating criteria to assess not only the quality of information and use of sources and citations, but also the choice of medium and quality of presentation in terms of that medium. In Newell et al.'s (2014) terms, Blake seemed to be working from a "social practice epistemology."

Lucy also seemed to appropriate this practice-based view of the project. Lucy said she wanted to "destigmatize" people with HIV/AIDS so she worked with a few peers to create an Instagram page. When asked in an interview, she described the purpose of the project as follows:

> I feel like 'cause it's accessible for everyone, it's kind of *to spread the word a little bit*. Not promote sex and AIDS, but show the real side of it, and how media stigmatizes it a certain way. So I feel like *our job is to unstigmatize the media* a little bit. 'Cause we've been learning about how most of the HIV and AIDS patients aren't scared of the sickness, but they're more scared of discrimination that goes behind it, and that's usually media

> influenced. So it'll be pretty cool. Unstigmatizing the media. (Interview, April 4, 2017, my emphasis)

In this excerpt, Lucy makes the connection between the task and her goals. Because she is making an Instagram page, she recognizes that it should be “accessible” for a real audience, and because it’s accessible for everyone, the goal is to communicate something to a broader audience, to “spread the word.” In a later interview after she completed the project, Lucy expanded on this idea, identifying a particular social purpose:

> I felt like our goal was to kind of educate people that stigma is one of the main things that people with AIDS and HIV deal with besides the disease itself. [The page is] to promote them, not to stigmatize them, in a way. So I felt like if someone came and looked at my Instagram page…what I wanted them to take away from it was just to be a little bit more caring and open-minded about people who deal with this disease. (Interview, May 3, 2017)

Lucy’s description of her project thus reflects an action-oriented or pragmatic goal. She had visited similar social media pages of groups trying to raise awareness about issues, and she saw herself aligned with those writers. “I feel like I was trying to be like a public voice,” Lucy told me in an interview. “Like an activist. That's what I was trying to be” (Interview, May 3, 2017).

When we consider Lucy’s experience in terms of potential goals and roles available to her, it becomes clear that the new media project served as a knowledge-making opportunity in which she felt like a contributor. In fact, Lucy recognized this herself when talking about the project. She called it “one of the most interesting projects” she completed in her first year. She and her group “took in all this information, and now we're trying to teach the public about it” (Interview, May 3, 2017). This writing task provided Lucy with an approximation of a real-life situation for her writing, one that allowed her to see a purpose beyond pleasing the teacher and to *use* her knowledge in new ways as she met the learning outcomes of the course.

Discussion: Modes of Participation in Lower-Division University Writing

The challenge of engaging student writers in communities of practice—especially in the first year—has been well-documented in critiques of FYW and general education (Adler-Kassner, Koshnick, & Majewski, 2012; Russell, 1995; Wardle, 2009). The structural epistemology and predominance of the "school essay" or "academic essay" that dominated the school-based writing opportunities in this study showed the limited modes of participation available to the student participants. In Prior's (1998) terms, we might say their modes of participation were mostly limited to "passing" and some level of "procedural display."

Figure 7 presents a "writing opportunities matrix" that can help us to visualize the kinds of writing opportunities provided to the participating students in this study. The x-axis demonstrates a continuum from decontextualized writing tasks like the ELA literary analyses to more participatory, situated activities such as Lucy's Instagram project and Jain's FYW journalistic text. These tasks were characterized by opportunities in which the student writers could engage in the activities of writers in that field or profession. Echoing Geisler's (1995) distinction between "knowledge-transmission" and "knowledge making," the y-axis shows a continuum from knowledge-telling to knowledge-making opportunities. The distinction between knowledge-telling and knowledge-making relates to how much the student writers were provided opportunities to develop and share new knowledge or use learned knowledge in novel ways. In short, a knowledge-telling writing task calls on students to demonstrate their knowledge to the teacher as examiner as opposed to the knowledge-making writing associated with the culture of the academy and many professions (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Geisler, 1995).

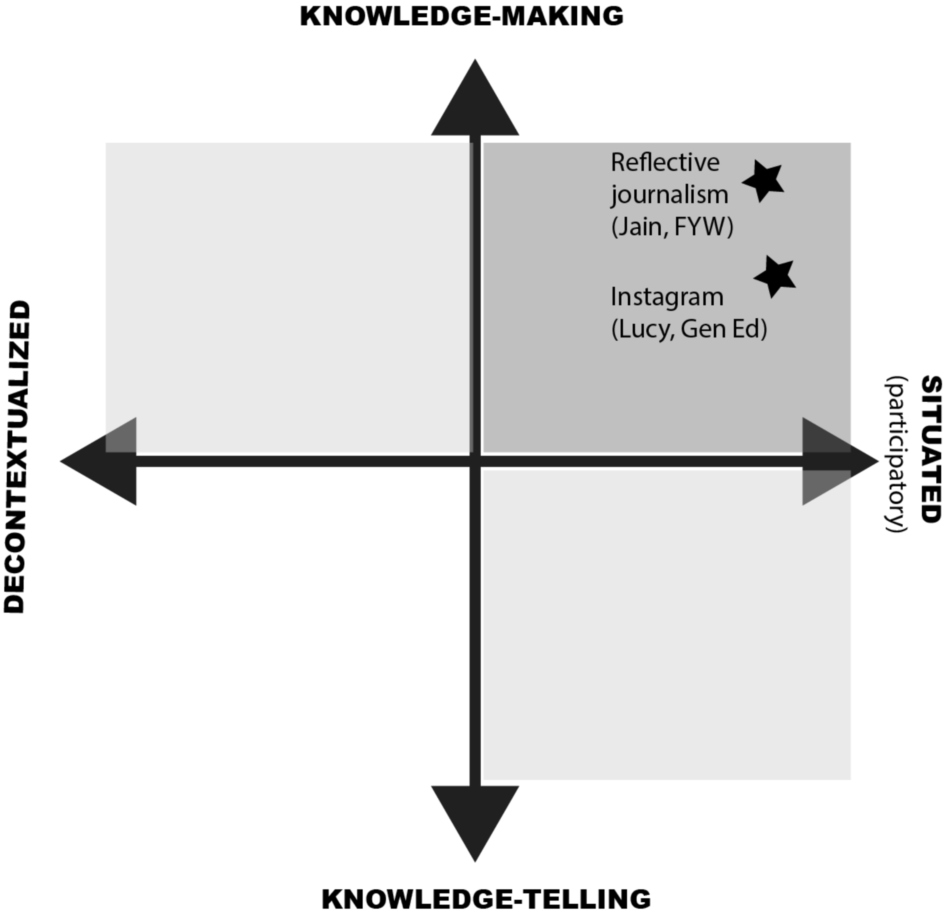

KNOWLEDGE-MAKING
Reflective journalism (Jain, FYW)
Instagram (Lucy, Gen Ed)
DECONTEXTUALIZED
SITUATED (participatory)
KNOWLEDGE-TELLING

Figure 7. Writing opportunities matrix

The two case studies described in this chapter help us to see the ways that school-based writing tasks can be opportunities for students to take on a contributor or knowledge-making role and engage in some forms of deep(er) participation. In these cases—both of which are represented in the darkened quartile indicating a participatory, knowledge-making opportunity—Jain and Lucy were writing with clear purposes that reflected a sense of genre and audience, indicating a "social practice" (Newell et al., 2014) approach to incorporating writing. In this section I want to highlight what I see as some of the similarities in the approaches that led to rich, contextualized writing opportunities, and point to a few differences that can lend insight into the variety of ways such teaching and learning experiences can be achieved.

Rich discursive contexts. Freedman (1995) has suggested that some level of situated learning can be achieved when the instructor frames the discursive context of the class such that students are exposed to contextualized target texts and have active, collaborative learning environments (p. 128). Both Jain and Lucy's experiences seemed to reflect such writing opportunities. For example, Jain's discussion of the class activities demonstrated an active learning environment, and Lucy's Instagram page was a collaborative project, in which she and her group members together created the social media page.

Moreover, both discursive contexts presented contextualized target texts these student writers drew from as they sought to understand and produce in these genres. Jain's instructor shared samples of "reflective writing," and Jain was particularly influenced by David Foster Wallace's (2004) "Consider the Lobster," an article published in *Gourmet* magazine. As Jain explained it to me, Wallace brought a "radical view to the event," moving beyond simply reporting on the event and "connect[ing] it to something like nobody else would think about, like the lobster's feeling when it's being cooked" (Interview, September 28, 2016). Jain drew from this sample and a few others to understand what mattered and to guide his process, saying, "I tried to do what they did and just observe the people and see what they were doing, and then um and then see like with those observations where they went, you know?" (Interview, September 28, 2016). He told me he tried to read the Wallace article thinking about "what publishers were looking when they went to the editor" (Interview, September 28, 2016). This line of thinking led him to challenge his prior understanding of what counts as a thesis statement. At the end of his first paragraph, Jain wrote, "I wondered to myself why anyone would spend their Friday night to come see amateurs drive a race in hopes of crossing the finish line in less than 12 seconds, and why would someone invest thousands of dollars and man hours on the car." He said he was trying to leave the reader "in awe…to make the audience wonder" like he saw in the examples (Interview, December 13, 2016).

Lucy had a similarly rich discursive context to draw from. Her instructor shared two social media pages—one Tumblr and one Instagram—advocating for social issues, and Lucy, an avid Twitter user, already followed some organizations "fighting for women's choice and reproductive health and stuff like that." She knew that these social media accounts were about educating their readers, providing her a distinct discursive identity: "I was trying to be a public voice. Like an activist." (Interview, May 3, 2017). As Lucy's experience demonstrates, the rich discursive context provided by the instructor offered her a contributor role and an opportunity to write as the *kind* of person who might take on this task.

Assessment within a social practice perspective. While lower-division undergraduate writing opportunities may only be able to strive for a modicum of authentic activity in a "mini-community of practice" (Casanave, 2002), the two case studies demonstrate the ways that an assessment process based within a social practice epistemology can support student writers. Both instructors seemed to view assessment as related to the discursive context they created, providing a rhetorically-situated understanding of success. In the rubric for Lucy's writing task, her instructor Blake made clear the assessment of organization and coherence was framed in relation to the new media genres students would be working with. Carter's feedback referencing the ways Jain was "personifying" a particular discursive identity similarly provided a contextualized understanding of what counts as "good" writing for this task, distancing this writing opportunity from a more typical school essay.

Summary and Implications

This chapter has explored the writing opportunities and modes of participation available to the four focal students in high school English Language Arts (ELA), First-Year Writing (FYW), and general education classes. The dominant focus on decontextualized "school essays" in both high school and the first year of college—regardless of the topic, purpose, discipline, content, or even the named genre—seemed to sequester student writers from the ways of thinking, being, and acting that could help them begin to see writing as a situated practice and to see themselves as contributors to knowledge or as producers of communication. Instead, the writing opportunities provided remain epistemic, decontextualized, written to a teacher-as-examiner audience, and positioned the student writers as consumers of knowledge. Their participation was predominantly characterized by "passing" (Prior, 1998), where both the students and instructors focused on "answering the prompt" and moving on to the next class, although in the two case studies we did see some forms of deeper participation in teaching and learning contexts characterized by "facilitated performance" (Freedman & Adam, 2000). I close this chapter with a few observations and implications.

Writing Opportunities and What Counts as "Good Writing"

My discussions with students about what counts as "good writing" frequently reflected the structural epistemology that characterized their writing opportunities. The students seemed to experience reading and writing as a display of skills, reflecting what Collins (1996) called the ideology of "textualism" frequently found in schools. According to Collins, this ideology can lead to decontextualized assessment of error and prescriptivism (Collins, 1996, p. 205). When I talked to the students about examples of "good writing," they often talked about a thesis, structure, or "flow," but rarely talked about the ways these writing features might reflect or necessitate a rhetorical context. These ideas are embedded in the culture of schooling. For example, Hector talked about the importance of a “good hook” because it “starts your essay off strong” (Interview, March 21, 2017). This echoes advice found in his high school textbook, where guidelines for the “structure of an argument” state that the hook “grabs readers’ attention and catches their interest” without any discussion of rhetorical context or strategy (College Board, 2014, p. 44). Lucy told me that when she visited the university writing center for help working on her structure and building coherence, the undergraduate tutor simply told her to Google “transition words” (Interview, February 3, 2017). In both of these examples, the students were offered suggestions that call for decontextualized “parts” of a text.

However, when students were offered more explicit rhetorical contexts, their talk about writing seemed to change. When he was writing a lab report in his Physics course, Jain was conscious about making writing choices that “sound scientific” (Interview, February 28, 2017). Hector talked about how his introduction for a literacy narrative would be “more personal so that people get interested in it,” whereas a rhetorical analysis would have to be “more fact” (Interview, March 21, 2017). In both of these cases, the students were writing to meet established genre expectations, and they were able to identify how their writing might need to change in order to meet the needs of the community of readers. These opportunities were rare in high school and college, and particularly uncommon in general education.

Implications for equity. In Freedman’s (1995) comparison of teaching and learning in writing classes and disciplinary contexts, she concluded that the disciplinary contexts were more supportive of developing student writers because the writing was more homogenous and students were immersed in the “rich discursive contexts” of disciplinary classrooms. In composition, however, student performance varied according to the genre, with students unsurprisingly struggling to write the decontextualized "argument" common in general writing course contexts. Without a clear discursive context, students tended to draw form their out of school cultural experiences, privileging mainstream students whose home discourses aligned with those of the academy.

The data in this chapter seems to suggest an update to Freedman's argument. For the students in this study, the FYW courses seemed to be doing a better job creating rich discursive contexts that enable students to take on clear writing roles and draw from sample or target texts. However, the high school and general education settings continued to promote a structural epistemology and decontextualized school writing opportunities that emphasize correctness and perceived universal standards that tend to benefit mainstream students. Such writing ecologies tend to exclude those who do not identify with academia or who have been historically marginalized by dominant practices. For example, Jain and Hector both expressed negative associations with writing when I interviewed them in high school, and these negative perceptions were largely related to the ways they had been labeled by assessment practices. Hector didn't think grades "show what your writing actually is, or [is] worth," and thought that teachers were too focused on the formal aspects of writing (Interview, May 4, 2016). Jain's frustration with analysis described in this chapter seemed to come from a similar sense of frustration: "Why would you do it?" he asked (Interview, December 13, 2016). Creating more equitable teaching and learning contexts for writing across institutional and disciplinary context will require broad interventions at both curricular and policy levels.

Evolving FYW and the Need for Institutional Investment in Writing

Critiques of general writing skills instruction (GWSI) in disciplinary discussions over the last few decades seem to have made an impact in the ways we are thinking about the writing ecology of FYW (Russell, 1995; Downs & Wardle, 2007). Writing studies research focused on transfer and transitions across contexts—high school, college, FYW, disciplinary contexts, workplace, etc.—has led to an increased focus on genre in pedagogical contexts. One prominent example is a "genre awareness" approach advocated by Bawarshi (2003) and Devitt (2004) in their own scholarship and in a textbook they co-authored (Devitt, Reiff, & Bawarshi, 2004). Bawarshi (2003) suggested that a genre-based pedagogy can help students "locate themselves and begin to participate within [genred] positions more meaningfully, critically, and dexterously" (p. 146). By teaching students a process of identifying and analyzing genres so they "can learn new genres with a better understanding of their rhetorical purposes and contextual meanings" (Devitt, 2004, p. 197), students can gain strategies to more seamlessly acquire the genres of writing in their discipline. Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) specifically describe genres as "learning strategies or tools for accessing unfamiliar writing situations" (191).

However, Wardle's (2007) study of transfer from FYW to general education contexts reminds us that the usefulness of such an approach relies in part on the writing opportunities provided to students. The students in her study believed that they had learned useful lessons in their FYW classes, but they reported that they "rarely needed those lessons elsewhere" (p. 73). They did not have to do much writing, and when they did, the tasks did not require the kinds of careful planning, revising, and general process-oriented approach they valued in FYW. Wardle comes to the conclusion that the students lack of generalization (transfer) from one context to the other was not because they couldn't, but because "neither the writing tasks in other courses nor the structures of the larger activity system of the university provided the necessary affordances for generalization" (p. 76). In other words, successful transfer and academic writing development doesn't just happen in school because we want it to; students need the right kinds of writing opportunities across institutional and disciplinary contexts.

Unfortunately, this study seems to align with Wardle's (2007) findings, and should remind teachers, administrators, and policymakers that more writing does not necessarily mean effective writing opportunities. In the years since Wardle's study, writing has become more of a focal point of education policy in the accountability culture that permeates both K-12 and higher education contexts—in this case, we see this in the implementation of the *SpringBoard* curriculum in high school and the general education writing policy at my university. These curricular changes seem to have led to more writing occurring in both institutional contexts. However, the data in this chapter show that just because students are writing more, it does not mean they are being provided opportunities to develop as writers in beneficial writing situations. As Soliday (2011) has argued, improving access to learning is a collective decision; it's not only teachers who can provide access to genres and communities, but institutions as well. Supporting faculty in high schools and general education to develop rich discursive contexts and social practice approaches to assessment would seem to be two ways to demonstrate a commitment to learning.

At the same time, the experiences of the Jain and Lucy highlighted in the case studies seem to indicate the possibilities for situated learning that can exist when instructors create "mini-communities of practice" (Casanave, 2002). The contextualized writing opportunities provided in the mini-communities shared in the case studies seem to allow students to engage in the practices that help them to feel like contributors, "like a journalist" (Jain) or "like an activist" (Lucy). In other words, they provide students with a sense of who they are supposed to be when they are writing. I develop this notion of identity further in the next chapter, focusing in on general education tasks completed by Hercules and Jain.

CHAPTER 6

MAKING GENRES, MAKING WORLDS: NEGOTIATING IDENTITY IN GENERAL EDUCATION

In Chapter 5, I explored the ways in which writing opportunities for the participating students seemed limited to school-based genres and social motives. Whether an "argument," "research paper," or "essay," most writing opportunities offered to the students in this study treated them as consumers of knowledge; their goal in writing was not to participate in ongoing knowledge production but to demonstrate that they had acquired the content taught by the teacher. With few (and notable) exceptions, the student writers saw themselves *as students* writing for their teachers. The writing they completed thus operationalized the needs of the classroom and educational institution, but was minimally connected to other genre systems, if at all.

As a result of these constrained generic contexts, the student writers in this study gained more practice in school-based writing but did not have the kinds of access to literate communities that would allow them to explore the various roles, identities, and values of more advanced scholars or practitioners in their fields. As discussed in Chapter 2, developing writers need access not only to the genres, but to the various roles and situations that that motivate the genres in order to take on the values and attitudes the practice demands (Gee, 2001). Providing opportunities for genre learning for developing writers thus becomes in part a question of identity. In this chapter, I present two "text histories" (Lillis & Curry, 2006) of general education writing tasks to gain a more in-depth look at the construction of discursive identities in lower-division academic writing.

In *Genre & the Invention of the Writer*, Bawarshi (2003) described the ways writing prompts create opportunities for student writers to take on specific roles and relations to content knowledge. These prompts, he argued, are not simply conduits for sharing information or giving directions; they also situate students within a "genred site of action," as the prompt "not only *moves* the student writer to action; it also *cues* the student writer to enact a certain kind of action" (p. 127, emphasis in original), leading the student to both the subject and the subjectivity they will need to explore (p. 128). In other words, the writing prompt provides student writers with the subject matter they should address and the position they should assume when addressing it. We saw these effects in Chapter 5: the prompts in the high school textbook clearly constructed a "student" positionality and a teacher-as-examiner audience, whereas the prompt in Lucy's general education course made her feel like an "activist."

As Bawarshi demonstrated, however, this navigation is not always easy or clear for student writers to navigate. He provided examples from an FYW class in which students were asked to conduct field observations and write a claim-driven essay in the vein of Clifford Geertz's oft-cited essay, "Deep play: Notes on the Balinese cockfight." In the prompt, student writers were assigned a role ("cultural anthropologist" or "ethnographer") and a purpose, but some still struggled to take on the genred subjectivity completely. In such school writing tasks, Bawarshi explains, part of the student role "involves recontextualizing the desires they have acquired as their own self-prompted desires to write" (p. 141). In other words, the student writer needs to present themselves *as* an anthropologist, someone interested in the topic on their own terms. To further demonstrate, Bawarshi presented examples from student-written introductions in which the writers essentially rephrase the prompt rather than create their own exigence for the text. When students reference the course or the prompt, they are identifying themselves as students, not cultural anthropologists. Thus, Bawarshi suggests that FYW teachers should make genres more visible to student writers so they may participate more effectively.

This chapter takes a similar approach as I seek to better understand the ways the students in this study are positioned as writers in general education writing assignments. More specifically, I ask: What identities are available to the students in this study as they write in general education? Like Bawarshi, I examined writing prompts and student appropriation of those prompts in their writing, and I assumed that I would come to a similar conclusion about the importance of teaching genre awareness. After all, Bawarshi's argument has become central to the general acceptance of genre as a predominant term in composition studies and genre awareness approaches to FYW (Devitt, Reiff, & Bawarshi, 2004; Devitt, 2009). However, when I reviewed interviews with students and their instructors along with the student writing and classroom materials, I found the making of genres in general education writing to be dynamic and heavily contextualized. As Prior (1998) has argued, genres are created and recognized in a process of alignment and should be understood as "dialogically located in sociohistoric streams of activity" (p. 72). In this way, the process of "genrefication" reminds us that "alignments of texts, contexts, and identities are dynamic and mutable, not fixed frameworks inhering in situations" (p. 72). Bawarshi's (2003) suggestion to make genres more visible to student writers thus assumes a clarity of generic expectation that may or may not be available or even possible, even to an instructor. This chapter will show that the joint activity of making genres can only be understood in their unique contexts and will thus pose important questions to consider for writing pedagogies across institutional and disciplinary contexts.

Methodology

To engage this argument, I present two text histories of General Education tasks modeled after Lillis and Curry's (2006) "text-oriented ethnographic" approach that seeks to explore the production of academic texts as a dynamic social process (p. 7). In their study of writing for scholarly publication among scholars for whom English is a foreign language, Lillis and Curry constructed text histories of published academic texts that included interviews with the writers and readers and as many written drafts as possible. Through this method, they were able to view the mediating effects of readers and editors on published texts and explore the trajectory of textual production in detail. This approach provides a layered, sociohistoric perspective that connects the development of individual texts to broader concerns about power relations and knowledge production in English-language academic publishing.

In this chapter, I take a similar approach, tracing the trajectory of a student-written text from the prompt through assessment and feedback. In the first of these text histories, Hercules earns an A on a family studies research writing task. In the second, Jain receives a failing grade on an analytical writing task in a social sciences course. These two in-depth case studies provide us an opportunity to see the ways in which genres are generated through joint activity. By examining the assignment guidelines and rubrics, the teacher-talk about the assignment, the student text, and the student talk, we can trace some of the layered constraints and expectations that influence instructor construction of student positionality through the assignment guidelines, the student uptake of a role or discoursal identity, and then the teacher re-positioning of the student while reading, assessing, and offering feedback.

This chapter asks: What identities are available to Hercules and Jain as they write in general education? In both of these cases, we'll see that their instructors set up a role that seemed to contradict what they wanted. This finding poses particular complications when we focus on the complex negotiation of identities and commitments involved in learning, especially when considering traditionally excluded persons in institutional contexts and the role of assessment in shaping student attitudes about writing, schooling, and their own potential (Caraballo, 2011; Inoue, 2014; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014). Tracing the genesis of two general education assignments may help us to see the ways in which writing opportunities shape the writing experiences of undergraduate student writers and position them (or not) as learners, writers, and knowledge-holders.

Case Study Context

The two writing experiences described in this chapter were assigned in "Tier One" General Education courses usually attended by first- and second-year students at my institution. At this institution, like many others, all students must take a prescribed number of general education courses across disciplinary perspectives. In this "distributive" model (Hanstedt, 2012), students take a set number of credits in themed areas of study, including more issue-based Tier One courses and discipline-specific Tier Two courses. Instructors are advised that students in Tier One—which includes three strands titled "Individuals & Societies," "Traditions & Cultures," and "Natural Sciences"—may or may not have completed their FYW requirement. According to a recently-implemented university policy, all general education courses are now considered "writing-intensive," and must assign at least ten pages or 2,000 words over the course of the semester and include at least one assignment of at least 750 words with an opportunity for revision. An initial assessment of syllabi from all General Education courses has demonstrated a variety of ways instructors are designing their courses to meet these goals, including more traditional school tasks like term papers, persuasive essays, and online discussion posts, and tasks that seem to represent more action-oriented genres like zines and new media projects (Meeting, 2017).

The instructors of record for each assignment discussed in this chapter are experienced teachers who have worked to design what they believe to be engaging assignments. While their participation in this research was somewhat random and determined by participating student enrollment, these instructors happened to be active in faculty development activities on campus. They demonstrated in our interviews and follow-up discussions a reflective disposition and willingness to grow as teachers.

In the case studies that follow, I will attempt to create text histories of the tasks as completed by Hercules and Jain in their first year of university study. I begin by introducing the tasks as presented in the posted assignment guidelines and as described by the instructors in interviews with me. In the case of Hercules's family studies class, I will also draw from a class session recording shared with me by the instructors. I will then draw from interviews with the student writers and analysis of their drafts and final texts to describe the student uptake of the task and explore the ways they made choices based on perceived writerly roles. Finally, I will examine how the instructors re-positioned students in a text-based discussion of the student final texts. In doing so, I will explore some of the factors that "make genres" in academic contexts.

Hercules: Applying Course Concepts

Assignment Design

The concept application assignment comes from an interdisciplinary course focused on understanding fatherhood from a cross-cultural perspective. The teachers, Xena and Conan, are a husband and wife teaching team who draw from a variety of research traditions, including anthropology, evolutionary biology, family studies, and neurobiology.[25] In this course, which they think is the first university class in North America to focus solely on fatherhood, they try to straddle the social and biological sciences and offer a cross-species, cross-cultural perspective on fatherhood and parenting. Xena and Conan consider it a “self-literacy” course, in that they hope students will have a better understanding of their own biology and parenting choices, and also an opportunity for students to learn about “different values and different approaches” to learn “cultural and context sensitivity” (Interview, Nov 10, 2016).

The concept application assignment is the major writing task in a course that serves over 150 students each semester. According to the teachers, this project asks students to “reflect on your own experience” by focusing on the lyrics to a popular song (Interview, Nov 10, 2016). The assignment guidelines expand on this goal. The instructions state, “This assignment is meant to improve critical thinking skills, particularly in connection with evaluating popular culture’s views on fathering and families. It is also intended to help you reflect on men and fatherhood in your personal life.” We can see in this description that the teachers are offering multiple learning goals for the task: improve a skill, evaluate, and reflect. Xena described the project similarly in class, framing the task as an opportunity to “take what you learned in this class and apply it to something in your life” (Observation, September 22, 2016). The task was introduced early in the semester, and Xena and Conan built in numerous opportunities for feedback, including a mandatory initial meeting with a TA and a graded outline that serves as a rough draft. The majority of grading and feedback were offered by TAs unless students made efforts to visit with Xena and Conan during office hours.

---

[25] While most instructors did not elect to choose their own pseudonyms, Xena chose the pseudonyms Xena and Conan without knowing that the participating student in their class had selected Hercules. I don’t think I hid my smile during that meeting.

Xena and Conan referred to the task as a "final paper," an "essay," a "project," or simply by its title throughout our discussions and the videotaped class session. As these ambiguous names suggest, there is not a distinctly recognizable genre enumerated in the task guidelines, an issue I explored in more depth in Chapter 5. If we think about genre in terms of the action it is going to accomplish (Miller, 1984), it is important to consider the alignment of a generic task with a perceived social purpose. In this case, the varying purposes do not necessarily indicate a genre either. "Critical thinking," evaluation, analysis, or reflection can be achieved in many different ways. The assignment guidelines similarly do not name a distinct genre, and teacher-talk *about* the task does not do much to clarify (see Table 14).

Table 14

Overview of the concept application assignment.

Terms used to describe the task	"final paper"; "essay"
Stated purpose(s)	• "improve critical thinking skills" • "**evaluating** popular culture's views on fathering and families" • "**reflect** on men and fatherhood in personal life" • "In your FINAL essay you have an opportunity to **show** what you know"
Audience(s)	"explain to a non-specialist audience, as if you were writing to your fellow students in a music magazine or *[the student newspaper]*"
Formal expectations	4-5 pages, excluding references, APA style
Source requirements	1 from textbook; 1 peer-reviewed article from library database

Note: Quoted text are copied from the "Instructions and Grading Rubric" distributed to students.

This lack of distinct genre and communicative purpose seems to create tensions and contradictions that influence both writing and reception. Consider, for example, the way the assignment guidelines position the student writer. It is an "essay" to be written for a "non-specialist audience," like one you might find in "a music magazine" or a student newspaper. To a reader of music magazines and newspapers, like me, this description might call to mind a text that attempts to evaluate the views on fatherhood or families in a song. I can imagine seeing a music magazine article about the way fatherhood is discussed in contemporary hip-hop or country, for example. One might also imagine a student writing for other students in a school newspaper about why they should or shouldn't listen to their pop idols for parenting advice. In one of our conversations, Xena got even more specific, comparing the task to a letter to the editor (Interview, November 10, 2016). In a class session, Xena explained the project to students like this:

> This is like an article…If you were submitting this to the [undergraduate daily newspaper], none of your peers out there know anything that you know already about men and fatherhood and paternity confidence and making a fitness benefit to the offspring or… any of that stuff! So you need to be able to explain it. Or as if you're going to go home at Thanksgiving and explain it to your mom and dad or your grandparents. You need to give them a little bit of background explanation. So that's where you're explaining the course concepts. (observation, September 22, 2016)

Xena is describing multiple—and differing—potential situations and audiences students should consider as they write. Should they write as if they are writing for the school newspaper and their peers, or should they write like they are explaining it to family at Thanksgiving?

My discussion with Xena and Conan continued along the same lines. Xena emphasized that they wanted students to be able to share this information with their peers, and Conan agreed, adding that he wants students to consider their audience and use “ordinary language” (Interview, November 10, 2016). The goal here seems clear and potentially valuable, as sharing this knowledge about the social construction of fatherhood with a broader public does seem worthwhile and would place the student writer in a knowledge-producing position. However, the opportunity for students to position themselves as contributors of knowledge—a position that would seem to align with both the goals and audience of the task and a more journalistic genre—seems to come up against constraints placed on the task by the instructors. Notice in the following interview excerpt the ways that the teachers complicate the role of the writer:

> **Conan:** And part of it is really understanding who the audience is, in the first instance. And so I'd say, "Ok, imagine I'm now talking to my friends." And I want to tell them what's interesting or significant about this. I don't have hours and hours to do this. I only have, like you know the elevator pitch or something, and so I need to really distill and then say it in a way that they can understand it without having to go over it a thousand times. That's the challenge.
>
> **Xena**: And not go into too casual language, either.
>
> **Conan:** That's right. You don't want to lose things, necessarily. And I think that's the trick… and it's actually, as I'm sure you can appreciate, it's a tougher thing to do than you might think. 'Cause it sounds like, "Oh hell anybody can do that." Not really. Sometimes that's really tough without losing some of the essence or forgetting something that was significant. It doesn't always translate so easily, so it's a good skill to learn, I think. (Interview, Nov 10, 2016)

In this excerpt, Conan begins by hoping a student will consider “talking to my friends” before Xena adds that it can’t be “too casual.” The contradiction is clear: the instructors want students to imagine talking to their friends in a way they can understand, but not in “too casual language” because they don’t want to “lose things.” They should write for a “non-specialist audience,” but at the same time use APA citation conventions and reference at least one peer-reviewed, scholarly article in four to five double-spaced pages. Now it is not inconceivable that a magazine article, newspaper feature, or letter to the editor would cite a scholarly source—in some high-brow publications citing scholars seems common, as I will show below—but the use of “APA style” would not be appropriate for these publication venues. The instructors seem to be reaching for an opportunity for students to invent themselves as public scholars or critics, but the centripetal force of “academic writing” pulls the task in to a more traditional writing task. So who is the writer supposed to be? A journalist? A friend? A science writer? A student?

Student Uptake and Making Genres

Faced with these competing possibilities, Hercules did not struggle to determine his writing role; he decided early on that this was a thesis-driven school essay, an opportunity “to show what we’ve learned in class” (Interview, Dec 15, 2016). Even as his professors stressed outside audiences in the assignment guidelines and class discussions, Hercules never imagined an audience outside of his teachers. With his teacher-as-examiner audience in mind, the role he took on was not as a peer or a friend trying to communicate an idea, as they suggested, but instead he wanted to sound like “people that do research” (Interview, Dec 15, 2016). In other words, he tried to mimic the discourse of his teachers. As we talked about his final text, Hercules pointed to specific words that helped him “sound smart.” For example, he wrote, “As loving caring parents, of course we all want our offspring to do better than us, but what other way can that happen if we’re not there to show them how to better themselves?” Hercules told me “offspring” is a word that he would not use in his day to day speech, and that by using it his teachers can “see that we’ve been paying attention or something” and he can “sound like I know what I’m talking about” (Interview, Dec 2015, 2016). Hercules said if he were really imagining an audience from outside of class, he would have spent more time explaining the ideas he was drawing upon. In other words, he was assuming a shared base of knowledge because he was writing for his teachers, not his friends or an audience of peers as his teachers had suggested. These choices were validated when he received a 91% on the grading rubric.

It seems that Hercules recognized the ways this was a typical academic writing task, not really a magazine or newspaper article. Even as his instructor said it was “not your traditional research paper” (Interview, November 10, 2016), Hercules saw it as “just research, facts” (Interview, December 15, 2016). When comparing this writing to a narrative task from another course, Hercules saw this assignment as “more formal” because it expected a clear thesis, the use of outside sources, and a “structure,” which was described in the task directions and formalized in an outline template to be completed as a first draft (Interview, November 2, 2016). Hercules drew upon his prior experience with school-based writing, his “student” role or identity, and the written and verbal discourse of the class, demonstrating the complexly laminated process of his generic production.

Focusing just on the introductory paragraph might offer us a way to see this task construction at work. Hercules follows the common “pyramid” approach to academic introductions, starting with a general statement about fathers loving their children: “Fathers are very different across cultures and they show different styles of care towards their offspring and even family.” He then introduces the song, “Just the Two of Us” by Will Smith, and offers a brief summary before closing the first paragraph with this statement: “This song by, Will Smith, relates to the course concepts of paternal care in the form of indirect and direct care.” In constructing this introduction, Hercules followed the teacher-provided outline—attention-getter, introductory information, thesis—and the thesis statement meets the rubric guidelines, as it “clearly relates the song to course concept(s).”

However, Hercules’s introductory paragraph is almost certainly not the way one might introduce a music magazine article or letter to the editor. To compare, let’s take a quick look at Kornhaber’s (2018) “Drake and the spectacle of charity,” a music critique published in *The Atlantic* magazine.[26] According to *The Bedford Book of Genres*, a popular FYW textbook that brings a genre-oriented approach to rhetorical analysis, opinion pieces—and related generic names like perspectives, commentaries, or viewpoints—are “texts that convey a writer’s opinion on a particular topic” (Braziller and Kleinfeld, 2014, p. 198). According to the textbook, in the introduction of an opinion piece the writer immediately seeks to gain readers’ attention and create a sense of identification. In his introduction, Kornhaber (2018) seems to meet these genred expectations, using imperative verbs and second-person pronouns to create an immediate connection with his readers (see Table 15). Structurally, he hasn’t even introduced the topic of the article yet in the first paragraph, nor has he introduced a thesis statement. But while

---

[26] While only one example, this article seemed to align with some of the assignment guidelines, including its use of academic sources. When I asked Xena and Conan, they were unable to identify a sample text that students might read to better understand the task expectations. They first considered other courses where students might do some kind of media analysis, but Xena was clear that “this is not literature analysis.” Eventually Conan said that he “wonder[ed] if maybe there are some projects in journalism courses that come close to this,” and they agreed that it should be written in a “journalistic style” (Interview, November 10, 2016). This article seems to meet these expectations, as Kornhaber (2018) draws from environmental studies scholar Ilan Kapoor’s (2012) work on celebrity humanitarianism and applies the theoretical concept—even using direct quotations—in an analytical reading of a popular music video.

Table 15

Comparison of Hercules' introduction and a published piece of music criticism.

Hercules's introduction	**Kornhaber's (2018) introduction**
Fathers are very different across cultures and they show different styles of care towards their offspring and even family. Men often show great love towards their mothers. Imagine when they become a father, how much love and joy they will have for their children. There is no question that their love for their children is unconditional, especially if they are his biological kids. This will raise the father's fitness as well and possibly benefiting both the father and his family. The song, Just the Two of Us, is by the infamous Fresh Prince of Bel-Air, Will Smith. In this song, Will Smith expresses his love for his oldest son, Trey Smith. He also is giving trey some fatherly advice throughout the song and lets him know he will always be there for him. Throughout the song, Will Smith gives many different ideas of paternal care he promises his son he will provide in the future. *This song by, Will Smith, relates to the course concepts of paternal care in the form of indirect and direct care.*	**Dip** into the strangely hypnotic film genre that documents the Publishers Clearing House delivering jumbo checks to people, and **you** begin to notice a pattern. When the "Prize Patrol" first knocks on a door, the sweepstakes winner might gasp and hesitantly smile at the cameras and the balloons, recognizing the familiar script they've suddenly been inserted into. But it's when the money is actually presented, and the amount of the prize revealed, that the crying begins. As a viewer, **you** feel happy for the winner. **You** feel gratitude for the Clearing House. And **you** start wondering what that jumbo check could do for you (Par. 1).

Note: The italicized thesis statement demonstrates where Hercules invokes the course context and prompt. Kornhaber (2018) uses the bolded imperative verbs and second-person pronouns to engage his readers. His use of contractions (discussed in the next section) is underlined.

Kornhaber (2018) creates a connection to his reader and builds toward a question that seems to drive the article—"What is this video: goodhearted charity, pop promotional spectacle, or both?" (par. 3)—Hercules has not "recontextualiz[ed] the desires [of the prompt] as [his] own self-prompted desire to write" (Bawarshi, 2003, p. 141). Instead, he leaves traces of the prompt by calling upon "course concepts" in his thesis statement. Hercules is "showing what he learned," as the assignment guidelines asked, but he is not taking on the discoursal identity of a journalist or music critic. Instead, in this introduction and throughout the text, Hercules is approximating the discourse of his teachers to show them he's been paying attention in class. He wants to earn a good grade, and as the good student and rhetorically sensitive person he is, he is making an educated guess that what his teachers want is not really a newspaper article written for a public audience, but a school essay written by a student showing that he's "been paying attention or something" (Hercules, December 15, 2016).

The centripetal force of the academic essay and the constraints of school-based writing are evident beyond structure and discourse patterns, as Hercules also made choices about personal disclosure that reflect his positionality in the "figured world" of school. The identity theorists Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain (1998) described figured worlds as socially produced, culturally constructed activities "in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (p. 52). Figured worlds are abstractions that provide ways of making meaning, taking action, and creating social positions and social relationships. As Gee (2011) explained, a figured world helps to describe "what is taken to be typical or normal" (p. 170). For example, one would not consider the Pope a bachelor because the term bachelor implies a figured world of marriage that does not include the Pope (Holland et al., 1998, p. 62). The figured worlds of school and academic life similarly construct certain meanings and possibilities for being, including the expected roles and aspirations of students and teachers. For our discussion, it's important to note that figured worlds "rely upon artifacts," so examining artifacts can help "open up" figured worlds to a researcher (p. 60). In other words, the artifacts of academic life—the genres—can help us to better understand the ways individuals are positioned within the figured world.

The writing prompt for the concept application task asked student writers to “include a personal connection” in their conclusion, and the instructors provided a few sample questions leading students to think about their own fathers and the fathers they would like to be or would like to have as the father of their children. According to Xena, creating this personal connection was a goal of the assignment, as the instructors wanted students to “start digging into what's happening in [their] own life and how is it relevant” (Interview, November 10, 2016). Hercules makes this connection by gesturing toward his own parenting goals, writing:

> The song describes the kind of father I want to be to my children. For example, letting them know real life situations when they are young so they do not mess up, and be there for them and always take care of them no matter what.

At the same time, Hercules did not mention his own father, who has been largely absent from his life. In our conversations, Hercules described this absence as one of his motivations for engaging with the task and the course, in general, but said he didn’t see this writing assignment as the place to talk about a father who was not there. One interpretation of his decision to not include this element of his story could be that Hercules’ understanding of the school-based writing genre and the figured world of schooling has taught him that academic writing is not the place for sharing one’s own story, even when the instructor seems to want to provide such an opportunity.

According to Holland and her co-authors (1998), figured worlds are produced and reproduced by individuals who participate in and through them. As in discussions of genre that draw from similar sociological frames (Bawarshi, 2003; Devitt, 2004), Holland et al. (1998) argued that individuals can improvise and bring creativity to their actions within figured worlds, eventually changing the nature of their subjectivity (p. 18). However, the unequal power relations that exist within the figured world also help to constrain those possibilities. Hercules knew he would be evaluated based on his writing choices, and he made choices accordingly to earn a high grade on the task. As we move to the instructor's uptake of Hercules's text, we will see the ways in which the figured world of schooling seems to influence the ways in which he is re-positioned by his instructors.

Re-positioning by the Instructor

As noted previously, the instructors created an expectation for students to meet somewhat conflicting rhetorical purposes in the concept application assignment, and Hercules recognized the task as a school-based "research" genre in which he was a student writing to his teachers. Here we will see how one of his instructors participated in the uptake of his text. Later we'll explore what this dialogic process of generic alignment means for available student identities and for student learning, in general.

In a text-based interview discussing the graded final draft, Xena was effusive in her praise, and seemed to acknowledge Hercules's attempt to "sound like someone who does research." Xena was happy to see Hercules present the disciplinary ways of thinking and writing common in anthropology, in particular, even though the assignment guidelines and Xena's initial discussion of the assignment seemed to encourage a more personal role or a peer-to-peer stance. Xena was especially impressed by the way Hercules made comparisons to other cultural expectations of child-rearing. He wrote, "Across many foraging societies we do not expect every community to be the same, and with this we see our expectations will be different, surprisingly." Upon reading this sentence, Xena was impressed that Hercules was "bringing in cross-cultural stuff, which a lot of students don't do" (Interview, Feb 7, 2017). Xena seemed to view this example as Hercules demonstrating one of the main goals of the course, as he was able to recognize and appreciate cultural variance and diversity of approaches to fatherhood. When I asked Hercules about that sentence, he said that he remembered seeing or hearing an idea like that in class, and so he used it in his writing. He was appropriating the discourse of his professors and the class, and, to his instructor, he was reflecting the goals and values of the cross-cultural, social science approach his teachers wanted to see.

As we continued to read through the final draft together, Xena lingered on a source Hercules used, remarking first that it was from their course readings and should have been cited as such, but then realizing that this was the source he found on his own. “That's a great article,” she said. “We don't have it in our book, we tried to put it in the book, and they couldn't get the copyright. So they picked up on… [Hercules] picked it. That's great” (Interview, February 7, 2017). Xena was impressed that Hercules “picked up on” a seminal text of the field. She was positioning him as a fellow researcher, or at least as a student with enough knowledge and interest in the field to know when a source is important or credible.

A different story emerged when I asked Hercules about his research process and about this source, in particular. He told me his research process consisted of typing the course concept “indirect and direct care” into the library’s search engine, scrolling for short articles, and clicking on one that seemed “straightforward, instead of talking-talking” (Interview, Mar 8, 2017). Then he used the search function to locate the word “care,” read around the highlighted words, and took note of the quotes that might work in his essay. This process is impressive in its efficiency and it demonstrates a certain savvy and rhetorical awareness. Hercules’ research strategy also helps us to see the ways teachers position their students based on their writing choices. Xena sees a student aligning himself with the goals and purposes of the field and with the knowledge-making practices therein (Ivanič, 1998, p. 295); Hercules is trying to write a paper that “sounds smart” and earns him a good grade. In some ways, these are the same thing because Hercules knows that to “sound smart” in this course, he needed to talk about the kinds of things his instructors were interested in. To earn an A, he wrote to impress his teachers.

During our conversation about Hercules’s final text, Xena did not reference the writing situation as described in our previous interview. In fact, rather than emphasize the plain language the instructors appeared to want as they described the goal of the writing, Xena seemed hopeful for a more formal register as she read through the text. For example, she noted a rubric criterion stating, "An appropriate writing style, no slang or conversational language," and implied disappointment with Hercules’s use of contractions, saying, “I think that was one of the things we changed subsequently, that you can’t do contractions… A lot of contractions, but we didn’t tell them no contractions” (Interview, February 7, 2017). This reference to “appropriate writing style” is telling, as *appropriateness* has long been viewed as problematic by critical linguists and education scholars because it implies but does not explicitly state a standard form (Fairclough, 1992; Flores & Rosa, 2015). Flores and Rosa (2015) have argued that discourses of appropriateness are central to the reproduction of a white racialized normativity in schools, forcing minoritized students to model their language practices after the white norms of educational institutions (p. 151). In other words, appropriateness is part of the discourse expectations of the figured world of schooling.

In contrast, the figured world of journalism or music writing would provide different discursive possibilities and means of identification. For example, in his introduction, Kornhaber (2018) uses two contradictions, *they’ve* and *it’s* (see Table 2). The figured world of journalism seems to allow for a different kind of relationship between writer and reader. Imagine the different possibilities if the rubric said something like, “appropriate writing style for the genre and audience” or “appropriate writing style for the school newspaper.” In these cases, student writers could make choices and be evaluated based on their attention to the rhetorical situation. But when appropriateness is not linked to a particular writing situation, savvy student writers like Hercules will work within the comfortable, formulaic school essay often represented by the 5-paragraph structure.

Prior (1998, 2009) reminds us that genres are not fixed. Instead, we *make genres* dialogically in sociohistoric streams of literate activity. In this case, we can see the ways that the centripetal force of the academic essay seemed to pull the instructor and the student writer together as they negotiated generic production for the conceptual application project.

Jain: Peoplehood

Assignment Design

The "Peoplehood" task comes from a general education course in a subfield of social science focused on Native American representation. This was the only course Jain took during the summer pre-session, a three-week session after spring semester finals, in order to make up the credits he lost when he dropped his second FYW course to take on more work hours. Class was held five days a week for three hours each day. There were three major writing tasks, essentially one due each week; the final was due on the Saturday following the last day of class. The task discussed here did not have a specific name—it was called "Assignment 1"—but I will refer to it as the Peoplehood assignment for this discussion because that was how Jain referred to it during our conversations.

This course was taught by Mason, a Ph.D. candidate who had been a graduate teaching assistant for the course three times, twice as the lead TA. According to the syllabus, the course was designed "to introduce students to the foundational concepts," including sovereignty, cosmology, cultural exchange, cultural transformation and survival, and diversity. In our interview discussion Mason narrowed the course outcomes, drawing upon their prior TA experience during which the instructor of record advised the TAs that if students can describe sovereignty in their own words at the end of the class, they have achieved the goal. Mason comes from an English Literature background and taught developmental writing at community colleges before returning to graduate study in social sciences. Unsurprisingly, with this background they consider writing as a goal for the course, saying they want "students to be able to articulate themselves well" and to develop their writing skills as much as she wants them to learn the content (Interview, June 9, 2017). Mason emphasized that because this is an academic discipline, "academic writing" is a focus in this class. When asked for specifics about what they are looking for in student writing, Mason explained that they are looking for sentence structure, essay structure, and to see that students are posing arguments, in addition to how they discuss Native people. Mason pointed out that many students speak of Native people in the past tense even though they are discussing surviving nations.

This was the first time Mason was teaching the course as the instructor of record, and the Peoplehood assignment was Mason's own design. For this task, students were asked to visit a campus museum and explore the exhibit on the Native people with roots on the land where the university stands today. The task is framed as a thesis-driven evaluation, in which students should claim that the exhibit "does or does not adequately present the [Nation's] Peoplehood." As Mason described it, this is an "agree or disagree" assignment, adding, "that's kind of your thesis and then go from there" (Interview, June 9, 2017). To do this, students had to apply a theoretical frame, the "peoplehood matrix" discussed by Holm, Pearson, and Chavis (2003), and use evidence from the exhibit to support their claim.

Table 16

The Peoplehood assignment from social sciences

Terms used to describe the genre	“assignment”; “essay”
Stated Purpose(s)	• “**discuss** the exhibit’s presentation of [the Nation’s] Peoplehood” • “Your thesis will **claim** that the exhibit does or does not adequately present the [the Nation’s] Peoplehood”
Audience(s)	*none explicitly stated*
Formal expectations	Essays should be 3-4 pages long and meet the criteria for written assignments established in the syllabus. (from syllabus) All writing assignments should be in double-spaced 12 point Times New Roman with no extra spacing between paragraphs. Use standard 1” margins. Students’ last name and page number should be in the header (not in the body) of the paper.
Source requirements	“You must address at least 3 points in the Peoplehood model and pull in evidence from the exhibit in order to back up your claim.”

Note: Quoted text copied from the “Assignment 1 Guidelines” distributed to students.

In terms of social action, this task seems to ask students to critically evaluate a museum exhibit using a theoretical frame, a common situation for academic writers. Mason wanted students to be “posing arguments” in “academic writing,” a skill they viewed as necessary for college success (Interview, June 19, 2017). As we see in the assignment guidelines in Table 16, Mason’s notion of academic writing reflects the somewhat typical, arhetorical demands of school-based writing reinforced by large-scale assessment practices (Clark-Oates et al, 2015; Jacobson, 2015). Because an audience is not specifically stated, it is assumed that the intended audience is the teacher. Furthermore, criteria worth the highest percentage of points in the rubric states, “Essay is thesis driven and **shows** that student is familiar with concept of Peoplehood and **understands** [the Native American nation’s] cosmology as discussed in class” (emphasis added). Framing the assessment in terms of “showing” and “understanding” creates a writer-reader relationship in which the writer is clearly positioned in a student role, demonstrating knowledge, proving to their teacher-examiner they have learned the content.

Student Uptake and Making Genres

When talking about this writing task, Jain referred to a general “reader” at times, but he named his teacher as the only audience he was thinking about during his writing process. Following the language in the assignment guidelines, Jain saw his goal as demonstrating knowledge, “[t]hat we just understand what the factors are, like what peoplehood is… and that we can analyze other cultures using that model” (Interview, May 23, 2017). Because the prompt offered clear directions for what he was supposed to do, he saw the task as “simple” and straightforward, “just a comparison essay,” something he was familiar with from previous school experiences. To get a good grade, he assumed he would have to meet the teacher’s expectations and show her that he understood the course. To Jain, this task fit neatly in his understanding of the figured world of school.

At the same time, Jain’s growing understanding of disciplinary epistemologies and his prior classroom experiences led him to enter into complex negotiation of discoursal identity. He said he was trying to be “more academic” in his writing and considered the task to require him to be “like a social scientist…analyzing a culture” (Interview, May 23, 2017). His writing choices seem to reflect this role. For example, Jain used metadiscourse strategies to engage with his reader in the opening paragraph and position himself as an equal in the field. In his thesis statement, Jain used the pronoun *we* to set up a dialogue with the reader and the frame marker *will examine* to clearly announce his goal: “Using Tom Holms’ “Peoplehood Matrix” **we will examine** the *Paths of Life* exhibit” (emphasis added). In this example, Jain seems to be flattening the hierarchy, positioning himself as someone worthy of taking the reader on this journey. In this thesis, he is also aligning himself with the goals and purposes of the broader social science discourse community, one that often applies existing theories to examining, critiquing, or understanding social texts.

At the same time as he seemed to be positioning himself as a social scientist using these discursive moves, Jain did not share a social scientist’s purpose, complicating his positioning. Jain said that the assignment called for a “persuasive essay,” but as the following excerpt of our interview shows, he never fully saw this task as anything other than an examination:

> **Brad:** I guess I'm wondering, so you said before that this is like a persuasive— you said it was persuasive, you said it was analysis— Like what's the purpose of that kind of writing?
>
> **Jain:** Probably to change someone's point of view. Like 'cause you're trying to convince them like that your analyzation is correct, I guess.
>
> **Brad:** So were you trying to change someone's point of view in this?
>
> **Jain:** Mm not really. [laughs]
>
> **Brad:** So what were you trying to do?
>
> **Jain:** *I was just answering the prompt*, that's it.
>
> (Interview, May 23, 2017, emphasis added)

Jain recognized the potential motive of the task as persuasive, but also noticed that the only person to persuade would be his instructor. Without an identifiable audience outside the classroom, and with only the term "essay" to draw from in the assignment guidelines, Jain wrote a school paper.

As he took on the student role in this writing task, Jain drew from prior experiences to make choices in his writing. He said the task reminded him of another General Education course which asked him to use cultural theory in analyses of media texts. The instructor of that course offered very specific structural guidelines and told students they should define their key terms in the second paragraph immediately after their thesis statement in order to make their theoretical orientation clear. In Table 17, notice how the beginning of the second paragraph of Jain's Peoplehood essay aligns with his first writing in the cultural theory class. In each, he introduces the key term and definition in the first sentence and includes a brief, cited quotation. Without samples in his social science class, he borrowed a discourse strategy from what seemed to him to be an analogous text.

Table 17

Comparison of second paragraph topic sentence in two of Jain's general education writing tasks

Cultural Theory	**Social Science (Peoplehood)**
Culture as explained by Robert F. Murphy is a "system of symbols or signs endowed with abstract meanings". This can be proven by looking at any culture and reflecting on what their culture is.	Sacred History, as defined by Tom Holm in his journal *Peoplehood*, is the history of a certain culture which gives meaning and reason to the ceremonies the people in this culture practice. As Holm's stated "A people's sacred history is equally an explanation of its own distinct culture, customs, and political economy."

Jain also drew from a strategy he learned in FYW as he wrote his thesis statement. His English 102 instructor, a long-time lecturer and MFA graduate from the creative writing program at the university, advised Jain to use an open-ended thesis statement, introducing the topic of the writing in the first paragraph but not answering it until the conclusion. Even though Jain dropped the class before completing a formal writing task, he remembered his instructor's advice. As Jain explained to me, "If you say what you think on your introduction, your reader might just be uninterested and try to refute every part away. 'Cause I say, 'Oh, the color red is the best color.' And as a reader you're just gonna automatically be against it" (Interview, May 23, 2017). Jain brought this guidance with him to the Peoplehood task. After introducing the importance of the essay by explaining the lack of resources told from the Native American perspective, Jain offers this thesis statement:

> Using Tom Holms' "Peoplehood Matrix" we will examine the *Paths of Life* exhibit. Using three factors of the "Peoplehood Matrix": Sacred History, Territory, Ceremonial Cycle and their definitions, the *Paths of Life* exhibits' presentation of the [Nation's] Peoplehood will be assessed.

Jain goes on to describe each of these factors in the essay, and then concludes the draft with his assessment of the exhibit: "Defining Peoplehood using Holm's journal, the *Paths of life* exhibit is successful in presenting the [Nation's] Peoplehood." It was a conscious strategy to introduce the purpose of his essay in his introduction (to assess) and then to make his claim at the end (he found it successful). Based on the way he remembered his FYW instructor's advice, Jain saw this strategy as a way to maintain his reader's interest.

In these examples, we can see the ways Jain's prior school writing experiences have textured this writing task. Jain seems to draw upon specific discourse strategies he learned from two different instructors in an attempt to position himself as a social science writer. By writing an open-ended thesis statement and defining his theoretical frame in the second paragraph, he is hoping to demonstrate to his instructor that he is the right kind of person doing the right kind of writing for the task. He seems to be generalizing specific strategies he used for tasks called "analysis" and applying them to this essay.

Re-positioning by the Instructor

Jain left our first discussion about this task feeling confident about the draft he submitted. He said because this was his only summer class he was actually able to keep up with the readings and take good notes. As described above, he recognized this task as something similar to tasks he had done before: using readings to analyze something else. So I was surprised when I received a text message the same night that read only, "57%." He also sent me the feedback he received. As I outline the ways Jain and his instructor's making of the academic essay genre misaligned, I will use this written feedback as well as a text-based interview with his instructor, Mason.

Reviewing the written feedback, it is clear that Mason has certain formal expectations for student writing. When I asked about their assessment priorities, Mason mentioned sentence structure and essay structure before a discussion of content and recognized that the assignment "seems very formalist" (Interview, June 9, 2017). Their written feedback reflects this approach, as none of the six summative comments engage Jain's assessment of the museum's exhibit or his use or understanding of the theoretical framework. The first three comments in the feedback refer to errors, as Mason comments upon his spacing (an extra space between paragraphs), his identification of the source text as a journal instead of a journal article—he wrote, "as defined by Tom Holm in his journal *Peoplehood*"—and his use of the personal pronoun *we*. The last three comments refer to his thesis, a topic sentence, and his conclusion. I will focus here on two examples to highlight the ways in which Mason's assessment practices re-position Jain as a student writing a generic school essay, even as he seemed to make a concerted effort to be a "social science writer."

Table 18

Comparison of thesis statements between Jain's academic essay and the published source text (Holm, Pearson, & Chavis, 2003).

Jain's text	Published text (Holm, Pearson, & Chavis, 2003)
Using Tom Holms' "Peoplehood Matrix" **we will examine** the *Paths of Life* exhibit. Using three factors of the "Peoplehood Matrix": Sacred History, Territory, Ceremonial Cycle and their definitions, the *Paths of Life* exhibits' presentation of the Tohono O'odham Peoplehood **will be assessed**.	"This essay argues that a core assumption for American Indian studies and a theoretical construct based solely on Native American knowledge have already been formulated and introduced, albeit in very raw form. … This essay **is intended to** refine and illustrate Thomas's modification of Spicer's original idea and propose that it be utilized as the core assumption of American Indian Studies" (pp. 11-12).

We can start this discussion at the thesis, which is a focal point of both the task guidelines and grading rubric. As Mason noted in our interview, the thesis is included twice on the grading rubric. First, the thesis is included as part of "Content": "Essay is thesis driven and shows that student is familiar with concept of Peoplehood and understands [the Nation's] cosmology as discussed in class." The thesis was also assessed as part of "Conventions": "Thesis articulates position and directs paper. Topic sentences subsequently promote thesis and create a logical argument." In the written feedback, Mason tells Jain that his thesis is "a bit weak" because "you fail to make a claim." The feedback continues, "A thesis is an opinion that the rest of your paper supports through evidence and maybe research." On this point, Mason is certainly backed up by the evidence. As previously noted, Jain does not make a claim in his thesis, at least not in the first paragraph (see also Table 18). He explains his goal as a writer and offers clear signposting to direct the reader's attention ("we will examine"; "will be assessed"), but he does not remark upon his assessment in the opening section.

While Jain's thesis statement does not directly reflect the rubric expectation, it does seem to reflect an approach taken by some social science writers. In fact, Table 18 shows that the source text assigned by Mason utilizes a similar move, in which the writers explain what the essay "is intended to do" as part of the framing. Interestingly, Mason seemed to recognize this rhetorical strategy in our text-based discussion. Mason's response is worth reproducing here in full:

> The idea of a thesis saying what you're going to do rather than positing an argument that you back up, um, *I hate it*. *To me* that's not academic writing. That might fly for a certain journal if you're writing an article, but that's not what research and, um, research writing and persuasive writing is about in an academic sense, *to me*. (Interview, June 9, 2017, emphasis added).

Note the ways Mason frames the critique in terms of their own preferences. Even though such a thesis might work "if you're writing an article," Mason implies that the preference for a claim-based thesis statement is what writing is about "in an academic sense." Here we see the ways in which genres are both complex and particular, emerging with each writer-reader interaction (Prior, 1998). Jain tried to sound like a "social science writer" and used a similar discourse strategy as published social science writers, but his teacher, a social scientist with a background in Literature, found this to be an inappropriate strategy for an "academic" writing task.

We see a similar incongruity happening in the critique of Jain's use of the personal pronoun *we*. In the written feedback, Mason writes, "Avoid language like 'we' found in your thesis. Who is ‘we’? This goes undefined at best and calls attention to the writing/reading process at worst.” Here Mason may be generalizing one of the most prominent myths of academic writing: Never use *I*. This myth seems to be part of a push toward artificial objectivity long-since disproved by writing research (Hyland, 2005; Irvin, 2010; R. Rodríguez, 2017). While there are certainly some writing situations in which personal pronouns are inappropriate, they are actually quite common in some disciplinary writing. For example, Hyland’s (2005) corpus study of 240 published research articles showed that scholars in humanities and social science fields tend to represent themselves as more explicitly involved in the research through the use of discursive strategies, including personal pronouns. The source text assigned by Mason serves as an example, as the authors write, “The connections between the four [factors] were somewhat vague at the time, but over the last few years *we* have attempted to explain his ideas fully and utilize the concept of peoplehood to serve as a disciplinary model” (Holm, Pearson, & Chavis, 2003, p. 12, emphasis added). In this example, the authors involve themselves and purposefully call attention to their writing process through the use of the personal *we*, the exact rhetorical strategy Mason argued against.

According to Hyland (2005), academic writers also often seek to engage their readers through the use of the inclusive *we* as used by Jain. Writers use this strategy to create a sense of solidarity with their readers as members of a community who share common goals, or to create a space for dialogue. As one of Hyland’s interview subjects, a scholar in Mechanical Engineering, explains, “I often use ‘we’ to include readers. I suppose it brings out something of the collective endeavor, what we all know and what to accomplish” (p. 183). Jain used *we* in this task (and others) for a similar purpose. He saw this discourse strategy as a way to engage with the reader and include them in exploration. It seems that as Jain tried to position himself as an academic, as someone who might write a journal article for an audience of academic peers, he was being re-positioned by his instructor as a student who doesn't write articles, but college essays, which have their own expected conventions.

Mason's uptake of Jain's text reminds me of Dryer's (2012) important study of teacher feedback. In the study, Dryer compared the reflections of 10 new graduate instructors on their conflicted relationship to academic writing with their responses to papers from FYW students. While these instructors talked about their own mixed feelings about academic writing, they did not seem to grant their students the same agency. For example, one instructor said she purposely dumbs down her writing in graduate course drafts in order to elicit more faculty feedback, but she did not think a student might do the same (p. 438). In other words, the graduate instructors relied on a number of strategies to "play the game" and get through their own academic writing tasks, but they only spoke about their students' academic writing in deficit-based language. As Dryer persuasively suggests, it seems like the uptake of student writing was so connected to their sense of the role of a teacher that it erased their own thoughts about academic writing (p. 433). Like these instructors, Mason's uptake of Jain's essay seems so connected to their understanding of the teacher role and what it means to teach "academic writing" that they overlook what it actually means to be an academic writer and do academic writing. Mason is so focused on "skill-building" and a perceived responsibility to help students "articulate themselves well" that they seem to be overlooking Jain's efforts to *be* an academic writer and make an academic genre (Interview, June 9, 2017).

I'll provide just one more example before discussing Hercules's and Jain's experiences together. Rather than simply applying three discreet elements of the "Peoplehood matrix" (Holm, Pearson, & Chavis, 2003) as per the task instructions, Jain tried to show how these elements are connected. When discussing “sacred history,” one of the elements of the matrix, Jain writes, “These legends like many others have become the Tohono’s sacred history, which has tied them to their culture, religion, and land.” In this sentence, Jain begins to make connections between a people’s sacred history and other elements of the matrix, “place” and “ceremonial cycle.” After he submitted the assignment, Jain told me he was worried he may have “over-complicated” the essay. Jain thought his teacher did not want students to connect the factors in the theoretical framework until the next essay, but “that’s kind of what [he] did in this one,” so he wasn’t sure how it would be read (Interview, May 23, 2017). Sure enough, as we reviewed Jain’s text during our interview, Mason commented on his efforts unprompted, and remarked that Jain was doing “higher intellectual work than what [they] expected” in this first writing task. But Mason qualified this praise, explaining that this intellectual work got “sort of buried” when he didn’t use clear, controlling topic sentences in his body paragraphs (Interview, June 9, 2017). In the feedback, Mason focused solely on the formal issue, the topic sentence, rather than praise Jain’s intellectual work and seek to help him shape his writing to support that work.

I do not mean to argue that controlling sentences or the cohesion they provide are unimportant, nor do I mean to argue that Jain’s writing deserved the highest marks. For example, Mason raised a valid critique that some of Jain’s paragraphs get caught up in the source texts and tend to wander from their purpose of analyzing the museum. But according to Mason’s feedback and evaluation, Jain had *failed* this writing task. Even though he had made a concerted effort to take on the discoursal identity of a social science writer as he tried to write an “academic” essay, and even though his instructor recognized his intellectual work as “higher” than expected, he had *failed* the assignment.

Discussion: Identity, Genre, and Social Motive in General Education

In the introduction to their recently published collection, Poe, Inoue, and Elliot (2018) suggest that genre can be a valuable theoretical frame for socially just writing assessment. They explain that genre helps us to see the ways a product-driven, teacher-oriented writing task "constrains student understanding of audience, frustrates individual identity, and interrupts professional association" (p. 29). In other words, genre theory can help us to see the ways in which typical school-based writing tasks, like the popular five-paragraph essay, become part of the social processes that serve social reproduction. As artifacts, these examples of "academic writing" help us to see the ways the power-laden positions within the figured world of school or academic life limit access to opportunity for writing development and learning.

For decades, scholars have brought a critical orientation to writing and literacy studies to argue that school-base literacy practices reward privileged classes and further alienate marginalized populations (Fox, 1999; Gee, 2008; Stuckey, 1991; Valenzuela, 1999). In the cases described in this chapter, the tasks-in-practice limited Hercules' and Jain's abilities to take on the roles required for more authentic participation in the activities of their use. Jain's frustrated attempt to take on a social scientist persona countered his nascent understanding of disciplinary rhetoric as well as his own understanding of his own writing abilities. And in both cases, the reversion to an "academic essay" further entrenched a student positionality, one that accepts dominant discourses of correctness based on an abstract standard

If we turn Poe, Inoue, and Elliot's (2018) framing around and look to the ways genre theory can point to a socially just writing future, we might say that a genre-based, socially just approach to writing assessment would have students writing for an audience that allows them to practice rhetorical awareness, explore the ways in which writing requires identification, and that encourages access—even if peripherally—to a community of practice. Clearly this did not happen for Hercules and Jain in these writing opportunities. Even as Xena and Conan sought to provide an audience and purpose for the writing task in their course, their expectations as outlined in the outline, rubric, and class discussion reminded Hercules that this project was just like the other "essays" he's written in other courses. And while Jain attempted to take on a social scientist persona, borrowing discursive strategies from published texts and prior instructors, he was frustrated when his instructor re-positioned him as a student writing for his teacher amid the genre expectations of the five-paragraph essay. In both cases, we see the ways in which the centripetal force of "academic writing" constrains the instructor's sense of possibility and assessment practices.

More centrally to this study, we see the ways in which the instructors' understanding of "academic writing" constrains the student writer's identity. As Caraballo (2011) has suggested, identity is an important analytical tool for understanding schools and society, particularly when considering the experiences of students from historically underrepresented populations. As education reform efforts across K-12 and higher education continue to focus on writing as both a goal and a method for improving educational outcomes, exploring student experience and identity formation in these processes can tell us much about the implementation of these efforts. When viewed in the context of broader shifts in education policy, focusing on identity also helps us see the ways in which an institution can support or frustrate student efforts to engage with and grow from interaction with academically literate communities.

According to Holland and her colleagues (1998), people gain identities through figured worlds, and are recognized (or not) as such by others within that figured world. Like genres, then, figured worlds depend upon interaction and intersubjectivity for perpetuation (p. 41). We can see this clearly in this chapter, especially in the case of Hercules's writing task. Hercules understood his writing assignment as a "typical" school-based writing task, in part because he recognized some of the generic features from his own educational trajectory in the instructor-provided outline: a thesis, body paragraphs, a conclusion. He saw this task as taking place in the figured world of schooling and located his role as a "student" writing for his teachers, even as the written directions called upon another imagined world. Hercules was recognized and rewarded for his efforts, but also felt like he could not include some aspects of his personal history that may have been meaningful to the project. On the other hand, Jain attempted to imagine a figured world of academia in which he was a novice social science writer, not only a student writing for his teacher. In Jain's case, the assessment procedures of his instructor indirectly seemed to show him that he did not belong in that world; instead, he needed to focus more on the formal features of the academic essay as it exists in the figured world of undergraduate education.

It's important to note for this discussion that no one actor is responsible for these difficult negotiations of identity and agency. Figured worlds are social processes and the products of institutional and cultural histories. Xena and Conan designed a writing task with a unique purpose and audience, but they may have included the genre-divergent addition of APA style because of the constraints they felt as university instructors and a sense of responsibility they imagined to the figured world of the academy. Similarly, when Mason talks about wanting their students "to be able to articulate themselves well" and to develop their writing skills (Interview, June 9, 2017), they are situating their teaching goals in a larger conversation about academic writing that permeates educational discourse. In other words, what counts as "articulate" or as academic writing seems to be an objective trait because others in the figured world agree and make it so.

General Education and Social Motive

These challenges point to the layered challenges complicating the negotiation of identity across the first-year experience. In essence, the struggle to negotiate identity is at least in part related to the struggle to negotiate the motives of general education. As Adler-Kassner (2014) has noted, the conflicting goals and tensions embedded in general education provide a challenge for education reformers and writing studies scholars, in particular. Loosely defined as education that undergrads across disciplines share regardless of their disciplinary major, current models of general education are textured by inherited expectations that are often in conflict with each other (C. Wells, 2016). General education has sought to serve outcomes related to student learning, societal aims, and institutional purposes. For example, general education can be a means of determining what knowledge or skills all students should acquire, it can be seen as necessary for a democratic and productive citizenry, and it can also be a means of imprinting an institution's mission and identity on the curriculum, as in Columbia University's Core Curriculum program (C. Wells, 2016, pp. 33-38). As Adler-Kassner (2014) explained, even the goals for student learning alone have historically been in tension. General education has been offered to promote the intellectual development of students, to prepare students for participation in society and the workforce, and to learn to approach problems in discipline-specific ways (p. 438). These competing visions have become more salient in recent years as public discourse surrounding education has focused on career preparation at the expense of disciplinary enculturation, perhaps most visible in initiatives like the Common Core State Standards that emphasize "college and career readiness," and in standardized tests like the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) or the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) that measure skills like critical thinking, reading, and writing divorced from their disciplinary contexts. From this perspective, students need general education in order to gain certain skills that they will need later, and because the writing is divorced from content, there is no need for any disciplinary knowledge or an understanding of writing as a dynamic activity (Adler-Kassner, 2014). In other words, this skills-based approach can lead to a focus on writing based on an arhetorical understanding of quality writing that emphasizes correctness and reinforces common notions of “academic writing” such as those discussed by Xena and Mason.

The goals and guidelines associated with the General Education program at my institution help to demonstrate the ways writing can be positioned as a functional skill even among more applied programmatic goals. According to published guidelines, the General Education curriculum at my institution should provide both “fundamental skills and a broad base of knowledge” and “a critical and inquiring attitude, an appreciation of the interdisciplinary nature of subject areas, acceptance of persons of different backgrounds or values, and a deepened sense of self.” Even more ambitiously, the guidelines state, “The goal of General Education is to prepare students to respond more fully and effectively to an increasingly complex and ambiguous world” (ABOR, 2018b). We can see here how the inherited goals of general education have been filtered through the university’s program. According to these guidelines, students should leave with skills and knowledge that demonstrate their intellectual development, with disciplinary understandings, with the ability to accept diversity and participate as a democratic citizen, and they should be ready to contribute to society.

One of the “fundamental skills” of the general education program is writing. As the recently-implemented policy for incorporating writing states, “The faculty recognizes that writing is a basic way of learning, as well as a means of ordering and communicating knowledge.” The policy goes on to explain that “writing engages students actively with the body of facts, ideas, and theories they encounter in the disciplines" and helps them to "develop a critical appreciation of the ways in which knowledge is acquired and applied" (ABOR, 2015). Further in the document, the policy prescribes minimum word counts and process requirements for all general education courses, and it includes a bullet point related to assessment: "Writing assignments are evaluated for format, organization, style, grammar, and punctuation, as well as content and participation in the scholarly conversation." In this framing, assessment of writing is built around formal expectations; the content knowledge and disciplinarity are secondary interests. These general education writing guidelines send the message that writing is valued as a decontextualized skill characterized by formal concerns. Mason's assessment emphasis on formal concerns and Xena and Conan's inclusion of APA style in what appears to be a journalistic writing task seem to reflect this tension between writing as a mode of learning or gaining disciplinary expertise and writing as a decontextualized, "fundamental skill" to be gained in general education.

The problem here is that this rhetorically-evacuated view of writing as a decontextualized skill sequesters student writers from the social motives of written genres because the "academic writing" often requested by instructors solely positions students *as students* demonstrating knowledge to their teachers for the purpose of evaluation. As described in Chapter 2, genre learning is a complex process that requires access to the people, resources, ideas, and values of a community. In disciplinary contexts like graduate school and upper-division courses in the major, student writers may be contributing to disciplinary discussions and working with the genres that operationalize the field, but in general education the goals and writing tasks are much less connected to their authentic uses (Russell, 1997). As such, the identities available to students—at least the students in this study—seem to be constrained by the social motives of schooling. While I acknowledge arguments claiming that genres cannot be fully learned (or taught) outside of their context of use (Spinuzzi, 1996; Wardle, 2009), we saw in Chapter 5 the way Lucy was able to "feel like an activist" because of the writing situation created by her instructor. What learning about and through writing might have happened if Hercules was encouraged to feel like a journalist, or if Jain was encouraged to feel like a scholar, and were treated that way?

Toward a Genre-Based Future in General Education

The ways in which figured worlds and the genres that sustain them are reproduced through social consent raises questions about what might need to change for genre theory to really play a role in the socially-just future of writing assessment. The political theorist Young (2011) has argued that social injustice it generally not the result of maliciousness by individual or institutional agents, but instead mostly occurs as people participate within accepted rules and norms. She explains,

> People act within institutions where they know the rules, that is, understand that others have certain expectations of how things are done, or that certain patterns of speech and behavior have certain meanings, and that individuals will react with sanction or in other, less predictable ways if the implicitly formulated or formal rules are violated. (p. 61)

What Young seems to be suggesting here is that it's not only Jain who runs a risk by using "we" in his academic essay, but Mason also runs a risk of sanction if they do not uphold the so-called "standard" of academic writing that the department or institution seems to reproduce. This institutional pressure may also inform the APA style and thesis-driven approach of the concept application analysis essay, even as the writing situation seemingly-desired by Xena and Conan may not require either.

However, to acknowledge the structural processes at work does not absolve the actors of responsibility for producing more just outcomes in the future. As Young (2011) explains, those in privileged positions need to evaluate not only the ways their interpersonal interactions contribute to social justice, but also whether and how we contribute to social processes that produce structural inequalities (p. 73). The institutional constraints are real, but they cannot be an excuse. As Holland et al. (1998) wrote of figured worlds, "The constraints are overpowering, yet not hermetically sealed. Improvisation can become the basis for reformed subjectivity" (p. 18). With this spirit in mind, let's explore briefly how a pedagogical approach informed by rhetorical genre theory could have helped the student writers and instructors to make more equitable genres together.

First, a genre-focused approach would **clarify the identity or social role expected**. Hercules explained that he never thought his conceptual application task was for anyone other than his instructors. If he did, he explained, he would have done more to explicate the academic sources he was using. In other words, if Hercules felt like he was really writing an article for the student newspaper, he might take on the role of a journalist and write for his audience. Such an approach might open up a discursive space that allows student writers to invest in different ways in their writing. As Nowacek (2011) has suggested, when instructors challenge the preconceptions of a genre, they can help students work with conventions and disciplinary expectations toward new ends. Applying theoretical concepts in a journalistic setting might be such an application.

In addition, this approach would **provide an opportunity for instructors and students to draw upon samples**. Xena and Conan did not have samples in mind for the concept application task, so they (and Hercules) reverted to the familiar 5-paragraph school essay.

Similarly, Jain said that a lack of sample text was one of his biggest challenges in his Peoplehood writing task. In other courses, Jain often used sample texts to understand the discursive patterns of target texts, a strategy I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 7. As Tardy (2009) has explained, such borrowing can be one way for a writer to try on a new identity. Without samples, however, Jain may have overgeneralized from other assignments that seemed similar.

Summary

In this chapter I have focused on the challenges of negotiating identity in two general education writing tasks. We saw Hercules succeed in one task by writing a five-paragraph essay even as his instructors seemed to want something else, and we saw Jain fail a task in which he tried to take on a more academic contributor role but was re-positioned as a student by his instructor. In both cases, the student writers came away from the tasks with more sedimented views of writing as a static, school-based process. These text histories offer individual explorations of student curricular experiences that help us to see the power dynamics at play in college classrooms (Caraballo, 2011). The next chapter builds on this theme, exploring Jain's writing and self-efficacy perspectives across the time of the study in order to see the ways assessment frames his understanding of writing and himself as a writer.

CHAPTER 7

“IT FELT LIKE HIGH SCHOOL”: JAIN’S WRITING AND SELF-EFFICACY ACROSS THE HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE TRANSITION

In Chapter 6, I explored Jain’s challenging experience negotiating the expectations of a general education writing task in a social science course. We saw some of the ways he tried to write “like a social scientist” (Interview, May 23, 2017), but failed to meet the expectations of his instructor whose view of “academic writing” seemed limited when applied to student writing. In an interview following the conclusion of the course, Jain said he got “frustrated” even though he thought the content was interesting. He told me, “It just felt like high school—like my high school class—all over again” (Interview, June 15, 2017).

It felt like high school.

When I followed up by asking what he meant, Jain explained that it was “the environment [a small class], the type of writing we were doing, it was just like high school-type writing. And then when I came here in English 101 it was journalistic and more active and stuff” (Interview, June 15, 2017). This quote deserves some elaboration. Jain said the social science class was “just like high school-type writing,” and tellingly contrasted the experience to his FYW course where he took on the role of a journalist and was “more active.” These descriptions align well with my previous discussion of the predominance of the “school essay” and the passive, knowledge-telling student positioning I described in Chapter 5. He said his social science writing was “simple writing” compared to the FYW assignment that was “more complicated,” and his social science teacher was a “hard grader” who was “very strict on how it was structured and stuff” (Interview, June 15, 2017). Taken together, we see that for Jain, “high school-type writing” is “simple,” yet graded strictly based on formal concerns.

As I reviewed the interview transcripts and considered my conversations with Jain over the prior 15 months, I was struck by the ways he talked about himself as a writer. For example, "I'm not really a good writer" was one of the first things Jain said to me in a formal interview setting (Interview, April 27, 2016). Over our first few interviews he told me about the ways "writing is hard" for him, including self-identified challenges such as analyzing literature and "analyzing it deep enough" (Interview, September 28, 2016), writing introductions and conclusions, and taking a long time to write any kind of school task. Jain told me it's not necessarily the time it takes to write that frustrates him, but that "it takes so long to do it and it doesn't come out to a good paper" (Interview, September 28, 2016). When I finally asked him why he doesn't think his efforts become a "good paper," Jain responded, "From my scores" (Interview, September 28, 2016). During another interview I reminded him that he earned a merit-based scholarship to attend college, but Jain told me he thought the scholarship was mostly based on his ACT scores, and while he scored well on reading and math, he only earned a 3 out of 6 on the writing portion of the ACT. He continued, "I mean, if I did as bad as I did on the reading and math as I did on the writing I probably wouldn't have got as much money" (Interview, April 27, 2016). Ah, there it is. Scores. Tests. Grades. *I'm not really a good writer.*

In their study of student transfer of writing knowledge, Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak (2014) explored what they named the "point of departure" that often influences the approach students will take to their writing in college. This point of departure is an identity marker "constituted by external benchmarks like grades and tests that in effect tell a writer what kind of, and how good, a writer he or she is" (p. 106). The authors explained that when a student's writerly self-identity is primarily influenced by grades and their goal is to meet teacher expectations, they may develop a "fixed identity…as the good writers or bad writers they are now and will be forever" (pp. 107-108). This point of departure bears similarities to the notion of self-efficacy in educational psychology. In Pajares's (2003) review of self-efficacy in writing research, he defines self-efficacy as the beliefs people hold about their capabilities. Drawing from Bandura's (1977) seminal work, Pajares (2003) explains that these "beliefs that students create, develop, and hold to be true about themselves are vital forces in their success or failure in school," especially because self-efficacy is related to motivation (p. 140). In writing, this can mean a student's self-efficacy may determine their perseverance, attention, and effort when completing a writing task.

Importantly for this discussion of Jain's writing and sense of writerly identity, research shows that people form self-efficacy perceptions by interpreting information from multiple sources, including the results of one's performance, like test scores (Pajares, 2003). Jain's persistent self-assessment as "not really a good writer" based on his test scores and grades seems to reflect this research and other studies that demonstrate the ways high school may frame a student writer's college experience (c.f., Dennihy, 2015; Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014). In fact, when Jain earned As in his first semester FYW course and a writing-intensive general education course focused on cultural studies, he attributed his success not to his writing abilities or his diligent efforts, but to the fact that "they're more lenient here in the grading" (Interview, December 13, 2016). Even as his FYW instructor gave him specific feedback about the ways his writing was meeting the rhetorical context of the writing task (see Chapter 5), Jain's prior experience with graded writing and standardized tests seemed to have created a negative sense of writerly identity to the point that he saw his writing success as the mark of a lenient, generous grader rather than his own abilities to meet the rhetorical needs of a specific writing task.

In this chapter, I want to explore this discontinuity further by examining Jain's texts and ideas about his writing and writerly ability over a two-year period. By analyzing Jain's texts, what can we learn about him as a writer? How can a student who earns As in multiple writing-intensive college courses hold such a negative self-assessment of his own writing abilities? And what might this phenomenon tell writing studies scholars and teachers about the ways we discuss and write about writing development and student learning?

To engage these questions and explore Jain's learning over the course of the study, I drew from a range of data. First, I conducted a textual analysis of graded writing tasks Jain shared with me over a two-year time period beginning in his senior year of high school through the summer course following his first year of college study. Drawing from discourse analysis methods, I looked for specific writing strategies that Jain used, reused, and adapted across institutional and disciplinary contexts in an effort to assess his writing from a textual dimension. As I explored the data, I returned to discourse-based interviews to provide Jain's reasoning for his choices, when possible. While the findings I present in this chapter are necessarily limited to the features I explored, they do seem to show Jain's rhetorical sensitivity and ability to adapt to new writing situations. In short, Jain brings a repertoire of discourse strategies that he draws upon when presented with differing writing opportunities. However, because much of his college writing was "like high school" in meaningful ways, Jain's ability to adapt or make specific choices about use or reuse of textual features was most salient when he was presented with new writing opportunities or writing opportunities that positioned him in a contributing, knowledge-producing role.

In the second half of the chapter, I examine how the predominance of limited, decontextualized school-based writing opportunities might lead even a rhetorically-attuned writer like Jain to carry a negative self-identity in school writing contexts. Drawing from interviews, observations, and class materials, I describe the form-driven, accuracy-focused understanding of writing promulgated across Jain's schooling and connect this pattern to a broader discussion of historically-produced power relations in educational contexts. Honoring Tuck and Yang's (2014) caution against playing the blame game in social science research, I suggest that Jain's limited opportunities are not the result of poor individual teachers or nefarious administrators or policymakers but are instead part of a social structural problem in education that reproduces injustice. I show how Jain's pattern of assessment experiences and feedback received reflects a broader racialized writing context. I close by arguing for pedagogical, programmatic, and institutional interventions needed to support the writing education of students from historically underrepresented populations.

Methodology: Writing Development from a Textual Analysis Lens

Writing studies scholars have long-argued for a place for textual analysis in writing research. Especially in studies of genre and discourse, scholars have argued that textual analysis can provide important insight into teaching and learning (Aull & Lancaster, 2014; Ivanič, 1999, Kamberelis, 1998). For example, even as Kamberelis (1998) recognized the potential for instrumentalism in the linguistically-focused Sydney School of genre pedagogy, he argued that the linguistic aspects of "over-determined and over-determining social contexts such as public schools" are actually "quite durable," making linguistic analysis of school-based genres an important complement to more contextualized, process-based research. Others have made similar arguments by focusing on specific textual detail in order to examine discursive identity (Ivanič, 1998) or to compare novice and more experienced writers in an effort to help instructors better explicate and teach the linguistic conventions and expectations of academic writing (Aull & Lancaster, 2014; Lancaster, 2014).

Donahue and Foster-Johnson (2018) recently argued that textual analysis can raise questions that might go unnoticed in other studies, even if those questions might remain unanswered. In their recent study of the “textual transition” first-year undergraduate students make from one context to another, Donahue and Foster-Johnson examined textual features that reappeared (or didn’t) as students wrote in new contexts. They collected the first and last “source-based” papers written by 156 student participants across a two-course FYW sequence (636 total texts) and examined seven text features. By focusing on reuse or nonreuse of certain discourse features, the authors suggested that reuse is itself a form of adaptation (p. 375), and that "student writers are moving knowledge forward while also retreating, adapting, in constant motion as they work through the liminal spaces of the first-year sequence" (p. 378). In other words, scholars, teachers, and administrators should not expect to see a marked difference even in a contained FYW sequence because writing development is a recursive, nonlinear process, and because students tend to write in multiple genres rather than revisiting similar genres across courses. By taking a lexicogrammatical approach to what was, in essence, a program assessment, they were also able to raise questions about their own program. For example, they were left wondering whether there were actually more similarities between writing contexts than assumed, or if there were some other elements of these contexts—like content knowledge, for example—that seemed to make reuse and adaptation more difficult for student writers. This approach to textual analysis was helpful as I considered Jain’s claim that some of his college writing felt like high school.

Stance, Engagement, and the Rhetorical Dimensions of Academic Writing

Product-based research achieved through textual analysis has also been generative for exploring the ways in which specific textual strategies serve rhetorical means and create a sense of authority and identity in academic writing. Hyland's (2004) rhetorical approach to understanding lexicogrammatical features through corpus-based research has been especially influential. He has argued that corpus-based writing research can illuminate the "regularity and repetition" that "conjure[s] up institutional patterns which naturally and ideologically reflect and maintain such patterns" (p. xi). Through various studies of student-written and published academic writing, Hyland has shown the ways in which particular discursive strategies both reflect and perpetuate the ideologies of particular discourse communities (Hyland 2002; Hyland, 2004; Hyland, 2005; Hyland, 2015). For example, Hyland's (2005) study of the scientific letter led to an in-depth analysis of hedging, qualifying a statement or assertion with words like *possible* or *might*, and boosting, expressing certainty with words like *clearly* or *obviously*, in scientific writing. For Hyland, hedges and boosters are more than simply ways of expressing a level of certainty toward an interpretation or a piece of data, they are also "an indication of the writer's acknowledgment of disciplinary norms of appropriate argument" (p. 101). He suggested that academic writers need to use hedges in order to show deference and a proper level of caution, but also tend to balance this "self-effacement" with the use of boosters that offer assertion and a degree of self-involvement in the discussion (p. 97). This careful linguistic dance varies across disciplines and even sub-fields or localized discourse communities in terms of the kinds of hedges and boosters or the patterned frequency of these moves, demonstrating the ways in which even the academic commitment to certainty or personal interpretation can be viewed through lexicogrammatical choices.

Hyland (2005) has argued that effective academic writing "depends on rhetorical decisions about interpersonal intrusion," with stance markers like hedges and boosters as a writer-oriented way academics represent themselves and their positions in a text (p. 190). *Stance,* "a linguistic, social, and epistemological concept" (Aull & Lancaster, 2014, p. 174) that can illuminate the "subtle social knowledge writers need to speak confidently to readers" (Soliday, 2011, p. 36), is a growing focus of research in academic writing because it is often considered tacit writing knowledge that can illuminate the writer's authorial presence in the text. Stance encompasses the author's view toward the material under discussion in the text, the author's relationship toward the reader, and the author's stance toward the larger discourse community (Aull & Lancaster, 2014, p. 174).

Hyland (2005) distinguished between stance, the authorial voice or the "attitudinal dimension" of textual "voice" (p. 176), and *engagement*, the interactional aspect of academic writing, or how writers relate to their readers. Just as writers use stance markers to express themselves and their approach to the content, they also seek to engage their readers in rhetorical ways. Hyland suggested that writers use engagement strategies to "meet readers' expectations of inclusion and disciplinary solidarity" and "to rhetorically position the audience," such as when a writer anticipates a certain objection or reaction and leads the reader to the desired conclusion (p. 182). Some features of engagement include relational markers like the inclusive *we* and *you* that indicate solidarity, directives ("*Imagine* if…"), personal asides, or questions that arouse interest or lead the reader to the desired interpretation. The use of engagement strategies, like stance, tend to vary across genres and disciplines, indicating some level of agreement among academic discourse communities about whether and how much reader engagement is expected in an academic text.

Corpus-based research comparing novice and more experienced academic writers has led some scholars to identify stance and engagement as potential pedagogical focus areas. For example, some have pointed out the inherent teaching and learning issue that arises when instructors may tacitly value certain stances toward the material or the reader, but they do not recognize or teach how those stances are used in academic texts (Lancaster, 2014; Soliday, 2011). Lancaster (2014) explains that instructors will often tell students they need to take an "authoritative stance" or a "critical stance" and hold a tacit expectation of what that looks like, but they do not teach the subtle rhetorical strategies often realized through linguistic choices that help students to project an authorial presence in the texts. Aull and Lancaster (2014) have suggested that because certain expressions of stance are valued—for example, hedging is valued because it creates an impression of cautious analysis privileged by academics—undergraduate students can be assisted to be more successful in college-level writing with access to the rhetorical moves that are more typical of expert groups (Aull & Lancaster, 2014, p. 153).

Here I must assert my authorial presence and note that just as research on textual features can offer only a partial understanding of a writer's choices, there also exists a danger in focusing *too much* on stance or other linguistic markers as necessary for "good writing" or as a model for explicit teaching. There exists an inherent risk of instrumentalism that emerges when teaching strategies focus too much on what students may see as templates (Luke, 1996). Furthermore, disciplinary genres and even approaches to style are dynamic and situated, and an instructor's preferences may be as influenced by their literacy histories as much as their disciplinary affiliation (Olinger, 2014a). Authorial intervention seems to be particularly fraught, as students may be disciplined for being too personal or too present in the text as we saw in Jain's experience with the pronoun *we* in Chapter 6. And even if a student were to "master" their uses of hedges and boosters by mimicking their instructors or sample texts, they may not have the content knowledge or disciplinary understanding to fully inhabit the authoritative role they are trying on. These limitations notwithstanding, these large-scale studies of academic writing do help us to see the patterns that seem to reproduce academic discourse communities, and, as Donahue and Foster-Johnson (2018) implied, they can offer metrics to understand the teaching and learning contexts student writers experience.

Method of Textual Analysis

Jain's self-efficacy judgments of his own writing abilities seemed to reflect the ways his textual products did not meet a certain standard as defined by standardized tests, mass-produced textbooks, or his instructors. However, I had always noticed a rhetorical sensitivity in Jain's writing and in his talk about writing, and I wondered if an analysis of specific linguistic or discursive strategies would illuminate abilities that may not be valued in the "over-determined and over-determining" (Kamberelis, 1998) school writing and assessment contexts. The analysis that follows attempts to see how or if Jain's writing demonstrated adaptation to different writing contexts over the course of his transition to college. In other words, my analysis takes into account the possibility that Jain's use of distinct textual strategies for different genres and situations may not be rewarded in school-based writing contexts. The questions that guide this analysis include:

- What discourse features and strategies of stance and engagement does Jain reuse or adapt as he transitions to new writing contexts?
- What resources does Jain seem to be drawing on as he makes these writing choices in academic contexts?

In order to explore Jain's writing choices at a discourse level, I began by building a collection of Jain's final drafts over a two-year period from high school through the summer after his first year of university writing. I was limited by the writing Jain shared with me, but I was able to collect texts from seven courses: two ELA sections from high school, one FYW course, three General Education courses, and one lab-based introductory physics course for engineering majors. The FYW course was the only course that called for multiple genres, so I included each of the texts in the corpus. For other courses with repeated assignments, I followed Donahue and Foster-Johnson's (2018) model and selected two texts, one from early and one from the end of the course, when possible. In total, I included in this analysis 12 of Jain's texts totaling 10,504 words. Because it was a relatively small data set, I printed the texts and conducted the analysis by hand.

Analyzing discourse features. I first analyzed four discourse features related to introductions, thesis statements, and conclusions modeled on Donahue and Foster-Johnson's (2018) data analysis methods (see Table 19). I chose these features because they were clearly marked in Jain's high school ELA textbook and carried into the metagenres—the "atmospheres of wordings and activities" surrounding the genres of writing classrooms such as task guidelines and grading rubrics (Giltrow, 2001, p. 195)—in his college courses. While I will mostly discuss the relationship between task, thesis type, and thesis placement in my discussion of the findings, I included the conclusion type in Table 19 because it relates to Jain's choice of thesis placement. For example, when Jain decided to include his thesis at the end of his text, he was more likely to introduce new information to extend or support it in the conclusion.

Analyzing stance and engagement. I read for stance and engagement strategies—including hedges, boosters, self-mentions, and relational markers—and used different colored

Table 19

Discourse features in Jain' s writing over two years, including high school ELA, FYW, General education, and one disciplinary course. Features based on Donahue and Foster-Johnson (2018).

Semester	Class Topic	Task	Text Type	Thesis type	Thesis	Intro type	Conclusion
High School	ELA	Literary analysis	School essay	interpretive	beginning	previews argument	restatement of the thesis
High School	ELA	Literary analysis	School essay	evaluative	beginning	previews argument	restatement of the thesis
Semester 1	Public Health	" Response paper" (Analysis)	School essay	summative	end	provides context	provides new information
Semester 1	Public Health	" Response paper" (Analysis)	School essay	summative	end	provides context	provides new information
Semester 1	Cultural Studies	Essay (Analysis)	School essay	interpretive	beginning	provides context	restatement of the thesis
Semester 1	FYW	Reflection of an event	Literary journalism	interpretive	End	provides context	provides new information
Semester 1	FYW	Profile of a person or community	Profile	Summative	End	provides context	provides new information
Semester 1	FYW	Genre analysis	School essay	interpretive	beginning	provides context	restatement of the thesis
Semester 2	Physics	Lab report	Lab report	none	n/a	provides context	provides new information
Semester 2	Physics	Lab report	Lab report	None	n/a	provides context	provides new information
Summer	Social Sciences	Analysis of museum exhibit	School essay	evaluative	end	provides context	restatement of the thesis
Summer	Social Sciences	Research paper	School essay	Interpretive	Beginning	previews argument	restatement of the thesis

highlighters to keep track of different features. After counting the instances of hedges, boosters, self-mentions, and relational markers, I normalized the raw data counts in order to view relative frequency and compare Jain's use of stance and engagement markers in different text types. I returned to interview transcripts to provide further depth and shed light on why Jain may have been making these choices.

Findings: Rhetorical Sensitivity and Adaptation

Analysis of four discourse features—thesis type, thesis placement, introduction type, and conclusion type—as well as stance and engagement markers seem to indicate Jain's rhetorical sensitivity to changing writing situations. Jain wrote a variety of text types during the course of the study, including thesis-driven, analytical school essays as well as lab reports and journalistic writing in FYW that belong to the constellation of "reporting genres" (Bhatia, 2002). Table 19 visualizes these tasks longitudinally from high school through summer following Jain's first year of college study.

The same writing tasks are visualized in Figure 8 on the "opportunities matrix" introduced in Chapter 5. To review, this visual presents a continuum along the x-axis from decontextualized writing tasks like the school-based analysis of a text to more participatory, situated activities such as a lab report. These tasks were characterized by opportunities in which Jain could engage in the activities of writers in that field or profession, such as conducting an interview for a journalistic task or completing an experimental lab experiment in physics.

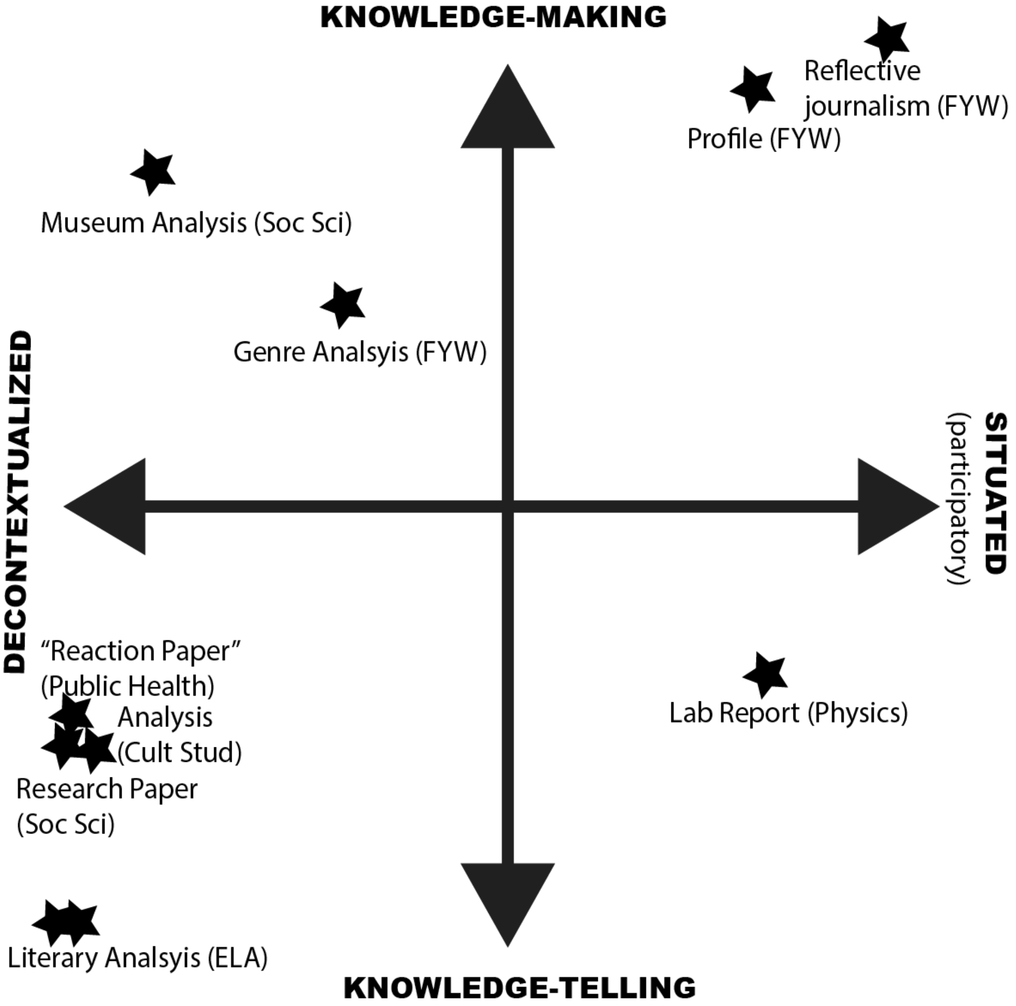

KNOWLEDGE-MAKING
Reflective journalism (FYW)
Profile (FYW)
Museum Analysis (Soc Sci)
Genre Analsyis (FYW)
DECONTEXTUALIZED
SITUATED
(participatory)
"Reaction Paper" (Public Health)
Analysis (Cult Stud)
Research Paper (Soc Sci)
Lab Report (Physics)
Literary Analsyis (ELA)
KNOWLEDGE-TELLING

Figure 8. Writing opportunities matrix for Jain's writing over a two-year period

Echoing Geisler's (1995) distinction between "knowledge-transmission" and "knowledge making," the y-axis shows a continuum from knowledge-telling to knowledge-making opportunities. The distinction between knowledge-telling and knowledge-making relates to how much Jain is repeating back something his instructor already knows, like his literary analysis tasks in high school, or if he has an opportunity to develop and share new knowledge or use learned knowledge in novel ways. In short, a knowledge-telling writing task calls on students to demonstrate their knowledge to the teacher as examiner as opposed to the knowledge-making writing associated with the culture of the academy and many professions (Dias, Freedman, Medway, & Paré, 1999; Geisler, 1995). As shown in the figure, it is possible to have a decontextualized, knowledge-making task like the genre analysis in FYW, or a situated, knowledge-telling task like the lab report in introductory Physics. The opportunities matrix becomes salient as we compare Jain's rhetorical choices across writing contexts rather than viewing his writing longitudinally. In the analysis, Jain appeared more likely to adapt his writing when he was involved in participatory learning tasks, which were characterized by a combination of stated audience, purpose, or genre, and/or activities that allowed him to take on the processes, styles, and identities of writers in that field or profession. In these tasks, he seemed to tacitly recognize the dynamic relationship of form and content and adapt some of his discourse strategies depending on the task and field of study. I suggest that his desire to adapt and use different strategies can be read as awareness of context and situation and an ability to draw from different aspects of his repertoire depending upon the task.

Discourse Feature Use, Reuse, and Adaptation

Thesis style. As demonstrated in Table 19, Jain varied his thesis style and placement depending upon the writing task. With the exception of the museum exhibit analysis discussed previously in Chapter 6, Jain seemed to follow the same thesis type and placement for tasks that required him to "analyze" texts. Whether literary analysis, genre analysis, or application of a theory to an element of popular culture (Cultural Studies), Jain wrote an interpretive thesis statement in his introduction that guided the rest of the text. For example, in his high school ELA course, Jain wrote:

> In The Metamorphosis, the absurdity of life is shown mainly with the reaction of characters towards the transformation, the symbolism throughout the story, and the conflicts faced in it.

In an analysis of food as a medium of popular culture in a cultural studies general education course, Jain wrote:

> A simple cup of hot cocoa helped create a war due to the cultural meaning it had to the Aztecs and even in modern society there are many foods and dishes that express the popular culture of a country or culture.

In both of these examples, we see Jain providing a thesis statement that foregrounds his interpretation of a text or concept.

Thesis placement. Jain's choice of thesis placement at the beginning or the end of the text also seemed to follow a pattern, as the five tasks featuring a thesis at the end all foregrounded a more evaluative, perhaps even personal approach to the task. The FYW reflective writing and profile tasks, for example, required Jain to be "journalistic and more active and stuff" (Interview, June 15, 2017). He seemed to see these as reader-oriented tasks in which his role was to create a sense of expectation or interest to draw the reader along, or "to make the audience wonder," as he noticed in the teacher-provided samples (Interview, December 13, 2016). Jain recognized something similar in the museum exhibit analysis task in his summer social sciences course, as he chose to offer his evaluation in the conclusion, writing in the final sentence, "…the *Paths of Life* exhibit is successful in presenting the [Native's] Peoplehood." Borrowing from the advice of another instructor, Jain explained, "If you say what you think on your introduction, your reader might just be uninterested and try to refute every part away. 'Cause I say, 'Oh, the color red is the best color.' And as a reader you're just gonna automatically be against it" (Interview, May 23, 2017). While we know from Chapter 6 that Jain's instructor did not agree with this approach, Thaiss and Zawacki (2006) found that thesis placement is not always agreed upon among instructors, even within the same department. They share an anecdote of a heated discussion among International and Public Affairs faculty wherein half of the instructors advocated for stating the argument in a thesis statement in the introduction, while the other half preferred waiting so that writers do not give away their conclusion before providing the evidence that supports their argument (p. 84). In short, while Jain's choice did not align with his instructor's expectation, his thesis placement choice may have been supported by other instructors, perhaps even in the same field.

Use, Reuse, and Adaptation of Stance and Engagement Strategies

My exploration of common interactional discourse features— those that help writers to convey judgements and align themselves with their readers, such as stance and engagement markers (Paltridge, 2012, pp. 76-77)—similarly found Jain adapting to genre and task expectations, as Jain appeared attentive to the ways his purpose and audience might require him to adapt his discursive approach.

Stance. With the exception of a few specific tasks, Jain tended to project more assertive claims through the use of boosters rather than qualify his statements (see Table 20). In one high school task, for example, Jain was asked to determine which of the theoretical lenses discussed in the course would be most effective to interpret a short story. In the final sentence, Jain wrote:

> With the Buyers of Dreams we use a historical, cultural, and feminist lens since they are the **best** and **most effective** lenses in order to understand **best** the meaning of the work.

In this case, Jain used bolded boosters like “best” and “most” that serve to emphasize the confidence in his claim. In an analysis essay in his Cultural Studies class, Jain begins a paragraph by writing,

> To begin with, food is one of the symbols that **can easily** express popular culture in any society.

And in his final research paper the summer social sciences course, Jain wrote:

> With this part of the ‘Navaho Origin Legend” the cultural value of having an extended family **is seen**.

In each of these examples, Jain is expressing a certain level of commitment to the claim (Lancaster, 2014). By saying food is a symbol that “easily” expresses culture or closing his interpretation of an origin myth by stating a cultural value “is seen,” Jain is expressing certainty in his interpretations and effectively precluding other opinions.

As in my examination of thesis statements, the “analysis” tasks seemed to have elicited a common discursive approach with regard to stance expressions. As demonstrated in Table 20, analysis tasks accounted for seven of the top eight tasks in terms of frequency of boosters and all but one of the analysis tasks elicited at least one booster per 250 words. Of the reporting genres, Jain only used one booster per 250 words in the profile task. The analysis tasks also seemed to demonstrate a pattern in the relative frequency of boosters to hedges, with the majority featuring a greater percentage of boosters than hedges, whereas the reporting genres tended to exhibit more equivalent usages.

Table 20

Frequency of boosters and hedges, per 250 words, organized by frequency of boosters.

Text Type	Task Description	Boosters	Hedges
School Essay	Essay (analysis)	2.95	0.49
School Essay	Literary Analysis (timed)	2.55	2.55
School Essay	Literary Analysis	2.15	0.54
School Essay	Research paper	1.88	0
Profile	Profile	1.65	0
School Essay	Genre analysis	1.5	0.43
School Essay	"Response Paper" (analysis)	1.49	0.74
School Essay	"Response Paper" (analysis)	1.24	0
Lab Report	Lab Report	0.61	0.61
Lab Report	Lab Report	0.5	0.5
Literary journalism	Reflection on an event	0.2	2.18
School Essay	Analysis of museum exhibit	0	0

One notable exception to this pattern of relative stance markers in Jain's analysis tasks was a timed literary analysis essay in high school that featured an equal number of boosters and hedges. The timed nature of this essay exam led me to wonder if Jain tended to make his writing more forceful and assertive through the use of boosters when he had time to revise. To explore this possibility, during a discourse-based interview I provided Jain different options to qualify or assert his claims more strongly in this text. For example, in the timed essay he wrote the assertive claim:

> When the third woman appears and makes her point, **we can see through a historical lens** that the author is taking a stand against the new ways of a modern woman.

In the interview, I asked him if he preferred his original or a more qualified claim:

> When the third women appears and makes her point, **the historical lens allows us *to infer*** that the author is taking a stand against the new ways of a modern woman.

I was surprised to find that in this example and throughout the discussion about this task Jain almost always chose the more qualified phrase. However, when we did the same exercise for his FYW genre analysis, he chose more boosted phrases. He explained, “I guess it's better to be firm 'cause you're trying to persuade someone” (Interview, January 30, 2017). However, Jain further explained the difference in his choices by saying that he “didn’t do it purposefully” and “probably just was more confident on my observations” in the genre analysis than the literary analysis. According to Jain, he was more assertive when he actually felt “more confident” about his claims. The connection Jain is making between assertiveness and confidence elicits one of the more interesting paradoxes of academic writing: while lower-division undergraduate writers tend to use more boosters than hedges due to a desire to seem authoritative or correct. published academic writers tend to qualify claims to support their authority as cautious analysts in academic discourse communities (Aull & Lancaster, 2014). In other words, experienced academic writers tend to qualify their claims as a way of demonstrating their expertise.

The other texts in which Jain qualified his claims at least as much as he boosted them were his journalistic writing in FYW and his two lab reports, which can broadly be considered reporting genres. It strikes me that these three tasks were also the three with the highest number of self-mentions, in which Jain was acknowledging himself and his own role directly in the text (see Table 21). For example, in the reflective essay he wrote:

> Before arriving, **I** had imagined the spectators to be the stereotypical macho man, but **I** soon observed…

In the lab reports, which were all co-authored, Jain narrated the procedures and methods, writing,

> The software allowed **us** to analyze the video.

In each of these examples, Jain made himself visible as the writer and researcher, inserting himself into his methods and interpretations.

It seems that when Jain explicitly included himself in the text using self-mentions in the reporting genres, he tended to qualify and assert his claims in equal measure. For example, Jain observed a Friday night drag race and made connections to broader social and cultural issues for the FYW journalistic writing task I described in detail in Chapter 5. After observing drag racers choosing to burn out before the start of the race, Jain writes, "**I** thought **maybe** it was just for intimidation or simply to look cool" (emphasis added). In the conclusion of a lab report, he explains that the "tiny amount of error…**may** be due to some systematic errors while conducting the experiment…" (emphasis added). What this indicates to me is that when Jain inserts himself into his writing, making clear that he is the interpreter (drag race) or the one conducting the experiment (lab reports), he also leaves room for others to come to different conclusions. While this may reflect Jain's "confidence" (or lack thereof) in these texts, I also wonder if these choices may be due to the visibility of Jain's authorship and his audience in these genres. Hyland (2002)

Table 21

Frequency of stance markers in Jain's writing, per 250 words, organized by frequency of self-mentions.

Text Type	Task Description	Self-mentions	Hedges	Boosters
Lab Report	Lab Report	9.98	0.5	0.5
Literary journalism	Reflection on an event	7.13	2.18	2.18
Lab Report	Lab Report	6.88	0.61	0.61
Profile	Profile	1.02	0	1.65
School Essay	Literary Analysis	0	0.54	2.15
School Essay	Literary Analysis (timed)	0	2.55	2.55
School Essay	"Response Paper" (analysis)	0	0.74	1.49
School Essay	"Response Paper" (analysis)	0	0	1.24
School Essay	Essay (analysis)	0	0.49	1.95
School Essay	Genre analysis	0	0.43	1.5
School Essay	Analysis of museum exhibit	0	0	0
School Essay	Research paper	0	0	1.88

has argued that the use of first-person pronouns can be "a powerful means by which writers express an identity by asserting their claim to speak as an authority" (p. 1094), but the text types assigned in school also typically set out an unequal writer-reader relationship that makes students hesitant to make themselves visible (p. 1109). The participatory tasks described in this section seemed to provide an opportunity for Jain to take on a discursive identity other than a student writing for a teacher. In these reader-oriented reporting genres, he may have subconsciously decided to assert his authority by acknowledging the role of interpretation in his claims, much as a more experienced writer would in these genres.

Table 22

Frequency of relational markers in Jain's writing, per 250 words

Text Type	Task Description	Relational markers
School Essay	"Response Paper" (analysis)	5.6
School Essay	"Response Paper" (analysis)	3.72
Profile	Profile	2.88
School Essay	Essay (analysis)	2.46
School Essay	Literary Analysis (timed)	2.18
Lab Report	Lab Report	1.21
Lab Report	Lab Report	1.0
Literary journalism	Reflection on an event	0.74
School Essay	Genre analysis	0.64
School Essay	Literary Analysis	0.54
School Essay	Analysis of museum exhibit	0.3
School Essay	Research paper	0.16

Engagement. There did not seem to be a similarly clear pattern over time or across text types related to Jain's overall use of engagement strategies such as referring explicitly to the reader (*you*), the inclusive *we*, a leading question, or an interrogative (*Imagine…*), each of which he used at least once in his writing over the course of the two-year period. While Jain did seem to use these relational markers more frequently when writing “analysis” texts, there were outliers, such as the profile project (see Table 22).

When looking more closely at the placement of relational markers in Jain’s texts, I noticed that over 40% (27 of 66 total uses) occurred in the concluding sections. Jain’s conclusions were usually one paragraph long, except for the lab reports in which the section labeled “Discussion and Conclusion” was anywhere from one to three paragraphs. Jain’s use of relational markers in concluding sections repeated across institutional and disciplinary contexts (see Figure 9). In fact, I observed midway through his first semester that all of Jain’s concluding paragraphs began with the phrase, *As you can see*. In fact, Jain used *as you can see* in every writing task he shared with me through the end of his first semester of college, except for the journalistic writing about the drag race in FYW. Jain told me that he learned this strategy for transitioning to conclusions in middle school and just kept using it. But when I pressed him in a discourse-based interview after his first semester at the university—offering him a choice between *As you can see* and *In conclusion*, another popular strategy I’ve seen students use in my FYW courses—Jain preferred the more interactional approach. He explained, “When you read *as you can see*, it kinda tells the audience, ‘alright, so this is kind of the end, and just recall what you've read’” (Interview, December 13, 2016). In other words, Jain sees this discourse strategy as an element of the writer-reader relationship; he uses relational markers to guide the reader. Jain continued:

> “As you can see” kind of makes the reader look back at what he's read. And then if you were to put “In conclusion…,” you'd still be tying it [up]…like it's…the end of the essay,

> *but like the reader won't really like look back*. [B: uh huh] *You just cut him off right there*. (December 13, 2016, emphasis added)

As you can see in the quote above—see what I did there?—Jain has a well-reasoned explanation for choosing an engagement strategy in his concluding section, even if the choice was habit rather than an explicit rhetorical choice each time. He wants his reader to think about what came before, perhaps to remember the evidence Jain provided earlier in the text, before reading the concluding thoughts. In contrast to a less interactional signal like *in conclusion,* Jain also sees the more reader-engaged phrase as a cohesion strategy as opposed to separating the conclusion (“cut[ting] him off”) from everything that came before.

“***As you can see***, Kafka uses the characters reaction…” (High school ELA)

“***As you can see***, with the multiple perspectives **we** can understand…” (High school ELA)

“***As you can see***, as a society **we** tend to categorize…” (1st semester, Public Health)

“***As you can see***, through the ignorance and misinformation of AIDS…” (1st semester, Public Health)

“***As you can see***, food is a great median to express popular culture…” (1st semester, Cultural Studies)

“After seeing all the children enjoying the races and having a good time that is when I realized…” (1st semester, FYW)

“***As you can see***, although the presidential candidate Donald Trump can point out the few radical Muslims…” (1st semester, FYW)

“***As you can see***, through the similar features and the organization of app stores…” (1st semester, FYW)

Figure 9. The first sentence of concluding paragraphs for Jain’s texts in the data set through the first semester of college. Emphasis added.

Attention to Resources in Use, Reuse, and Adaptation

At this point, we have some evidence to offer answers to the first question that guided this exploration: *What discourse features and strategies of stance and engagement does Jain reuse or adapt as he transitions to new writing contexts?* Over two-years of data, Jain seemed to reuse or adapt certain discourse features including thesis structure and placement as well as metadiscourse strategies that indicate a writer's stance toward the content and engagement with the reader. In this section I interpret some influences on these choices by comparing the textual analysis findings with interview transcripts and class materials to answer the other question that guided this analysis: *What resources does Jain seem to be drawing on as he makes these writing choices in academic contexts?* Even in this limited dataset, I am able to identify a few direct resources that influenced Jain's decisions, including the writing opportunities presented, explicit instruction, and the availability of samples. Jain seemed to be drawing from these resources as he determined how to draw from his repertoire of writing strategies across rhetorical contexts.

Influence of writing opportunities. While thesis structure and placement were often prescribed by his instructors, the metadiscourse strategies Jain used, reused, and adapted were never explicitly taught in his classes. Because Jain did not use these features consistently over the course of the data, we can surmise that Jain is reusing and adapting depending on the writing opportunity he is presented. Much like in Donahue and Foster-Johnson's (2018) study that found not much difference in writing expectations across the FYW sequence, Jain's use, reuse, and adaptation in a two-year period shows that there may not have been much of a difference between his high school and college writing opportunities and expectations. While at this level of analysis we cannot know the quality or depth of his analysis or how accurately he used sources, or even how well his choices aligned with his instructors' expectations, I can share that the only grades Jain earned below a “B” were in the social science course discussed in Chapter 6. For the most part, Jain made similar choices as he did in high school when he was writing similar school essays with similar expectations as in high school; it was only when he was offered new opportunities that he seemed to adapt or make specific choices about use or reuse of textual features. When Jain says “it felt like high school” in his social sciences class, it’s because in many ways it *was* like high school, an idea I will explore in more depth in the next section.

On the other hand, the reporting tasks in which Jain seemed to adapt his choices and exhibit textual features were each associated with particular discursive identities—the reflective essay and profile in FYW, and the lab report in Engineering—and were also more participatory writing tasks that involved him in the activities of the task: observing an event, interviewing a classmate about his refugee experience, or conducting an experiment. As discussed in Chapter 5, these kinds of school-based writing opportunities are examples of social learning opportunities in which learners do something at the end they were unable to do before (Freedman & Adam, 2000. p. 34). The profile and reflective essay about the drag race, in particular, were opportunities for Jain to contribute new understandings as a knowledge-maker. Per the General Education writing policy, which states, “Writing assignments are evaluated for format, organization, style, grammar, and punctuation, as well as content and participation in the scholarly conversation” (ABOR, 2015), we might say these were the few opportunities Jain had to *contribute* as a participant in the conversation, not simply to display what is already known.

Explicit instruction as a resource. Jain’s choices were also influenced by both explicit instruction and informal advice from his teachers, including his thesis placement. In some cases, the thesis placement was an explicit expectation, such as in his Cultural Studies course where he was told to include an underlined thesis statement at the end of the first paragraph. This thesis placement for analytical writing aligned with the instructions from his high school ELA textbook. However, he also received advice from an FYW instructor to refrain from making an explicit argument until he has laid out the evidence for the reader.

Instructor advice also seemed to influence at least one particular discourse strategy: the use of *As you can see* as a transitional phrase leading into a conclusion. As with most of the instructor advice described to me by the student participants in this study, it was not offered (or Jain didn't receive it) as a rhetorical strategy. Much like the tutor who told Lucy to just "Google 'transition words'" as a way to improve cohesion (Interview, February 3, 2017), it seems as though Jain understood the phrase *as you can see* as part of a template for school-based writing; it became one of the nearly automatic, "habituated practices" he used without thinking (Anson, 2015, p.77). Whether or not his prior teachers meant for this application is a question I cannot answer, but given the template offered in his high school textbook (see Chapter 5) and the prevalence of the "almost-templated" school essay (Melzer, 2014, p. 56) across K-12 and college writing, it would seem quite understandable that Jain would begin to see *As you can see* as a universal strategy.

Discursive and textual borrowing. Another resource that influenced Jain's reuse and adaptation was the availability of sample texts. As discussed above and in Chapter 5, Jain's thesis placement for his reflective writing in FYW was heavily influenced by the availability of sample texts. He was also offered a sample in his Physics class—in this case more like a model or a target text to aspire to—that provided him clear strategies to borrow. This sample is where he first saw the use of personal pronouns in a methods section, for example.

Table 23

Examples of textual borrowing (bold) and discursive borrowing (italicized) in Jain's lab reports. Note the use of personal pronoun we throughout (underlined).

Sample Lab Report	Jain's Lab Report
[Introduction] **In this lab, we are measuring** the position, velocity and acceleration of a cart moving along a track. **In the first portion of the lab**, this is done with a level track where we expect that the velocity of the cart to be constant.	[Introduction – lab report] **In this lab, we are measuring** the acceleration of a tennis ball in free fall. **In the first part of this lab**, we did multiple trials of releasing the tennis ball from a height of two meters.
[Conclusion] *We found* that the velocity of the cart was relatively constant on the level track. **We could tell this** because the separation between adjacent dots was constant throughout the length of the track as seen in graph #1. … There was a slight difference because the cart was slowing down near the end of the track as can be seen in graph #2. *This negative acceleration was probably due to some friction either in the wheels of the cart or because of the paper going through the tape timer*.	[Conclusion] With the results received from the lab and the results of our calculations *we can determine* that the mass an object does not have any significant effects on the speed obtained by the object. **We can see this** on the velocities we obtained with the experiments and with the energy conservation theorem we see that mass cancels out in the equations. *The tiny amount of error in comparing the velocity of the cart with the experiment versus the velocity calculated may be due to some systematic errors while conducting the experiment like inaccurate measurements of height*.

Tardy (2009) has argued that both textual and discursive borrowing can be important genre learning strategies for writers, and we see Jain engaging in both across his writing tasks. He engaged in textual borrowing, the use of exact textual fragments, as he patterned his lab reports after the model, using specific phrases such as, “In this lab, we are measuring” and “In the first part of this lab” (see Table 23). Whereas some instructors I’ve worked with do not provide samples because they fear that students may “copy” from the sample text, Tardy (2009) has argued that this textual borrowing is actually an important learning strategy for writers. Especially in a relatively stable genre like the school lab report, the model can help students like Jain understand the expected structure or form. And because “much genre learning is a process of initially borrowing from and then eventually taking ownership of texts around us” (p. 99), we might also expect that Jain would eventually begin adapting the textual fragments he borrowed for his own purposes.

Moreover, Jain’s use of textual and discursive borrowing seemed to be part of his construction of the writer’s role, or his discursive identity. Tardy (2009) has suggested that the “borrowing of others' words [can become]…the borrowing of an alternate identity” (p. 70), and Jain seemed to demonstrate this identification during interviews. For example, when I asked him about the importance of “error analysis” in the lab report, he explained that “your credibility counts on it. Like if I were a scientist, I would want to look at a lab report that has the smallest errors” (Interview, April 4, 2017). In another interview he explained that the lab report has to be written in a “monotonic” tone so “it doesn't change pitch or anything.” He continued, “You have to write formally and professionally... 'cause it's what science wants” (Interview, May 11, 2017). Here Jain is indicating the “subtle social knowledge writers need to speak confidently to readers” (Soliday, 2011, p. 36), identifying elements of the lab report structure and style that help him to communicate in the ways “science wants.” He seems to be associating these choices with the role or identity of someone who works in the sciences. It’s important to note here that this understanding came from Jain’s use of the samples and his interactions with his professor, as Jain was never explicitly taught how to write a lab report. The lab director told me that individual TAs are supposed to teach and explain writing expectations (Andy, Interview, May 11, 2017), but Jain did not recall ever discussing the writing expectations beyond being told to use the sample lab report as a guide.

As discussed in Chapter 5, discursive borrowing also seemed to help Jain take on a certain “journalistic” identity in his drag race reflection in FYW. In addition to the Foster Wallace (2014) example discussed in Chapter 5, Jain drew from a student sample focused on a university dance class. In this sample text, the student was reflecting on the role of the professor in the class, but they didn’t actually name the professor or hint at the purpose of the essay until late in the introduction. As Jain explained, “She puts kind of suspense to it. As the reader it makes us like, ‘Who is this person here? Why is he so important?’" (Interview, October 28, 2016). Jain told me he often struggled when writing introductions, but reviewing these samples gave him a strategy: he noticed the introductions tended to leave the reader “in awe…to make the audience wonder” (Interview, December 13, 2016). In an effort to achieve the same effect, Jain explained, “I didn't introduce my event until the second to last sentence, and I started off with just like naming the cool stuff I saw at the event that I thought were interesting” (Interview, October 28, 2016). He wanted his audience to know “where I was, the location, like it looked, the time” before he even told them why it mattered. In direct contrast to the “monotonic” tone that “science wants,” discursive borrowing helped Jain to write in a more “journalistic” style and engage his readers in a more rhetorically-oriented manner.

This textual and discursive borrowing is made possible by the “rich discursive contexts,” including contextualized target texts and active learning environments, created by the instructors (Freedman, 1995, p. 128). As I discussed in Chapter 5, these kinds of participatory teaching and learning environments can provide an opportunity for situated learning, such that students not only learn the content or specific strategies, but also the ways of thinking, being, and acting associated with writers in the associated discourse community. At certain points in the study, all of the student writers were able to make choices or explain their choices based on sample texts or specific rhetorical discussions in class, almost always in FYW courses. Soliday (2011) has argued that enough exposure can help students guess the social actions genres perform, helping students to develop an appropriate stance position. Soliday advocates for writing tasks that emerge from participatory situations, like the lab report and the FYW journalistic writing task, and against the "college essay" that is often defined more by its conventions than its situations. When a writing task reflects the goals of the genre as it exists "in the wild," she argues, students are more likely to recognize the expected social motive and related identity, and to make choices that reflect their instructor's expectations. This seems to be how Jain adapted for these tasks as, to my knowledge, few of the discourse strategies that Jain picked up were ever discussed in class, even if they may have been implicitly expected.

Because implicit expectations are often unrecognized and unexplained by teachers, Lancaster (2014) has suggested that faculty need to be educated to become better aware of their tacit metadiscourse expectations in order to assess student writing more fairly. For example, Jain's lab instructor complained about students not being able to "write well," but associated this lack of ability with punctuation and grammar, especially commas (Andy, Interview, May 11, 2017). In other words, they did not explicitly consider metadiscourse strategies like stance as part of what makes for a "good" lab report, even though there may be implicit stance and engagement expectations (Lancaster, 2014). Implicit expectations particularly disadvantage multilingual students from historically low-performing high schools whose exposure to different kinds of writing opportunities is often limited (Gilliland, 2016; Ruecker, 2015).

I find merit in the suggestions offered by both Lancaster (2014) and Soliday (2011), and I think they are best put to use when placed together. Jain was actively borrowing from samples in a participatory learning context, but he does not have a language to describe his choices—a metalanguage—that may allow him to consciously reuse or adapt to similar contexts in the future. Lancaster's (2014) suggestion to teach the metalanguage to instructors might be one way to help raise such awareness among students. If teachers can explain why and how to use hedges or self-mentions as rhetorical strategies, for example, these strategies might be something Jain notices as he reads and writes in new contexts. In short, I see Lancaster's suggestion working best if the participatory situation described by Soliday (2011) is already in place.

These pedagogical approaches—explicit teaching and expectations from instructors, more social practice-based approaches to writing and assessment, rich discursive contexts in general education courses—can benefit student writing experiences across the curriculum, and I will bring together these practical considerations in the final chapter of this dissertation. In the concluding section of this chapter, I want to focus on some of the ways this case study of Jain's writing experience illuminates broader structural issues in writing education with implications for ever-diversifying higher education institutions.

Further Considerations: Case Study as Interrogation of Power Relations

In the textual analysis that focuses this chapter, I have shown a few ways that Jain demonstrated rhetorical sensitivity in his use, reuse, and adaptation of textual features over the course of the year. These choices seemed to reflect a recognition of the varying purposes, audiences, and disciplinary settings of Jain's writing opportunities. Based on the discourse strategies Jain used or adapted, he appeared to draw from a repertoire of discursive strategies to make distinct writing choices based on the task situation. In other words, Jain's success on writing tasks in FYW did not seem to be the result of “lenient” grading, as he suggested, but rather a result of his instructor’s social practice-based epistemology that valued Jain’s attention to rhetorical context and choices, as I discussed in Chapter 5 (Newell et al., 2014). But even after earning As in his first semester writing-intensive courses, Jain continued to see himself as “not really a good writer” (Interview, April 27, 2016) or someone who doesn’t write “all that well” (Interview, April 4, 2017) throughout the course of the study. Perhaps Jain’s writing self-efficacy perspectives had been solidified in a school structure that does not recognize or value Jain’s rhetorical abilities.

Scholars in writing studies and education have advocated for case study research to learn from the experiences of underrepresented students, examine the lived effects of policies and curricula, challenge historically-constructed power relations, and develop new forms of curriculum and assessment (Caraballo, 2011; Saidy, 2018). I suggest that this case study of Jain’s experiences as a student writer can offer us insights into the racialization of schools and challenge those of us invested in writing education to re-consider the normalized practices that perpetuate deficit-based understandings of student writers, especially those from marginalized communities. In this section, I use the data from this chapter to suggest that Jain’s choices can shed some light into what it meant to him to *feel like high school*, and why it matters that he considers himself “not really a good writer.” I argue that Jain’s negative judgments of his own writing abilities—his self-efficacy perspective—can be considered a product of a racialized school space. I also discuss the responsibility we all share as teachers in classrooms, administrators of writing programs, and researchers, to intervene in the seemingly normal processes of schooling that reproduce inequitable writing contexts.

“Like High School”: Invisible Authors and Argument as Formal Expectation

As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, Jain seemed to equate some of his college writing with “high school-type writing” because it was “simple” (Interview, June 15, 2017). Based on his textual and rhetorical choices, we might say this style of writing was characterized by authorial invisibility and by a linear, thesis-driven structure.

As Hyland (2002) explained, the use of first-person pronouns can create important sociorhetorical effects in academic writing. For example, authorial pronouns can be used to help to foreground important information and help the writer control the social interaction in the text, among other effects (p. 1093). But in his study comparing the writing of final year undergrads and published research articles, he found that students preferred strategies of “author invisibility…with the whole panoply of agentless passives, dummy ‘it’ subjects,” and other means to “disguise the writer’s role” (p. 1105). We can see Jain using these kinds of strategies in thesis statements from his cultural studies and social sciences writing, one year later:

> Furthermore, when reading “Buyers of Dreams” the most effective way to analyze and understand it is looking at it through a historical lens, cultural lens, and a feminist lens which may force you to read the novel a few times. (High School, Spring 2016)

and

> Through events foregone by the people and creatures in these four worlds, it is seen how the family structure of the Navajo People has been shaped. (Social Sciences, Summer 2017)

In both of these examples, Jain uses agentless passives—“the most effective way…is looking”; “it is seen how”— to disguise his role in the interpretation of the texts, even as he does draw the reader in with a relational marker (“you”) in the first excerpt. Hyland (2002) has argued that there are many potential reasons for students to use such a strategy to avoid the most authoritative functions of self-mentions, suggesting that student writers may be generally reluctant to claim an authorial identity due to the unequal writer-reader relationships of school-based writing (pp. 1108-1109).

One way this unequal writer-reader relationship manifests in school settings is through explicit teaching and assessment practices that reinforce hierarchical roles. For example, students are commonly taught that objectivity requires them to eliminate the use of first-person pronouns (R. Rodríguez, 2017). Even though empirical research has demonstrated that academics utilize authorial pronouns in rhetorical ways (Hyland, 2002; Hyland, 2004), the "never use I" rule remains common in school-based writing contexts (Irvin, 2010; Parker, 2017). As we saw in Chapter 6, Jain received written feedback from an instructor arguing specifically against use of the personal pronoun *we*—"Avoid language like 'we' found in your thesis. Who is 'we'? This goes undefined at best and calls attention to the writing/reading process at worst"—even though this advice counters the reality that published academic writers often use authorial pronouns specifically to call attention to the interpretive process. However, because the instructor was in a position of power, Jain had no way to counter this seemingly authoritative rule, or to know that what he was doing was actually a common convention of academic writing. Student writers may be reluctant to claim an authorial identity because they are positioned as students, not agentive academic writers, and they are largely expected to remain discursively invisible.

Another element of what "felt like high school" to Jain was the linear, thesis-driven structure most common in his school writing. As DeStigter (2015) has noted, the dominance of the linear, thesis-driven argumentative essay has become something of an unquestioned assumption in education policy and curricula. Instead of considering the many ways students might write in school contexts, the question becomes: how can students write arguments better?

To that end, Jain's high school textbook offers guidelines for the "structure of an argument" with decontextualized parts and advice for how to do each one. It describes an essay that begins with a "Hook" that grabs the readers' attention, includes "The Claim" in the opening section that presents the author's main point, and then offers concessions, refutations, and support, and closes with a call to action (College Board, 2014, p. 44). As I have argued elsewhere, this textbook template for structure reflects the standardized test rubric associated with the aligned Common Core State Standards, perpetuating a one-size-fits-all approach that neglects rhetorical considerations like audience and purpose (Jacobson, 2015).

As should be clear by now, I am not arguing against structured writing or even against thesis-driven writing as one kind of writing that may be worth learning. After all, this dissertation is, in essence, a *really long* argumentative research paper. I'm not even necessarily against providing templates. As I wrote in the previous section, there is much to be gained from discursive and even textual borrowing, and templates can be one way to help student writers to try on new identities. The problem, however, is that the linear, thesis-driven argumentative essay has become seemingly the only way student writers are expected—or allowed—to communicate their ideas in school contexts. Furthermore, this school-based type of writing is not presented rhetorically as a social action that conveys an idea to an audience, but rather as a form required to meet in order to earn a successful grade. After all, Jain's high school textbook titled the page about structural guidelines, "Writing an Argument," as if there is one text type called "argument," and this is the only way to write it (College Board, 2014, p. 44). Jain's social science teacher critiqued his thesis statement, saying his approach "might fly for a certain journal if you're writing an article, but that's not what research and, um, research writing and persuasive writing is about in an academic sense, to me" (Mason, Interview, June 9, 2017). In other words, for Jain's instructor, this academic writing task was to be a linear, argument-driven, *student-written* essay; Jain's choices reflected published academic writing in journals, which was clearly not what his instructor was hoping for.

In Jain's school-based writing experiences across high school and college, successful writing predominantly required a prescribed structure in which elements like thesis statements and topic sentences were emphasized without attention to rhetorical exigency. This attention to formal issues and evaluation based on correctness fits in with a broader, more troubling pattern that may shed more light on why Jain brought a negative self-efficacy judgment of his writing abilities with him to college and saw his success in college writing as a result of "lenient" grading rather than rhetorical dexterity.

Correctness, Deficit Frames, and "Subtractive Schooling"

Jain and the other student writers in this study were often told while they were in high school that formal concerns were what mattered in college. During Jain's senior year, for example, the ELA faculty offered a special workshop on MLA formatting and citation style and created a policy whereby students would automatically *fail* a writing assignment if they had errors in their citational practices. Although students had an option to revise for a new grade, this emphasis on formal concerns reinforces the centrality of correctness as a measure of writing ability or skill. As Jain told me, "In high school, [teachers] were like, 'Oh, you have to do perfect on this, this essay, 'cause that's how you're gonna have to write it in college, it'll have to be perfect,' and blah blah blah" (Interview, May 11, 2017).

This emphasis on correctness as a requirement for college success aligned with other advice Jain received about how he should prepare for college, most of which seemed to be fear-based, an attempt to scare students as a means of motivation. In an interview before high school graduation, Jain said, “I’m told that in college it’s gonna be way different. The professor’s not gonna care about you, and they don’t be on your case” (Interview, April 27, 2016). Jain told me he received such advice when he turned in something late, perhaps as encouragement to pay better attention to deadlines. He was told that college professors will “tell you the deadline, they won’t tell you it’s coming up. They just tell you the deadline that’s it” (Interview, April 27, 2016). In some ways, the advice Jain received does reflect findings from the college transitions literature. For example, Harklau’s (2001) study of second-language writers transitioning to college found that the most significant changes for students were not necessarily in the reading and writing expectations, but rather in the shifting locus of responsibility: students needed to keep up with their stuff on their own. Jain recognized this even in the first weeks of his first semester, mentioning that he was adjusting to “independence” and not being reminded what to do. He said, “Right now I don’t know if I have homework or not so I have to check on D2L [the online learning management system]” (Interview, August 24, 2016).

While guiding high school students toward greater independence is a worthy goal, I also wonder if the kind of feedback Jain received on his writing and the advice he received on his way through high school also contributed to his negative writerly self-efficacy. By focusing on a nearly-templated structure, MLA conventions, and punctuality, Jain’s high school curriculum and teachers seemed to be emphasizing formal concerns in their writing assessments and attempts to develop a college-going culture. As Ruecker (2013) has argued, the culture of high-stakes testing prevalent in historically low-performing schools like Jain’s may actually reinforce a culture of low expectations for Latinx students by limiting literacy instruction. After all, research on self-efficacy shows that once they are acquired, perceptions of one’s own ability are difficult to change, even when achieving subsequent success (Pajares, 2003).

Ironically, it may be that the high school teachers' well-intentioned push toward correctness and punctuality in the name of college success further alienated Jain from his school writing. In describing "subtractive schooling" for Latinx youth, Valenzuela (1999) identified such attention to formal concerns as a barrier to creating positive school-based networks and relationships between Latinx students and their often majority-White teachers. According to Valenzuela, this "aesthetic" form of caring treats cultural and linguistic assimilation as a neutral process such that it may actually hinder Latinx student success (p. 22). When Jain told me he felt his high school teachers "focused a little bit more on making sure we were writing the essay right, like the format they wanted, versus us actually learning how to analyze the books," he seemed to be indicating the dominance of aesthetic concerns in his school (Interview, May 11, 2017). To Jain, it seemed his teachers were more concerned with whether he did it "right" than showing that they were invested in his ideas. Jain seeing his college writing success a result of "lenient" grading rather than rhetorical success may reflect this limited instruction focused on correctness.

On the other hand, Valenzuela (1999) describes *educación* as a more "authentic" form of caring that includes formal academic training as only one piece of the broader moral, social, and personal responsibility that serves as foundation for all other learning (p. 23). This broader conception of education based in familial and community values can help to challenge deficit-based frames and deepen motivation rather than alienate Latinx students from school (Easley, Bianco, & Leech, 2012; Irizarry & Raible, 2011), a point I will return to in the concluding chapter.

The emphasis on formal concerns present in Jain's high school and some of his college experiences both reflects and reproduces the raced-gendered-classed expectations for success in writing. As DeStiger (2015) argued in his critique of argumentation as the dominant mode of school-based writing, academic arguments as currently conceived are themselves ideological and cultural productions. The linear, thesis-driven style sanctioned as a "rational argument" in school-based writing is not a universal structure, he argued, but is instead a reflection of the dominant group ideology (c.f., Heath, 1983; Street, 2012).

Racialized School Writing

What the school-based essay does do, as many writing studies scholars have noted, is privilege student writers whose home discourses most closely align with the expectations of academic arguments, primarily students from white, middle-class backgrounds (Gee 1991; Gee, 2008; Inoue, 2014). This scholarship shows that school-based writing is one example of the "racialization" of schools, the ways whiteness is built into the organization of schools through both formal and informal practices (Barajas & Ronnkvist, 2007). Critical race theorists and social justice scholars have argued that racism is not an individual act, but rather the effects of cumulative acts that create and reproduce structural domination based on race (Omi & Winant, 2002; Young, 2011). It's through this lens that education scholars Barajas and Ronnqvist (2007) have identified schools as "racialized spaces" in which "white ideologies dominate and operate through the organizational logic of the school" (p. 1528) and create "different expectations for mainstream students and students of color" resulting in "disadvantages for students of color" (p. 1519). They argued that race-neutral school discourses serve to conceal the processes through which whiteness is privileged and normalized in educational organizations, such as when school leaders approach decision-making as if it will affect all students the same even though policies may not be applied to all groups in the same way or may have different impacts on racial groups. For example, the authors discuss a high school attendance policy in which students were granted a maximum number of absences before forfeiting credit for the entire term, but exceptions were made for students traveling with their families and not for students needing to work the fall migrant season. In this case, the white, middle class value of travel as a way to experience different people and places was granted exception, but that same standard was not applied to Latinx students who needed to work a migrant job, even though they were also being exposed to different people and places (pp. 1531-1532). This attendance policy created racist effects, even though the individual decision-makers were ostensibly acting in a race-neutral manner. This is one example of how racism works as well-meaning people engage in seemingly typical, everyday processes.

The national, state, and local policies that impacted Jain's writing experiences—from the national Common Core State Standards to the local General Education policy—can similarly be considered racializing projects because they embed whiteness as the norm under a race-neutral framing. After all, it's hard to argue on the surface with the Common Core's focus on "college and career readiness" focus. But as scholars have long-argued, the popular discourse connecting literacy to economic prosperity, often in the form of a "literacy crisis," can be considered an ultimately conservative rhetorical strategy used to preserve the status quo in times of cultural and demographic change (DeStigter, 2015; Luke, 1996; Trimbur, 1991). For Trimbur (1991), literacy crises are "strategic pretexts for educational and cultural change that renegotiate the terms of cultural hegemony, the relations between classes and groups, and the meaning and use of literacy" (281). When the white middle class feels a sense of anxiety about changing social or economic conditions, the literacy crisis serves hegemonic purposes; the effort to maintain the status quo becomes a question of reading and writing. The language of literacy and schooling thus takes on symbolic and real power as those with cultural capital renegotiate whom or what counts as literate or educated. We see this occurring in the Common Core State Standards, which emphasize argumentative writing in an effort to prepare students “for college and career readiness in a twenty-first-century, globally competitive society” (NGA, 2010, p. 3), but only provide sample student writing limited to five-paragraph, thesis-driven, linear arguments, implying that this is the type of writing that should count (Jacobson, 2015). The General Education writing policy at my institution demonstrates a similar tension: while the General Education program purports “to further prepare [students] to respond more fully and effectively to an increasingly complex world” (ABOR, 2018b), the writing policy tells us that writing should be “evaluated for format, organization, style, grammar, and punctuation, *as well as* content and participation in the scholarly conversation” (ABOR, 2015, emphasis added), placing the primary focus on formal concerns.

The arhetorical argumentative writing often advocated in school-based settings is thus racialized in part because it is presented through a race-neutral, “common sense” frame. As scholars across writing and education studies have argued, uncritical policies or curricula focusing on dominant forms or the “genres of power” often ignore the social construction of discourse and power (DeStigter, 2015; Luke, 1996; Flores & Rosa, 2015). In an apt example, especially considering the current political climate, DeStigter (2015) reminds us that regardless of the evidence or force of persuasion presented in a text, "in most arguments, the person with the most power just has to say, 'Your argument is unreasonable,' and he wins" (p. 20). Similarly, even when teachers say they are focused on content and not form or style, they are still creating an image of the student writer based on their discursive choices, including racial or language background, nationality, or other form of identity that may influence their response (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Rosa & Flores, 2017; Tardy, 2012).

Jain never directly identified race as a factor in his schooling experiences in our discussions, but he did often reference his Mexican heritage as central to his identity. He told me he considers himself Mexican, not Mexican-American, because Spanish is the primary language at home and his family maintains a household guided by Mexican culture and values. This identity seemed to influence his approach to schooling. Echoing Easley, Bianco, and Leech's (2012) study of the factors that motivate successful immigrant and first-generation Latinx students, Jain seemed motivated by *ganas*, "a deeply held desire to achieve academically fueled by parental struggle and sacrifice" (p. 169). *Ganas*, the authors write, is characterized in part by an acknowledgement of parental struggle and sacrifice, strong value in family and family history, parental admiration and respect, a social consciousness characterized by desire to pay successes forward, and a resilience and willingness to persevere in the face of struggle (p. 169). Over the course of our study, Jain mentioned each of these factors when describing his motivation to succeed. He wrote in an FYW reflection about not wanting his mother to regret having him at age 16 and spoke frequently with me about wanting to be a role model for his younger siblings. Jain also frequently spoke of his family in México and connected his courses and assignment topics to issues in or about México whenever possible. When he took a cultural studies general education course focused on a critical understanding of Latin American pop culture, he said he was excited because "it will help me know who I actually am instead of just like following trends and stuff" (Interview, September 28, 2016).

Stereotype Threat and a Lack of Representation

But opportunities like Jain's cultural studies course were hard for him to find. In fact, when I shared an initial draft of this chapter with Jain, he told me that it was hard to see himself represented at our institution, even though it had recently been designated as a Hispanic-Serving

Institution. Such a feeling is common among students from underrepresented populations who rarely see campus as a place that validates their backgrounds and ways of knowing, and who find it more difficult to get involved in the academic and social life of the institution (Rendón, 2002). For example, Jain said he knew about some of the resource centers and student groups on campus geared specifically for Latinx students, but he didn't feel like he had time to participate given his academic, work, and family responsibilities. Other than the cultural studies course and an FYW course in which he could choose his own research topic, Jain did not have many opportunities to connect his studies to his self- and community identities.

Jain's desire to maintain connection to language and culture and succeed in a racialized school system can pose challenges, not the least of which is the task of maintaining an asset-based self-perspective in the face of racialized standards. When Jain turned in his first essay in the social sciences class—an essay he was confident about at the time, but would ultimately fail—Jain told me, "I don't care if [the instructor] thinks I'm average—it's okay—but not dumb" (May 23, 2017). Note the ways Jain is equating his ability to succeed on a writing task with his intelligence. He is worrying that a professor may judge his intelligence—may judge *him*—based on one piece of writing.

Research on "stereotype threat" has shown that students of color are likely to feel pressure to succeed when they see assessments as a direct measure of ability or intelligence, and this pressure may actually hinder their success (B. Rodríguez, 2014; Steele, 1997). Stereotype threat refers to the ways negative stereotypes can disrupt the academic success of stereotyped groups by causing anxiety in testing situations. Steele (1997) has argued this is a "situational threat," one that tends to affect confident students who identify with the academic domain more than it affects students who may not be as invested in their academic success. Because motivated, confident students have an affiliation with school success, Steele suggests, they are more likely to be triggered by the idea that a negative stereotype may be true in themselves and either feel pressure to counter that stereotype or rationalize poor performance as a reflection of racial, ethnic, or gender identity. For example, when Latinx students in a summer bridge program were reminded of the academic achievement gap before taking a test measuring “academic ability,” they scored about 10% lower than the control group that was not exposed to the achievement gap and were told they were taking a pilot exam unrelated to ability or intelligence (B. Rodríguez, 2014).

Stereotype threat can impede success in completing complex tasks in a variety of ways, including time management, memory, and decision-making processes (B. Rodríguez, 2014). Importantly, one does not have to believe the stereotype in order for it to affect them; simply knowing it exists is enough to cause effects. When Jain tells me he didn’t want his teacher to think he was “dumb,” I can’t help but consider stereotype threat when I think about his “point of departure” (Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014) and his negative self-concept as a writer. He spoke to me often about his struggles with writing, that it takes too long or that he has trouble getting started, which may just be typical writing struggles but could also be a response to a racialized education system. As Ivanič (1994) has suggested, when student writers feel “stuck” they may be uncomfortable with the self they are projecting as they write or with the way they are positioned as a writer (p. 6). Recall that Jain was raised and educated in a state outwardly hostile toward immigrants and Spanish speakers. During Jain’s childhood, the state legislature banned bilingual education for English Language Learners (Zehr, 2000) while continuing to offer bilingual education for native English speakers. In other words, bilingualism was treated as value-added for monolingual, native English-speaking youth, but a deficit for students like Jain who grew up in multilingual households (Flores & Rosa, 2015). While Jain was in middle school, the largest school district in our city was forced by the state government to discontinue a Mexican-American Studies course. During Jain's high school career, state and national policy identified writing as necessary for "college and career readiness," and the associated standardized testing apparatus created a washback effect on curriculum and teaching that emphasized a decontextualized, templated argumentative structure reinforcing white, dominant hegemonic language use (Hillocks, 2002; Jacobson, 2015; Ruecker, 2014).

As Pajares (2003) explained, self-efficacy research offers one possible explanation for why minoritized students tend to remain "at risk" and why their academic achievement diminishes over time in school. Self-efficacy is built over time, and once acquired, these self-perceptions are difficult to change. The research has shown a relationship between self-judgments and motivation, showing that a negative self-efficacy perception can influence the choices students make, including the effort they expend, their persistence in approaching new tasks, and the anxiety they experience, all of which are related to writing success (Pajares, 2003). In short, once students begin to doubt their abilities to complete writing tasks or to succeed in writing in school, they may tend to stop or even resist the practices and strategies that are generally related to writing success. As Pajares writes of his analysis of the writing self-efficacy literature, "The obvious conclusion is that it does not seem as though confidence in writing skills is nurtured as students progress through school" (p. 152). Indeed, teachers in Jain's high school consistently sent messages to a 96% minority student population that they needed to improve their writing if they wanted to succeed in college, and they framed this improvement largely based on formulaic concerns. These well-meaning teachers—and the administrators and policymakers who influence their decision-making—may have been unwittingly contributing to the reinforcement of deficit-based stereotypes about Latinx students and student writers that already exist in popular and educational discourse. From this perspective, we can see how a multilingual, Latinx student at Jain's high school may have come to understand negative stereotypes and develop a negative self-efficacy perspective of their writing abilities.

Implications: Individual and Institutional Responsibility

To me, this discussion serves as a reminder that the negative feedback Jain received from his high school and college instructors that helped to form his negative writerly self-identity was not a result of poor teaching or any animus toward Jain or Latinx students—in fact, I know many of his teachers personally as kind, caring, and motivated to go beyond their duties to benefit their students. Instead, his teachers' responses to his writing reflected their participation in the normal—and racialized—processes of schooling that value correctness in the name of a race-neutral quest for credentials. For decades, scholars have documented the structural stratification of schooling along lines of race and class (Anyon, 1980; Bernstein, 1975; Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Heath 1983), but the popular discourse continues to portray schools as the places that can solve the problems, rather than institutions that reflect broader social inequalities (Labaree, 2008). College-going itself is seen as a race-neutral meritocratic endeavor rather than "a learned social practice co-constructed by multiple agencies that interact with various social structures" (Gildersleeve, 2010, p. 2). As Adler-Kassner has persuasively argued (2012), even the idea of "college and career readiness" emerged from organizations with political and financial ties who stand to benefit from the "content-vacated vocationalism" that places form as the focus of writing (pp. 128-129), reproducing a race-neutral understanding of school-based writing as "correct" or not based on formal concerns, which are, of course, racialized as well.

Barajas and Ronnqvist (2007) argued that recognizing the ways ordinary processes reinforce a white racialized space in education is a necessary first step. “The problem is being willing to recognize what we are doing,” they write, “and then creating relationships that support a socially just educational organization (p. 1536). I have suggested in this chapter that what “we are doing” in writing education in high school and college is reproducing a racialized space that alienates students who come from marginalized communities. In curriculum development, assessment, standards, advising, and other areas of college-going, the system continually told Jain that he was not a good writer and that in order to succeed as a writer in college he was going to have to be “perfect” and error-free to meet a racialized standard of correctness. Because this standard may seem unattainable as a multilingual, self-identifying Mexican in a U.S. school setting, Jain understands harsh feedback based on formal issues as “real” and constructive, but feedback from a social practice perspective as “lenient.”

In my experience, the opposite has been true for students of privilege (usually white), who often see good grades as marks of their actual ability and more critical feedback as the result of a “mean” or “harsh” grader. Merz (2010) identified a similar distinction between primarily lower- and working-class, first-generation to college students who tended to blame themselves for educational struggles and middle- and upper-class students who tended to blame institutional factors like large class sizes and inexperienced instructors for their failures. Tellingly, the lower- and working-class students in Merz’s study tended to value learning, whereas the middle- and upper-class students considered the “quality” of their education to include “ease to getting the degree” (p. 106). From this perspective, it would make sense to a more privileged student that the “harsh” grader was an impediment to their inevitable credential, whereas for a first-generation to college student like Jain the negative feedback makes sense because it's *supposed to be hard*.

Adler-Kassner (2012; 2014) has rightly pointed to the ways standards and policies like the Common Core State Standards and the General Education writing policy at my institution can lead to a limited understanding of what it means to write and what counts as writing. And I find value in her call for reconceiving of general education as an introduction to communities of practice, a model that should "explicitly address *how* students learn to identify and participate in the threshold concepts of the discipline in which the course is situated (p. 451, emphasis in original). Such an approach, if done humanely, could potentially lead to a more practice-based, genre-situated writing context and helping students to see the ways in which their writing choices reflect disciplinary ways of being. I could imagine, for example, a lab sciences class in which a student like Jain was explicitly taught common discursive strategies of a lab report—personal pronouns, use of passive and active voice, etc.—as a reflection of "what science wants" (Jain, Interview, May 11, 2017). In such an approach, Jain's attention to discursive identity would be more valued because his writing role would be made clearer. If these general education pedagogies were based in participatory practice and a social-practice approach to assessment, they would also seem to reflect the research on writing self-efficacy that shows that students' writing confidence and competence can increase when they are provided with specific process strategies and feedback about how well they are using these strategies, in contrast to overall judgments about their writing abilities (Pajares, 2003).

But I also recognize the ways in which this communities of practice approach could be appropriated within the same race-neutral frames and perpetuate the racialization of schools and school writing. After all, communities of practice such as disciplinary communities are not inherently welcoming to newcomers (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Without being "attuned to the contexts in which writing is taught at our institutions and the students who are recipients of that instruction" (Poe, 2013, p. 93), the same forces of exclusion and marginalization will likely persist. To choose just one low-hanging example, an institutional commitment to lower class size and reward faculty for professional development in writing pedagogy would be necessary for an instructor to provide the kind of social-practice based feedback that might help students develop confidence as writers across the curriculum. Of course, this is not the direction higher education seems to be moving. Nearly two decades ago, Biggs (1999) bemoaned the managerial imperative overtaking higher education that seemed to bring assessment further from the “qualitative and holistic” approaches to assessment that maximize student learning (p. 74), and it’s not as if the managerial approach as gone out of style.

To intervene in the processes that reproduce racialized writing spaces and to work toward building “a socially just educational organization” (Barajas & Ronnqvist, 2007, p. 1536) will thus require more than a curriculum change; it will require a reconfiguration of what it means to write in school, and what “counts” as learning. In Jain’s case, a normative correctness and formalism were often required in his writing opportunities, but his rhetorical sensitivity and attempts to take on varying discursive identities were not always recognized as valuable.

In the next and final chapter of this dissertation, I will address these ideas and related pedagogical implications. I will acknowledge my own complicity in the processes that reproduce racialized school writing processes as I also discuss pedagogical and institutional interventions in these processes. I will also draw from the insights of the student participants, allowing Hector, Hercules, Jain, and Lucy to share their advice for high school and college faculty to improve student learning and writing experiences.

CONCLUSION:

CULTURALLY SUSTAINING SCHOOL-BASED WRITING ECOLOGIES

In my third year of graduate school, I was selected to teach two honors sections of First-Year Writing (FYW). Inspired by the Ethnography of the University Initiative at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (EUI, n.d.) as well as my burgeoning investment in qualitative research methods, I focused the course around primary research methods and mini-ethnographies of university subcultures. The course went well overall, but I still think about one student's experience in ways that remind me of the deeply engrained beliefs and structures that need to be challenged in order to create more equitable school-based writing ecologies.

The student—I'll call him Aaron—had an idea for his semester-long research project as soon as the project was announced. Aaron told me he wanted to study the Islamic center just off-campus, which had recently been surrounded by new luxury student housing. He said he walked by the center every day and he wanted to know more about what happened there, about the religion, about what the mainstream understanding of Islam and Muslims might be missing. And he went. He was a young white guy from western Pennsylvania who showed up at Friday services every week for the two months he was working on the project. He conducted interviews with the volunteer clergy, and he collected brochures and texts from the main office for textual analysis. When he submitted a final research portfolio, there was a notebook full of handwritten fieldnotes.

While our conversations were always intriguing, Aaron's research writing was messy in the way that early drafts often are: he was trying to impose a theoretical frame that didn't really work; he was struggling to create a central theme or idea that would tie the project together; he spent too much time on details that didn't seem to relate, and not enough on the evidence that could support his claims. And so on.

It's my response to Aaron's work that still bothers me. I gave him a B grade on the project and in the class, even as he engaged more with his primary research than any student I have taught in similar projects since. I gave him a B on the project even though he was involved in real intellectual work, critically examining his own assumptions and those of his family and friends around an issue that mattered to him and to our world. I remember his face as we talked about his draft, the frustration visible as I told him about how smart and important his work was, but he needed to focus on the controlling ideas. *I'm trying to figure this out*, his eyes seemed to say. But I wasn't able to hear him.

At this point I had already been a teacher for nearly a decade, but this was the first time I was teaching an advanced class at the college level. Looking back, I think I let circulating discourse about grade inflation and writing standards get to me. I was trying to uphold some arbitrary standard about what "honors" writing should be, rather than meeting students where they were and rewarding their learning. After all, this was the first time most students in the course had been asked to conduct primary research; what was I expecting? I told students I valued their research process and the effort they put in, but when it counted for their grade, I reverted to what I thought they should be doing in terms of "academic writing". Aaron had the courage to take on assumptions. I didn't.

I begin the concluding chapter with this story because it implicates me directly in the systems and structures that I have critiqued throughout this dissertation. Granted, a B in an honors first-year writing class was not going to tank Aaron's academic career. But my choice to grade based on perceived quality measured against a standard of writing can also be read as a reluctance—or an inability—to grade based on quality learning and development, the supposed goal of a First-Year Writing (FYW) course. As Inoue (2014) has argued, utilizing such a quality-based grading approach will inevitably benefit white, middle-class students if the ideals are all based off of white, middle-class writing.

In this chapter, I draw from the insights and experiences of Hercules, Hector, Jain, and Lucy to offer some specific pedagogical and institutional interventions that may contribute to more socially-just ecologies of school writing. Throughout this project I have argued that the centripetal pull of "academic writing" contributes to inequitable assessment practices and constraints on student learning and identities, and I have suggested that the racialization of writing in schools requires everyone who works in education to reconsider the ways we discuss writing success. I have also tried to be clear that these findings reflect broader social processes that implicate everyone involved.

The political philosopher Iris Marion Young (2011) suggested that social injustice is a result of institutional rules and social interactions that work to constrain the options certain people or groups of people have. From this perspective, injustice is not caused by malevolent actors who can be punished, and it cannot be solved solely through social programs because the social processes that have created the injustice will still create damage (p. 34). Young reminds us that while some injustice is caused by individual or institutional agents, it's the "normal, ongoing structural processes of the society" that produce and reproduce inequality (p. 175). In other words, even well-meaning actors contribute to injustice by simply participating within the accepted rules and norms of an unjust society. As DiAngelo (2018) writes about her role as a white woman in a racist society, "I didn't choose this socialization, and it could not be avoided. But I am responsible for my role in it" (p. 149). The same could be said for many teachers—like

Jain's instructor in Chapter 6, like *me*—who have succeeded in a system that perpetuates racialized writing education. Those of us who benefit from these structures have a "special responsibility" to work on transforming the institutions that support them (Young, 2011, p. 187).

In this concluding chapter I will begin to address some ways I imagine we as educators could intervene in the structural processes that reproduce inequality in educational settings. I begin by offering a review of the questions that guided this study before introducing a holistic approach to institutional organization and research-based models for supporting the success of Latinx and other students underrepresented in higher education. I will extend these frameworks in the contexts of writing research, administration, and pedagogy. Finally, I close with implications for future research and practice.

Summary of Findings: All About Access

As I discussed in Chapter 2, my approach to this research adopts a theoretical framework that foregrounds a genre-based understanding of communication in academic communities. As Dias, Freedman, Medway, and Paré (1999) wrote, "If what we want above all is to *belong* to a particular group but do not know what specific things we ought to do in order to act as members, the genres of the group will tell us both what to want to do as member and how, rhetorically, to achieve it" (p. 21, emphasis in original). In other words, the genres offer opportunities to be seen as members of a community: academic writers are constantly working to be recognized as the kinds of people who do the task they are trying to accomplish, whether they are writing experimental lab reports, literary analyses, or even listserv emails. The process of learning genres, then, has proven to be much more complex than simply learning to follow features or conventions. Scholars from across writing studies remind us that literate development requires access to literate communities (Gee, 2008; Hernandez-Zamora, 2010). This access is central to developing a complex, rhetorical understanding of the genres (Prior, 1999; Tardy, 2009) and the related practices of a community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). In this dissertation, I have focused on this question of access, examining the writing opportunities of four students across the high school to college writing transition. Chapters five, six, and seven each focused on a different aspect of access—opportunities for learning in practice, negotiating identities, and taking advantage of resources, respectively.

What Modes of Participation are Available to Focal Students Across the High School to College Transition?

In a capacious analysis of the writing opportunities provided to the focal students in three contexts—high school ELA, FYW, and general education—I found there were limited opportunities for the participating students to practice genres as social practices. The dominant focus on decontextualized "school essays" in both high school and the first year of college—regardless of the topic, purpose, discipline, content, or even the named genre or text type—seemed to sequester student writers from the ways of thinking, being, and acting that could help them begin to see writing as a situated practice and to see themselves as contributors to knowledge or as producers of communication. Instead, the writing opportunities provided remain epistemic and decontextualized, written to a teacher-as-examiner audience and positioning the student writers as knowledge-tellers or consumers of knowledge. Their participation was predominantly characterized by "passing" (Prior, 1998), where both the students and instructors focused on "answering the prompt," earning the credential, and moving on to the next class.

However, in case studies featuring Lucy and Jain writing in more participatory environments, we did see some forms of deeper participation in teaching and learning contexts characterized by "facilitated performance" (Freedman & Adam, 2000). These contexts included rich discursive contexts in which students were exposed to contextualized target texts and had active, collaborative learning environments (Freedman, 1995, p. 128). The act of writing in such participatory situations that approach genres as they are “in the wild” (Soliday, 2011, p. 37) seemed to help Lucy and Jain identify the social motive of their writing tasks and identify the with the ways of thinking, being, and writing required to achieve the social action. When Lucy said she was trying to be “like an activist” (Interview, May 3, 2017) and Jain considered “what publishers were looking when they went to the editor” (Interview, September 28, 2016), they demonstrated a practice-based understanding of writing that went beyond demonstrating knowledge for a teacher. While too rare in the experiences of the focal students, these case studies demonstrated the possibilities for school-based writing to be more than simply a mode of examination.

What Identities are Available to Student Writers?

My analysis of student writing tasks across institutional and disciplinary contexts led to another important finding: the student writers were predominantly being positioned *as students* demonstrating knowledge, not as writers creating new knowledge or communicating ideas. Drawing from Ivanič’s (1998) research on discursive identity, we might say the students were offered a student role, not a contributor role. Social theories of writing and identity also remind us that a writer’s discursive identity—the impression(s) a writer consciously or unconsciously convey of themselves in a particular written text (Ivanič, 1998, p. 25)—is co-constructed by instructors who position student writers in terms of their own understandings of generic, disciplinary, and personal expectations (Hyland, 2002; Matsuda & Tardy, 2007; Prior, 1998).

This emphasis on the dialogic construction of discursive identity was further explored in two “text histories” of writing done by Hercules and Jain in general education courses. The analysis was modeled after Lillis and Curry's (2006) "text-oriented ethnographic" approach that explores the production of texts in their contexts (p. 7). By examining the assignment guidelines and rubrics, the teacher-talk about the assignment, the student text, and the student talk, I traced some of the layered constraints and expectations that seemed to influence instructor construction of student positionality through the assignment guidelines, the student uptake of a role or discoursal identity, and then the teacher re-positioning of the student while reading, assessing, and offering feedback. This analysis provided some insight into the tension inherent to negotiated identities in general education contexts.

In both cases, the instructors' sense of "academic writing" as an inflexible construct consisting of formulaic texts seemed to constrain their sense of *who* the student writers could be in their writing. Even as Hercules's instructors sought to provide an audience and purpose for the writing task, their expectations as outlined in the outline, rubric, and class discussion reminded him that this project was just like the other "essays" he'd written in other courses. And when Jain attempted to take on a social scientist persona, borrowing discursive strategies from published texts and prior instructors, he was frustrated when his instructor re-positioned him as a student who did not meet the expectations of a decontextualized school essay.

My analysis indicates more endemic issues related to school-based writing ecologies. If we accept that literate development requires access to literate communities and their related identities and discursive resources, then the "figured world" of schooling (Holland et al., 1998) as it is currently constructed is ill-fit to support literate development for all students. The instructors in this study seemed to unconsciously construct "teacher" and "student" subjectivities that reinforced novice/expert binaries and diminished opportunities for student identification with disciplinary ways of thinking, being, and writing. The uncertain and at times conflicting social motives of General Education seemed to exacerbate this effect. When writing is seen as an add-on or simply a way of assessing the knowledge a student should gain, it can lead to an arhetorical understanding of quality writing that emphasizes correctness and reinforce decontextualized notions of "academic writing" like those discussed by the teachers in the study. I will discuss some of the issues related General Education in more detail later in this chapter.

What Resources are Available to Inform Student Writing Choices in Academic Contexts?

The data in this dissertation shows student participants drawing from a range of resources to inform their writing in academic contexts. These resources included but were not limited to: instructor advice (office hours, in-class discussion, feedback, direct instruction, etc.); peer review; class materials (textbooks, assignment sheets, rubrics, "tips" for writing); sample texts; extracurricular writing experience; and family members.

I hesitate to make claims about the value or effectiveness of these resources, because to judge them requires careful consideration of the intended goals. For example, Hercules, Jain, and Lucy all took the same general education course in cultural studies. The instructor provided specific guidelines and expectations for the writing task: the student texts needed to be *exactly* three pages, the thesis was to be underlined at the end of the first sentence, and the structure was prescribed: "For each paragraph, like the first paragraph [is] the intro, and then next will be…the theories that we're using, define them, and then the next will be the analysis part, so that's how I did it" (Hercules Interview, April 21, 2017). This prescribed format seemed to allow the student writers to focus on content, and all of students were successful in the course. In this case, the direct instruction, office hours, and assignment guidelines did help each of the students demonstrate their learning and earn high marks in the course. However, the decontextualized assignment and lack of rhetorical instruction may have also led to overgeneralizing, as both Jain and Lucy borrowed from this form in future classes with less success. In fact, none of the students reported any rhetorically-situated instruction outside of their FYW courses. When I talked to the students about examples of “good writing,” they often talked about a thesis, structure, or “flow,” but rarely talked about the ways these writing features might reflect or necessitate a rhetorical context; Lucy’s story about visiting the university writing center and being told to Google “transition words” (Interview, February 3, 2017) still haunts me.

Sample texts seemed to help the students when they were writing in well-developed discursive contexts. In Chapter 7, I discussed the ways Jain borrowed discursive and textual strategies that helped him to not only succeed in the writing tasks but begin to understand the ways these choices reflected the social expectations of the community.

An Ecological Understanding of School-Based Writing

While it has been helpful to think about these elements of access separately in my analysis of the data, it is also important to foreground the ways they are always interconnected. For example, Jain’s First-Year Writing (FYW) course discussed in-depth in Chapter 5 was characterized by a teaching and learning context that offered access to participation via research methods and guided activities. These practices opened possibilities for Jain to take on a “journalist” identity, and the availability of sample texts served as a resource for his genre learning. In other words, opportunities for access are interconnected: when one element of a writing task is changed, it affects the others. Moreover, there are other elements that influence these opportunities. National and state education policy heavily influenced the standardized assessments that served as the foundation for the English Language Arts textbook Jain used in high school (Jacobson, 2015). And a local policy for general education writing mandated that teachers include writing tasks that they may not have included before, nor were they necessarily supported to teach. In other words, Jain’s writing opportunities can be analyzed as part of a much school-based writing ecology in which the agency of individual students, teachers, and administrators is necessarily interconnected with organizational structures, local, state, and national policy, and broader cultural discourses. In the rest of this concluding chapter, I explore the ways this ecological approach both complicates my findings and generates new possibilities for thinking about more culturally sustaining school-based writing futures.

Writing studies scholars have drawn from biological theories of ecologies to consider the complexity and interconnectedness of writing and the various contexts that compel writing, including educational institutions. As Pennington and Hoekje (2010) explained, organizations have long been described as dynamic organisms, but the notion of ecology “emphasizes the multiplicity of interconnected components or resources and their mutual relationships and dependencies” (p. 214). Because these interrelated components are diverse and not necessarily tightly bound, organizations are complex, changeable, and in essence always changing. In this way, language programs are ecological (see also Reiff, Bawarshi, Ballif, & Weisser, 2015, for an application of this theoretical approach to writing programs, in particular).

In an example pertinent to this discussion, Pennington and Hoekje (2010) offer an example of the ways a changing student population leads to changes throughout a program ecology. When the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Higher education funded the enrollment of several thousand Saudi students in U.S. universities in 2005, some language programs reached Saudi enrollment of over 50 percent. This influx of a new student population affected all members of the ecology, including the other students, faculty, program leadership, and staff: faculty with Arabic language experience were in demand, leading some programs to expand their human resources efforts; administrators needed to be aware of holidays and traditions that affected class schedules and even food offerings; and curricular initiatives needed to be developed to support students with stronger written than oral literacy skills, among other changes (pp. 224-225). As the authors write, “The potential of an organization to function interactively and responsively in relation to context is a crucial aspect of the ecology and a main determinant of its health and survival over time” (p. 224). Student-centered programs with the agility to respond to this new population of students successfully were able to thrive. Realistically, however, not every educational institution or program can respond to all shifts and changes in real time. Instead, such programs need to be aware of their central mission and available resources, because making one decision inevitably impacts others (Pennington and Hoekje, 2010). Of course, internal or external influences on the ecology can also serve to change the mission.

This complex dynamic that characterizes the ways educational organizations respond to student populations is central to higher education scholar Gina Garcia’s (2018) research on Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs). Answering what seems to be a basic question—what does it mean to actually *serve* Hispanic students? —Garcia offers a holistic framework that demonstrates how reconsidering one element of an educational organization necessarily influences others, echoing Barry Commoner’s first law of ecology: “Everything is Connected to Everything Else” (cited in Reiff et al., 2015, p. 6). In the case of HSIs, the law of interconnection reminds us of the necessity to re-think the entire institution when it seeks to serve a student population that has been historically and institutionally excluded. For example, Garcia (2018) suggests that an institution that truly wants to serve Hispanic students needs to reassess its purpose and resist focusing solely on outcomes like graduate and retention rates as legitimate markers of success (p. 137). Instead, the institution should also focus on the holistic development of students, including self-efficacy, civic engagement, and critical consciousness. But such a change also requires altering the incentive structure for faculty such that criteria for advancement is aligned with these outcomes: rather than primarily valuing individual achievement, promotion and tenure would have to privilege mentorship, community engagement, professional development, and efforts to decolonize curricula or governance structures (p. 140). Garcia's holistic, ecological framing serves as a cogent reminder that only so much can be done around the edges to truly serve students from marginalized communities. Because these student populations haven't been historically included in the missions of postsecondary institutions—more accurately, they have been *excluded*—school leaders cannot simply do things in the way they always have (p. 133; see also Dukakis, Duong, Ruiz de Velasco, & Henderson, 2014). Instead, Garcia's (2018) organizational theory encourages a critical approach that doesn't just question or adapt traditional practices, but instead entirely re-thinks the entire organizational ecology.

Such an ecological approach is necessary for re-considering school-based writing opportunities in writing courses and across the curriculum given the ongoing demographic changes in higher education that have led to more linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse student populations. The case studies in this project serve as examples of individual student experiences that illuminate the historically constructed power relations in pedagogy and assessment (Caraballo, 2011). Education scholars Django Paris and H. Samy Alim have recently theorized *culturally sustaining pedagogies* (CSP) as one approach that explicitly seeks to counter these historically constructed power relations (Paris, 2011; Paris & Alim, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017). In the introduction to an edited collection about CSP in practice, Paris and Alim (2017) explain that "CSP seeks to perpetuate and foster—to sustain—linguistic, literate, and cultural pluralism as part of schooling for positive social transformation" (p. 1). Building from earlier asset-based pedagogies—such as funds of knowledge, third-space, and culturally relevant pedagogies—that have emerged since the 1990s, CSP offers a more explicitly political approach. As Paris (2011) has argued, responsiveness or relevance are not enough to ensure the maintenance of nondominant languages and cultures or to engender "a critical stance toward and critical action against unequal power relations" while still learning the dominant cultural competence (p. 93). Echoing the previously discussed reminders that responding to changes in a program ecology requires careful thought about overall mission and goals (Garcia, 2018; Pennington and Hoekje, 2010), such a CSP approach requires careful thinking about "fundamental questions of teaching and learning" (Paris & Alim, 2017, p. 2).

Such fundamental questions were central to the story about Aaron that began this chapter. What was my goal for the class? Was I trying to help students write an ideal text, or was I providing an opportunity to practice new research methods and genres? Were my assessment practices valuing the ways students did what *I* would do, or did my practices value students as agentive writers making their own choices in service of their writing goals? My approach to answering these questions is necessarily mediated by my classroom ecology, the writing program ecology, and the organizational ecology of the institution where I teach and conducted this research. In the section that follows, I work in this order—from classroom to program to institution—to consider a way forward.

Toward A Culturally Sustaining Approach to School-Based Writing Ecologies

When I asked the student participants about the advice they would give to students from their high school about writing, they tended to focus on writing as a developmental process. Hector said students should know that "in the beginning [writing is] not going to be too great, but after you start practicing and learning from your mistakes and knowing how to put more information together it will get better" (Interview, May 4, 2016). Lucy offered a similar philosophy, saying writing is "a work in progress… I feel like it's like wine. It gets better with time [laughs]" (Interview, April 4, 2017). She compared her writing development to a computer loading a new program or downloading an app:

> You know when you try to load, like downloading something? I feel like that's me. 'Cause I'm still working my way towards, like, the download of the final product. So I'm not there yet. I'm in progress. I'm not— I'm doing better each time a little bit, so that's how I feel where I'm at. (Interview, April 4, 2017)

Hector and Lucy are echoing what decades of research on writing development and learning has shown: writing development happens over time, with practice, and sometimes in ways that aren't recognizable at the time. But how well are classroom, program, and institutional structures designed to support such an approach to teaching and learning? And what might such an approach look like in a culturally sustaining environment?

Re-Thinking Classroom Practices

Participatory, genre-informed discursive contexts. Throughout this dissertation, I have discussed opportunities for students to learn in practice by referring to the "rich discursive contexts" (Freedman, 1995) or participatory classroom environments (Soliday, 2011) that seem to support student writing success. These learning contexts echo those advocated by Johns (1997): they provide sample texts for students to learn from and create opportunities for students to take on the roles and practices that are associated with the writing task. Jain seemed particularly attentive to the role of participatory activities in his learning. He seemed to benefit particularly from such an environment in his FYW course. He explained that he liked the course because of the opportunity to do "a lot of activities, like engaging activities…not just like a

PowerPoint on the board, or read this article or something" (Interview, May 11, 2017). When he went outside with his class to observe the campus mall or sat in the classroom looking at the walls and windows to notice things he hadn't seen before, Jain was able to "feel like" a journalist. This role was also encouraged when he wrote about his visit to a drag race in town. Jain contrasted this experience with his high school ELA classes that "focused a little bit more on making sure we were writing the essay right and the format they wanted versus us actually learning how to analyze the books" (Interview, May 11, 2017). In other words, Jain seemed to want more opportunities to focus on the activities of the community rather than the written products.

The writing opportunities matrix introduced in Chapter 5 locates school-based writing opportunities on a set of continua, with the most productive, supportive, *learning*-focused environments being more participatory, knowledge-making environments like those described in the Chapter 5 case studies (see Figure 7). In each of these writing tasks, Jain and Lucy were asked to apply what they've learned in a new context. These "knowledge-making" tasks asked them to *do something* with their knowledge rather than just demonstrate that they've learned it. As Nuñez, Ramalho, and Cuero (2010) argued, classrooms that support the success of Latinx and other students of colors should position students as creators of knowledge rather than passive recipients. In this case, even though Jain and Lucy were being graded by their instructors, these writing tasks clearly positioned the student writers as communicators for an audience. They were writing in public genres that exist in the world and served the social motives of the writing tasks. These "situated" tasks—combined with a situated assessment structure, which I will discuss below—helped to reinforce the idea that writing changes as contexts change and encouraged the student writers to consider their strategies within that context. These were also the least common opportunities offered to the student participants in this study.

Situated assessment epistemologies and antiracist assessment ecologies. Such situated, genre-informed writing contexts that position students as knowledge-makers should be considered essential features of a culturally-sustaining writing ecology because they have the potential to push against negative writing self-efficacy perceptions that build from standardized tests, comparison to others, and social messaging (Pajares, 2003). As discussed in Chapter 7, negative writing self-efficacy builds over time and can be compounded by decontextualized writing assessment technologies that privilege white, middle-class discourse strategies and emphasize issues of correctness. The students in this study seemed less likely to describe writing in these decontextualized terms—good hook, transition words, etc.—when they were writing new genres or applying knowledge in new ways; instead, they thought carefully about audience-specific strategies. For example, Jain wanted to make choices that "sound scientific" in his lab report writing (Interview, February 28, 2017), and Hector talked about how his introduction for a literacy narrative would be "more personal so that people get interested in it," whereas a rhetorical analysis would have to be "more fact" (Interview, March 21, 2017). In these cases, the student writers were bringing more of a social practice epistemology that saw writing as an action within a rhetorical context rather than as a decontextualized skill (Newell, VanDerHeide, & Olsen, 2014). This social practice approach not only seemed to provide them with some of the discursive strategies or rhetorical awareness needed to succeed in new and varied contexts, but also distanced the student writers from the raced-gendered expectations of the dominant five-paragraph school essay.

An ecological approach reminds us that changing the task requires changing the assessment strategy. If the goal is no longer to meet a decontextualized standard, then traditional rubrics and correctness-focused assessment strategies won't do. While this argument for context-specific, assessment is not new (see Anson, Dannels, Flash, & Housley Gaffney, 2012; Broad, 2003), emphasizing the importance of a social practice epistemology in all writing tasks cannot be overstated because a student's writing success exists in dialogue with the reader's—most likely the instructor's—response. Therefore, the teacher's expectations and assessment methods need to reflect the context of the writing.

Grading was a common source of frustration among the study participants, and Hercules was particularly pointed in an interview toward the end of our year working together. When I asked him what advice he would give to his college instructors, he said, "Be clear what you want… Whatever they're looking for in their writing, put it in the rubric" (Interview, May 11, 2017). He was particularly frustrated by an FYW writing task that asked him to write "an argument." In the assignment guidelines, the instructor explained that evaluation would include the thoroughness and quality of the argument's development but did not explain further what that quality might look like. He said he used published research to support his ideas a researched argument task, but his instructor "wanted to know the name of the study, what the study showed, why did they do the study, and then I think in the rubric it was just like, 'Back up your ideas.'" He said this was a problem with college writing, in general, because "the teacher wants more, and you don't know that because it's not in the rubric" (Interview, May 11, 2017). I interpret Hercules's frustration to be a problem of decontextualized assessment and generalized notions of "academic" writing. Hercules was writing about the controversy of medical marijuana in sports because he thought the decision-makers of the National Football League should hear it

(Interview, May 11, 2017). But while the assignment ostensibly asked the student writers to choose an audience and write an *argument* for that audience, the task directions and concurrent writing tips distributed by the instructor made it clear that this would be a thesis-driven school essay written for an instructor. Hercules hadn't been asked to include the name of the study and the researcher's goals in previous school essays—and he most likely wouldn't have to if he were writing to the NFL commissioner—so his frustration seems understandable, to me.

At the same time, I appreciate his instructor's goals. For some academic genres, it would be important to include more information than just a study's findings in order to support a claim or argument. But identifying those genres, explaining why they need more information, and assessing it appropriately would provide more clarity to students and create a more fair and equitable writing situation. For example, in my FYW research and writing course, I have started assigning a literature review task. Students collaborate when conducting the research, sharing the labor of finding and reading academic studies about a shared topic, and they provide each other with annotated summaries. Then, rather than writing an argument about a topic that students are just learning about, I ask them to write a literature review that could educate a reader about what is already known about this topic. We read sample literature reviews, discuss rhetorical and discursive strategies, and then we collaboratively create a rubric that student will use to review each other's writing and that I will use to offer eventual feedback. In this task, students know they need to include the name of the study, what the researchers were asking, and what they found, not because these are my instructor expectations but because these are expectations we've identified when reading samples of the genre. When I respond to their writing, I can frame it in these terms: "In a literature review, I'm expecting to see *x*, but here I'm not getting that yet"; or, "Here you are doing a great job comparing the study methods and findings." And so on.

Clear, context- and genre-specific assessment is central to Inoue's (2015) call for antiracist assessment ecologies (see also Poe, Inoue, & Elliot, 2018). While Inoue's scholarship is rightly applauded for his development of labor-based grading contracts, I worry that attention on the grading contracts may be limiting the broader potential impact of his work on antiracist writing assessment. As Inoue explains, the grading contract is but one element of the assessment *ecology* he has created for his classroom. He suggests that an equally important element of an antiracist assessment ecology is providing students with opportunities to evaluate writing, to reflect upon where those evaluations come from, and to critique the power structures that lead to these evaluations. Using an adapted model of Broad's (2003) dynamic criteria mapping, Inoue (2015) leads his students through a similar exercise I described above in order to create a shared set of writing goals. They discuss why these goals are the way they are and give feedback accordingly. This approach is antiracist—and could be considered culturally sustaining—because students have an opportunity to consider and critique these shared expectations, and in the grading contract model they are not disciplined if they challenge or do not meet those goals. As Irizarry (2011) writes, honoring diverse language practices does not mean students don't want or don't need to learn the practices and conventions of dominant academic English. However, an antiracist, culturally sustaining writing ecology can decenter whiteness by making expectations explicit and providing opportunity for critique in a genre-specific framework.

Re-thinking Programmatic Approaches to Writing

What is the mission of school-based writing instruction in high school and college? What is the mission of a general education program? How can these programs *center* students from historically underrepresented populations rather than merely including them? These are some of the questions an ecological approach to culturally sustaining education should raise for those of us who lead programmatic efforts. The research on culturally responsive and sustaining approaches to student success raises important issues and questions related to these programmatic goals. In this section I want to focus on an important one: What purpose should writing play in general education?[27]

The purpose of FYW has historically been framed as a service to the institution. Advocating for a renewed commitment to FYW in the face of institutional pressures more than a decade ago, Bawarshi wrote (2003) that FYW "has reached a critical impasse in its history" and that interested scholars, teachers, and administrators "must address the course's responsibility to the university, especially its relationship to WID…if we are to justify its continued existence" (p. 149). In his argument, Bawarshi proposed a genre awareness approach to FYW as a way to help students succeed when they enter their disciplines. This argument suggests that by teaching students a process of identifying and analyzing genres so they "can learn new genres with a better understanding of their rhetorical purposes and contextual meanings" (Devitt, 2004, 197), students will gain strategies to more seamlessly acquire the genres of writing in their discipline. This genre awareness approach was soon followed by similar, related pedagogical approaches like Writing about Writing (Downs & Wardle, 2007) and Teaching for Transfer (Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014) that incorporated genre as a central teaching concept for helping students adapt to new writing situations. While it should be clear by now that I am an advocate for a genre-based approach to writing instruction, I believe the argument for FYW as a preparatory course for writing in more advanced academic and professional contexts misplaces the role of writing in lower-division study and actively ignores the ways writing can be central to learning and a broader programmatic vision.

---

[27] For the purposes of this discussion, I am including FYW as part of general education, except when otherwise specified. While depending on the context they may be considered separate programs—even though FYW is part of a student's required general education curriculum at my institution, the writing program has its own mission and goals separate from the broader general education program—I keep them together here because they are both central to lower-division writing experiences at many institutions. As I hope will become clear, my approach to general education may also bring the goals and outcomes of FYW and general education closer together.

Longitudinal studies of student writing consistently complicate the notion of FYW as preparation for writing in the disciplines. As researchers like Carroll (2002), Bergman and Zepernick (2007), and Leki (2007) have demonstrated, the typical English genres explored in FYW are too removed from the genres students will need in their majors, and there is too much time between FYW and when students will be writing in their majors to make a difference. Even when instructors and programs try to incorporate more discipline-specific writing in FYW contexts, "the activities of [FYW] do not provide the content needed to practice those genres in a meaningful way" (Wardle, 2009, p. 781). As a result, Leki (2007) argues that “students get writing instruction when they do not need it and do not have access to it when they might be able to use it” (p. 284). Rather than an opportunity to gain skills, abilities, or concepts that might benefit them in the future, students tend to see FYW as just another course to pass along the way to their major.

A similar issue seems to be facing general education in U.S. higher education, more broadly. As Foster and Russell (2002) explain, general education is a unique development found only in U.S. educational systems. The historical lack of articulation between secondary and postsecondary education means that students are presumed to be unready for higher learning, so they are not yet specializing as first-year students. For example, students in 100- and 200-level courses at my institution are typically not engaged in the real activities of disciplines, but rather in introductory courses in fields of study that may hold little or no interest beyond acquiring the credential that will allow them to move on. Since students are generally not interested in joining the communities to which their general education professors belong (Carroll, 2002, p. 60), their motivation to succeed will be mostly situation-based. Survey research has shown that students tend to see general education courses as a waste of time, or even as an institutional money-making venture (Driscoll, 2014). Even when students do see the potential value of general education, some still believe a more professionalized course sequence in the major would be more beneficial than the common cross-curricular, distributed model (Thompson, Eodice, & Tran, 2015).

As I discussed in Chapter 6, student frustration with and confusion about the purposes of general education may reflect broader societal tension. While there may be “broad consensus” among educators and employers that the kinds of habits of mind encountered in general education will prepare students for the world (Schoenberg, 2005), students, parents, and policymakers often feel differently. Adler-Kassner (2014) has noted that this tension is not new, as general education programs were developed to encompass three potentially competing goals: to promote the intellectual development or liberal learning of students, to prepare students for participation in society and the workforce, and to learn to approach problems in discipline-specific ways (p. 438). While those in the academy tend to see these competing goals as a form of productive tension, Adler-Kassner suggests that policymakers and reformers see a strain. These competing visions have become more salient in recent years as public discourse surrounding education has focused on career preparation at the expense of disciplinary enculturation, perhaps most visible in initiatives like the Common Core State Standards that emphasize “college and career readiness,” and in standardized tests like the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) or the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) that measure skills like critical thinking, reading, and writing divorced from their disciplinary contexts.

Meaningful content and attention to student roles. This emphasis on decontextualized skills as a measure of learning or program success brings us back to the racialized nature of schooling and the centering of white, middle-class language conventions and values in pedagogy, assessment, and policymaking. As Garcia (2018) reminds us, truly serving students from underrepresented and linguistic minority populations must move beyond these notions of success. In the case of writing, a general education must view writing as more than either a decontextualized skill or a way to integrate into a future discipline or major.

As I continued to think about what this writing and related success might look like, I was reminded of Jain and Lucy's writing experiences in two general education classes focused on sex and AIDS from public health perspectives. Jain saw value in the course. He looked forward to sharing what he learned with his teenage siblings and he thought the course would help "to be smart about my sexual choices" (Interview, September 28, 2016). The writing tasks in the course included a series of short "critical response essays" for an instructor-as-examiner audience. In a response essay about needle exchange programs, said he was "trying to persuade people why it's important to have those [needle exchange] programs." But while he thought it would be important to write for the affected community, this is not the role the task was asking of him. mentioned that "as a student," his role was to show his teacher what he learned, but he also identified ways in which his knowledge could be used for a more outward-facing purpose, saying, "If I was an activist or something, if I'm trying to prevent people from making mistakes […] It would be important to actually publish stuff for people to read" (Interview, September 28, 2016). Jain seems to recognize his limited agency here, as the task assigned was instructor-driven and did not offer a real-life situation.

In Lucy’s course, the final project was to create a digital project on a topic of their related to the course material. Blake, her instructor, explained to me in an interview that evaluation would not focus on whether or not the project met formal expectations, but on whether the content included was understandable to an audience. Blake continued,

> That's the big difference is that this one is for an audience. If they're writing stuff that's really obscure to people, and it's not coming across, that's a problem. But if it's like, ‘Oh, you've clarified a point that people are probably confused about,’ that's what I'm hoping for here. (Interview, January 30, 2017)

Blake sought to create a real-life situation for the students to write to, and the task also clearly positions the students as educators teaching their audience about the topic. Reflecting on this project, Lucy said she said she felt “like an activist,” the same role identified as one that Jain said *would* have been meaningful in his class. “I feel like I was trying to be like a public voice,” Lucy said. “Like an activist. That's what I was trying to be” (Interview, May 17, 2017). She called it “one of the most interesting projects” she completed in her first year. This writing task provided Lucy with a context for her writing, one that allowed her to see a purpose beyond pleasing the teacher. This approximation of a real-life situation encouraged her to take on a new role as a public health advocate, and to *use* her knowledge to meet the learning outcomes of the course.

These contrasting writing experiences—and the ways both Jain and Lucy called upon the “activist” role of public writing—remind me of Easley, Bianco, and Leech’s (2012) discussion of the factors that motivate academically successful immigrant and first-generation Mexican heritage students. Drawing from autobiographical writing, student focus groups, and family interviews, the authors call upon the concept of *ganas*, a deeply held desire to achieve academically fueled by parental struggle and sacrifice, that seems to result in a commitment to succeed academically. As Easley, Bianco, and Leech describe it, the motivation associated with *ganas* draws not only from a student's recognition of parental struggle and respect and familial history and legacy, but also from a social consciousness that aims to break the cycle of poverty and contribute back to their community (pp. 169-174). Irizarry's (2017) work with Latinx high school students similarly found that for students, "education is most valuable when there is practical application to what they are learning, particularly opportunities that allow them to improve themselves as individuals and the communities in which they live" (p. 93).

Both Jain and Lucy seemed to acknowledge *ganas* in their own motivation to succeed. When Jain talked about his work ethic, he often referenced his parents and their sacrifices for him and his three younger siblings. In a FYW journal assignment he wrote that he "never [wants to] give my mom a regret to having me at the age of 16 and having to change her life around." Speaking about how far she has come since being placed in classes for English language learners, Lucy said, "I felt like I've gotten to this point where I demonstrated so much and I can keep going and prove to people that I'm not that girl, you know? I'm much more than that. And people who are in the same situation can do the same thing as I am" (Interview, January 13, 2017). Both of these students work 20-30 hours each week to help support their families. They see education as a way to change their lives, to honor and support their families, and to serve their communities. To Jain and Lucy, good grades are important, but they are not an end. Their motivations exist in tension with the individualistic mentality that defines success in U.S. education structures (Irizarry, 2017; Pimentel & Wilson, 2016).

Writing tasks in a general education program that center the success of Latinx and other underrepresented student populations could therefore offer opportunities for students to contribute to their families and communities about issues that matter to them. If general education is really to help develop “people who are independent and flexible in their thinking and capable of responding to the demands of a changing world in civic-minded, deliberative ways” (Hanstedt, 2012, p. 2), then perhaps writing should provide a way for students to practice responding to the world. Reichert Powell’s (2014) call to a “kairotic pedagogy” seeks to resist academic writing for academic writing’s sake. She argues:

> [W]e don’t begin where students are in order to lead them toward subsequent semesters in the academy; we begin where students are in order to demonstrate to them the role writing can play in their lives right now, the habits and practices that can, immediately and in the future, infuse their lives as students but also as workers and citizens." (p. 119)

Rethinking success in general education writing means rethinking what writing general education can and should *do*.

Hanstedt (2012) has argued that in general education, where students are just beginning to learn the content and discourse conventions of the discipline, students may better demonstrate deep learning when they feel less pressure to impress their instructor with academic jargon in unfamiliar disciplinary discourses. As a result, he suggests that "one of the ways to get more scholarly thinking and writing from students is to move their work into a less scholarly context" (p. 78). When Lucy wrote an advocacy Instagram page, she was demonstrating deep learning in such a context. Taking this writing seriously means re-thinking what can and should “count” as academic writing. In their argument for having students interact with public literate communities in FYW, Fishman and Reiff (2011) suggest that "writing expertise can—and should—include the ability both to recognize and to participate in a multiplicity of knowledge-using (knowledge-producing and knowledge-misusing) communities” (p. 130). In other words, notions of success in general education writing should not be limited to traditional notions of “academic” writing.

Note also the knowledge-related terms Fishman and Reiff present: “knowledge-using,” “knowledge-producing,” “knowledge-misusing.” These constructions notably omit “knowledge-telling” as a desired writing ability.

Beyond the school essay. If we, as educators, want students to be able to respond to, adapt to, and change an ever-evolving world, they will need practice using knowledge, not simply gaining it. In introductory general education courses, students should be tasked with educating others or contributing to public discussion rather than telling the teacher what they already know. In other words, rather than contributing to academic conversation that they are not yet ready (and have little desire) to join, student writers should use what they’ve learned from academic conversations to join publics.

I argue here that such an approach requires decentering the thesis-driven school essay and related text types—research paper, analysis essay, etc.—in general education courses. In a recent workshop on assignment design I co-facilitated in my university’s teaching and learning center, a professor of East Asian Studies revised an assignment so that students were writing a memo to a corporate team educating them about what to expect about the communication practices of a particular culture. An Italian literature scholar designed a writing task in which students would draw from their course readings to write a letter to a state senator explaining why (or why not) the humanistic study of literature remains valuable in the 21st century. These writing tasks, like Lucy’s Instagram page and Jain’s journalistic FYW writing, provide students with a knowledge-*using* role, a purpose, a genre, and an audience.

Moreover, when such situated, knowledge-using writing tasks are directly related to local communities, Latinx students and other students from underrepresented populations may benefit by being able to draw from the cultural, linguistic, and community resources they bring to the classroom. Jain wanted to use the knowledge he was learning in his sex and AIDS class to help his younger siblings learn about safe sex practices and to speak to affected communities about needle exchange programs. What textual and linguistic resources might he have drawn upon to actually speak to these audiences or communities? Spanish is the primary language in Jain's home and neighborhood, and he often referenced the Mexican culture and values present in his home. Perhaps he would have drawn on these resources in a way that honors and leverages the experiential knowledge he and his community bring (Irizarry, 2017). Such an opportunity may have become an opportunity for Jain to understand and critique the social factors of sexually transmitted disease, as his professor intended, and also to maintain community cultural and language practices as he gains access to dominant ones (Paris, 2011). In fact, research has shown that Latinx students are more likely to succeed when they have opportunities to learn in environments that affirm their linguistic abilities (Nuñez, Hoover, Pickett, Stuart-Carruthers, & Vázquez, 2013).

An important caveat. As I argue against the school essay, I want to be clear that I am not dismissing the potential value of such writing nor the role it can play in developing certain kinds of thinking and learning. After all, I recognize the potential for hypocrisy the exists when writing an academic text to argue that academic writing shouldn't matter. At the same time, I am writing this as a PhD candidate who has chosen this career path. While the genres of English Studies are not necessarily static or hardened, there are certain expectations I am trying to meet. But again, I *chose* to write in this way in order to join this community. When Jain enters his Engineering major, he will be expected to learn how to write like an engineer. When Lucy gets further toward her degree, she will be expected to write more like a public health practitioner or advocate; if she goes to graduate school, she may even develop facility writing academic research. But when and if that happens, she'll need good writing instruction and mentorship at that time. Tardy's (2009) study of a graduate level writing class reminds us that it's difficult to bring genre "to life" in a "one size fits all" course unless students are able to immediately use their knowledge outside of the classroom (p. 132). John, the student who seemed to gain most from the assignment in the study, was concurrently working on a statement of purpose for doctoral program applications, so he was able to blend the classroom and out of classroom contexts. To paraphrase Leki (2007): Lucy will need writing instruction in academic writing *when she needs it*. It's up to educational institutions to support that learning, a thorny issue I will take up briefly in the next section.

Re-Thinking Institutional Approaches to Writing

Ecological understandings of educational organizations and programs remind us that all elements of the organization are interconnected. For example, if an HSI adapts its mission to support other measures of student success such as civic engagement or critical consciousness, it must then also adapt its incentive structure to support that mission (Garcia, 2018). Requirements for promotion and tenure can no longer be based solely on personal achievement; instead, faculty must be rewarded for acting in ways that support other aspects of the student success mission, such as mentoring or community engagement (p. 140). If the incentive structure does not change, however, it is unlikely the new vision for student success will be realized.

Shifting reward structures. This tension between a revised mission and a static reward structure became visible at my institution with the implementation of the general education writing policy I have referenced throughout this dissertation. In an interview, a faculty member in upper administration invested in building student writing capacity across the university told me the writing policy was an effort to prioritize writing because "employers want the students to get better and they're not" (Interview, May 16, 2018).[28] By focusing on writing throughout general education—requiring students to write in each class and have opportunities to revise—the intention was to provide students may opportunities to write. But at the same time, the incentive structure of the university had changed in ways that seemed to push against effective writing pedagogy. A new budgeting system, responsibility centered management (RCM), ensured that large class sizes would be essential for departments, programs, and colleges across the university to remain in good fiscal standing. Because general education is a requirement for all students at this large, land-grant institution, it seems general education courses became dollar signs to some segments of the university faculty. As the administrator explained to me, "I think responsibility centered management encourages some deans, not all, to think that they're going to get rich on teaching Gen Ed …. They want the biggest class they could have and they're trying to do as little in the writing as they can" (Interview, May 16, 2018). Further complicating this issue, decisions about teaching assistants are left to the department or program leaders. So even though a 500-person class is bringing in a certain amount of money, there are no centralized policies for how many teaching assistants a faculty member will get to work with. If, hypothetically, there are five TAs assigned to this course, they would each be responsible for grading and giving feedback to 75-100 students over the course of the semester and would not necessarily be trained how to do so. It is no wonder the students I worked with complained about the lack of feedback they received on their writing.

---

[28] It should be noted that this administrator's focus on writing as an employable skill is a common rationale for emphasizing writing in higher administration. Adler-Kassner (2012) has demonstrated that the instrumentalist aims of the recent policy push toward writing are clearly influenced by corporate interests. As Trimbur (1991) might argue, even if writing scholars do not agree with the motivation, it still provides an opportunity to exert some rhetorical power as experts in the field. At my institution, for example, this administrator's efforts toward writing led to writing instruction workshops based emphasizing effective practice from writing studies scholarship, and there is talk of a new WAC/WID coordinator position.

Clearly, at this institution the implementation of a writing policy did not mean that sustainable or effective writing instruction was also supported, let alone a culturally sustaining model. In fact, one might argue the opposite has occurred; because instructors *have* to assign writing and the personal, programmatic, and institutional reward structures are not set up to support more time-intensive, personalized approaches to writing and assessment, it may not be better at all than the multiple-choice exam-based system it seeks to supplant, or at least supplement. The issues are many, but they seem to be located along two related tracks: issues of access and issues of equity. First, students are not being offered the kinds of access needed for writing development in a given academic community: access to disciplinary genres, identities, and resources. At the same time, the modes of instruction and assessment remain primarily decontextualized, privileging the cultural and linguistic knowledge of white, middle-class learners and writers. As Freedman (1995) suggested, without a clear classroom discursive context, students tended to draw from out of school cultural experiences, privileging mainstream students whose home discourses aligned with those of the academy.

I highlight these as institutional issues because an institution that seeks to center the education of underrepresented student populations would clearly need to address these issues of access and equity in writing and other forms of instruction. As Barajas and Ronnqvist (2007) suggested, the biggest challenge facing educational organizations is to acknowledge the ways that ordinary processes and practices support the racialization of educational spaces. "[W]e must willingly accept that racism," they wrote, "and particularly how white racism operates in educational organizations, in order for educational organizations to operate in more socially just ways" (p. 1534). Again, to return to Garcia’s (2018) theory of a student-centered institution, acknowledging these practices and intervening to change them would require changes to other elements of the organizational system. For example, the issues I’ve raised throughout this dissertation related to writing instruction all require supporting faculty to change their practices. While at my institution has offered support in the form of teaching workshops and consultations, this is not nearly enough to influence the kinds of change needed. In essence, what is needed is a cultural change—a change to the culture of writing and teaching writing—and such change requires a completely different conception of what teaching is and can be. For my university to support such a change, it will require much more than eight yearly workshops offered by an instructional specialist and a graduate student who combined represent a half-time faculty member (20 hours each week).

Learning-centered pedagogies and constructive alignment. Nearly twenty years ago, Biggs (1999) argued for a shift toward learning-centered teaching that remains valuable today. He argued against some of the dominant assumptions of assessment—that a “good spread” of grades describes a well-designed examination and that learning is a result of what the teacher does, among them—and suggested that good teaching should actually reduce the gap between students as all students improve and learn. In other words, if students are assessed based on the ways they actually demonstrate the intended outcomes of the course—and, equally important, *what has actually been taught*—then more students should succeed in the course. This “constructive alignment” approach maps well onto the incorporation of writing in the broader curriculum. For example, students should only be assessed based on what they have been taught, an idea that Matsuda (2012) drew upon when he advised writing program administrators to create explicit policies about grammar and grading. As Matsuda reminded us, if grammar isn't taught, who benefits when it is assessed?

This question was raised explicitly by one of the instructors in this study. Ray, who taught a general education course with a cultural studies perspective, told me, "I don't punish them for some sort of a grammar problem. I'm more interested in what they think, rather than how they write it. Because the way they write is nothing but the result of their past educational experiences" (Interview, March 8, 2017). Ray's pedagogical approach developed from their own experience as a multilingual speaker and writer, and as a cultural theorist well aware of the political implications of language. To counter the disciplinary tendencies of writing assessment, Ray and their TA provides students with extensive feedback and allows them to revise as many times as they want before assigning a grade. While Ray provides specific guidelines and expectations for the task such as page length and thesis placement, a student's grade is not determined by their writing style or level of correctness. Ray also brings an asset-based view of linguistic difference that would be at home in many writing studies discussions. While reading one of Jain's essays for the course during our interview together, Ray guessed that the student was of Mexican descent even though I had removed any identifying information. Ray told me, "This is how Hispanic people think in terms of language: we start here, and we go in circles. This is how American people think: straight line…. Why do we dock them because they think that way?" (Interview, March 8, 2017). Ray continued by discussing the Jain's linguistic abilities as an asset, saying, "That's the efficiency of being bi-cultural, you can change from that spiral into a straight line" (Interview, March, 2017). When I said Jain was an engineering major, Ray told me they would advise Jain to take a technical writing course. There, Ray explained, Jain would learn to write more directly and concisely. The important thing, for Ray, is that Jain is not punished for something he was not taught in the class. “[Jain] write[s] well,” Ray told me. “You know, that stuff can be fixed quickly. What I cannot fix is the way that they were able to get the concept of the theory” (Interview, March 8, 2017). In other words, Ray was drawing upon principles of constructive alignment: Jain’s high grade was determined by his understanding of the theory, which was taught, not by his grammar, which was not.

Hiring and retaining diverse faculty. It should be noted that Ray is part of only 8% of UA faculty who self-identify as Hispanic, while more than two-thirds self-identify as White (ABOR, 2018c).[29] Even at an HSI that claims to serve Latinx students this is sadly not uncommon. In general, the demographics of the teaching force across K-12 and higher education are not keeping pace with the changing demographics of student populations (Irizarry & Raible, 2011). But hiring and retaining diverse faculty may be one of the most important changes an institution like mine must make. I do not raise this argument to claim that all faculty from underrepresented populations would bring the same asset-based approach that Ray does. After all, whiteness and a white racial habitus can be inhabited by individuals who are both recognized as white and nonwhite (Inoue, 2015; Rosa & Flores, 2017). However, faculty members’ “complex cultural identities” can also influence the ways they approach students, pedagogy, and educational equity (Nuñez et al., 2010, p. 178). A more diverse faculty with resources to develop and spread pedagogies rooted in respect for cultures and identities and based on the historical and contemporary sociopolitical contexts of marginalized communities could help shift a broader institutional culture away from deficit-based approaches to student learning (Irizarry & Raible, 2011). Furthermore, hiring and retaining diverse faculty has been shown to help students from underrepresented populations see others like themselves and envision possibilities for success in the institution (Nuñez et al., 2013).

---

[29] Ray was a non-tenure eligible teaching professor. Hispanic faculty make up only 7% of the tenure-track faculty (ABOR, 2018c).

Smaller classes and more time to engage with individual students. Such an institutional culture-shift might promote pedagogies that view the teacher role as a supporter of student learning rather than an imparter of knowledge. Ray seemed to bring this approach to their teaching and demonstrated a fundamentally different idea about their role as a faculty member than is often promulgated at a large, land-grant institution like mine. Ray told me:

> My students know, and I tell them the first day of class, "If you need help, you can come to my office. If I'm walking around the cafeteria, all you have to do is just stop me. If I'm sitting down in the cafeteria, come and sit with me and tell me what your problem is, and we'll fix it there and then. Once I'm on campus, I'm on the job. I'm available to you."
>
> They *have* to know that we care about them. (Interview, March 8, 2017)

For Ray, showing students that "we care about them" means spending time with students. It means showing students that their learning and growth is what matters. An institution that truly wanted to support the success of underrepresented student populations would need to provide the resources teachers need to make this kind of care, this "authentic caring" possible (Valenzuela, 1999, p. 25). Ray told me that 25 office hours during the week a written project is due is not uncommon; this is how they show they care. But this work is largely invisible, and not rewarded by the institution outside of the stray teaching award or other recognition. To influence a broader cultural shift, institutions would need to reward instructors for putting in the time that Ray does. It would need to reward community-oriented research and service, and the mentoring and organizing required to help students achieve the forms of success they may find more meaningful than grades: *ganas*, civic engagement, and identity development, among others (Garcia, 2018; Nuñez et al., 2010).

The need for smaller class sizes and more time to engage individually with students was a common theme among my instructor interviews, at least for instructors who were not already resigned to auditorium-sized classes. I spoke with Drew, a former journalist teaching on a contingent contract in the communication field, after their first semester teaching a general education course. Drew was hired by the department with less than two weeks' notice before the beginning of the semester and was not even told that the course included a significant writing component. Drew cared about the class and wanted to teach it well, but they found the surrounding structures unsupportive. They taught in a large, auditorium-style lecture hall where the back rows were dimmed making it difficult to maintain eye contact with many of the students. Their office was off-campus, a 15 to 20-minute walk from the classroom, and Drew found many students wary about making the walk to office hours. To teach such a course well, Drew offered a few specific solutions that would require institutional support. First, they wanted more face time with students in smaller classes. and requested the classroom or a near-classroom location for drop-in office hours. For example, if the course was scheduled for 9-10:15 am, the drop-in office hours could be held on either end of the class time for 15-30 minutes. Drew believed this would improve teacher-student relations and, in the process, improve student learning and their written production. Drew also recommended a shift in institutional expectations for instructors, suggesting that teachers should commit to general education for five years so that these introductory level classes are not just passed around. Such a commitment, Drew told me, would show that the instructors and the university values the course (Interview, December 20, 2016). Left unsaid was the concurrent argument that faculty commitment to general education might also show students that it was a valuable learning experience.

Expanding notions of success and focusing on student learning. What struck me about these conversations with Ray and Drew was how their approaches were connected by a goal to center students and student learning. They were actively acknowledging the challenges many students face on campus and seeking to shift the ways institutions think about teaching to best support them. It is also clear from speaking with these faculty that doing so will require a significant re-allocation of resources and a significant re-conception of what student success can and should look like. For example, the general education writing policy was spurred by an internal assessment that showed student writing was not improving over the course of their time at the university. But this assessment was flawed in a number of ways, which the administrator I spoke with eventually acknowledged. First, the comparison was made between first-year and final year students enrolled in general education courses, courses in which we know there are different levels of motivation. Also, these writings from courses across the curriculum were evaluated using the same decontextualized rubric. In short, this attempt at university-wide assessment was attempting to measure against a universal ideal of writing success that seems to exist only in school settings.

But scholars have long argued that postsecondary institutions must expand their ideas of what counts as success. The educational psychologist and assessment scholar Robert Sternberg (2010) has advocated for expanded approaches to college admissions because traditional models of assessment are good at measuring some forms of intelligence, such as memory and analytic skills, but they do not allow students to demonstrate their abilities in other forms, such as creative, practical, and wisdom-based skills. When we combine these often overlooked intelligences with some of the outcomes described by Garcia (2018), including critical consciousness and civic awareness, we find that there are many ways to discuss student success beyond simply talking about “how well” they write, if they are “career ready,” or if they persist beyond the first year or graduate within a certain time frame. Writing can be a valuable opportunity to develop abilities and intelligences like creativity and wisdom, but only when faculty are providing opportunities for students to demonstrate them in use, and then assess them contextually. To move toward such a model would call for significant resources to re-train faculty in the very basics of pedagogy, and to include faculty in campus-wide assessments of writing and learning. All of these efforts would require visionary leadership that resists the accountability mandate of the “audit culture” that necessitates the constant production of evidence to show that students and teachers are doing things efficiently and in the “correct” way (Apple, 2004, p. 14).

Getting There from Here

> *“As educators, we need to lead the way and design our pedagogical approaches for the students we have, not the students we wish we had. This requires approaches that are responsive, inclusive, adaptive, challenging, and compassionate. And it requires that institutions find more creative ways to support teachers and prepare them for the work of teaching. This is not a theoretical exercise — it is a practical one.” (Goldrick-Rab & Stommel, 2018)*

Near the end of his second semester, Jain told me he was “still struggling” and demonstrated some uncertainty about his role as a college student. “I don’t know how college works yet,” he told me, even though he had already been a largely successful student over the last six months. “I don't know. I'm just doing what I think is right. I don't know, like, I don't know. It's more independent. ‘What should I be doing?’ I don't know. I don't know how to explain it. I don't know how to explain it” (Interview, April 4, 2017). He went on to say that while he understood the point of high school—essentially to prepare for college—he was having trouble figuring out the point of his current general education classes. “I feel lost,” he told me. “Not what’s going on now, but what’s ahead” (Interview, April 4, 2017).

As we spoke, I began to understand how Jain might believe the general education experience was pushing him further from his goals. He was not learning how to be an engineer, which he wanted to do to support his family financially, and he also wasn’t doing anything that seemed relevant to his future or to his community. He was working hard and getting by in his courses, but he was having trouble putting it all together. This project offers some initial thoughts about how teachers, administrators, and policymakers can better help students like Jain, Lucy, Hercules, and Hector to succeed in educational contexts that were not designed for them. More accurately, this study argues that educational institutions need to change, and writing instruction in secondary and post-secondary contexts can be a good place to start.

Building from Success

I am under no illusion that a cultural shift in writing pedagogy and assessment would be quick or easy, especially at a large institution like mine. There are, however, successful models that already exist worth exploring and expanding. The PUENTE Project in California has worked for more than 30 years to support the college-going and success of students from underrepresented populations (PUENTE, 2018). By creating a support system for students that includes teachers, advisors, and mentors in literacy-focused coursework, the program helps students in high school and community colleges matriculate to and succeed in four-year institutions. These adults serve as a “validating team” who affirm students’ cultural and linguistic knowledge even as they work to develop academic discourses, validate their concerns and feelings of alienation on campus, and provide access to professional role models and opportunities (Rendón, 2002, p. 662). Students are placed in groups of four or five for an entire semester—their *familias*—that foster collaborative learning and help to build academic capital (Nuñez et al., 2013). This holistic approach attends to academic and interpersonal needs and acknowledges that external validation may be a requirement for building academic self-efficacy for students historically excluded from institutions of higher education (Rendón, 2002; Rendón Linares & Muñoz, 2011). I could imagine one high school or university program or department adopting such a model utilizing a combination of faculty, graduate and advanced undergraduate students, community members, and even trained professionals to serve as a validating team in a foundational course or program. If such a pilot were successful, one would hope that such an approach might lead to broader change.

Because the work of writing studies scholars extends across areas like assessment, teaching and learning, and pedagogy, we are uniquely positioned to take leadership roles in such an endeavor. In fact, holistic approaches to academic literacy development have been advocated by writing studies scholars in recent years (Smit, 2004; Wingate, 2015). Wingate (2015) has advocated for writing and literacy experts to facilitate collaboration with subject teachers. This literacy expert would help to identify “literacy windows,” the moments in the teaching when attention gets paid to how knowledge is communicated such as how scholars refer to each other in a reading or how information is conveyed in a scholarly debate (pp. 155-156). While this approach does not explicitly attend to interpersonal concerns, with proper resources both the literacy and content experts could be trained to bring a validating approach to their instruction.

A Critical Hope

The quote that began this section points to the ways institutions of higher education must heed the voices of students and make changes to the entire organizational ecology. It’s not enough to change policies without better supporting faculty, nor is it enough to provide more writing support if the overall approach to writing remains focused on issues of correctness in service of examinations. Duncan-Andrade (2009) has called for a pedagogy of "critical hope" in which teachers connect schooling to the material conditions in students' lives, build trusting, reciprocal relationships, and develop a collective vision and strategy *with* students. "At the end of the day," he writes, "effective teaching depends most heavily on one thing: deep and caring relationships" (p. 190). A culturally sustaining stance toward writing in secondary and postsecondary contexts must embody this sense of critical hope. An institution that seeks to serve Latinx, linguistic minority, and other students from historically underrepresented populations should provide opportunities for writing in supportive environments for real purposes and audiences, in a range of genres, and in participatory teaching and learning contexts. It should position students as knowledge-makers and contributors to public discussion. Rather than using writing as a means of examination or sorting, students across educational contexts should have opportunities to see their writing as meaningful and engaged with their world.

APPENDIX A

DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS

Beginning of Study Student Questionnaire (Phase 1)

This survey is part of a research study on student writing. In order to better understand the experiences of students transitioning to college writing, it is important to know about your language and writing experiences in high school. The goal of this study is to help teachers better support student writers in high school and college

Your personal information will remain confidential except to the project researcher. None of the information collected will impact your grade in this or any future courses.

Demographic Questions:

1. Please complete the following information so I can stay in touch with you:

Name:
Email address:
Phone number:

2. Gender: male female prefer not to answer

3. Ethnicity:
African American/Black
American Indian/Alaska native
Asian
Hispanic
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
Two or more races
White
Unknown/Other

4. Date of Birth: ______________

5. Language(s) spoken: ________

6. How often do you speak English with the following groups of people:

Your grandparents	never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always
your father	never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always
your mother	never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always
your brothers/sisters	never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always
your friends	never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always
your teachers	never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always

7. How good is…

Your spoken English?	not good	okay	good	very good
Your written English?	not good	okay	good	very good
Your spoken Spanish?	not good	okay	good	very good
Your written Spanish?	not good	okay	good	very good
Other language spoken?	not good	okay	good	very good
Other language written?	not good	okay	good	very good

8. How often is English spoken in your home?
Never Sometimes Often Always

9. How long have you lived in the United States
I don't live in the USA
All my life
Part of my life (please specify number of years) ___

10. How long have you attended school in the United States?
All my life
Part of my life (specify number of years) ____

11. Where did you go to school before high school?

Open-Ended questions

What is your favorite kind of writing? Why?

What is your least favorite kind of writing? Why?

What kinds of writing have you had the most success performing?

What do you consider your most successful piece of writing (in school or out) and why?

Why do you want to go to college? What would you like to major in?

Where do you want to go to college? Why?

Beginning of Study Interview (Phase 1)

Thank you for participating in the study. Before we begin, I want to remind you that your participation in the study will remain anonymous. Do you have a name in mind that you'd like me to use instead of your given name? If not, it's ok; I'll ask you again at the end of the interview.

In the survey you completed you wrote a little bit about your writing experiences. In this interview, I'm interested in talking more about your ideas and experiences surrounding writing and your expectations for college.

Previous Writing Experiences/History

What type of writing do you do every day? How does this differ from writing you do in school?

Can you tell me about your English classes in high school?

Tell me about your best writing teacher
    What do you look for in a good teacher?

What class has been most helpful in your development as a writer?

Tell me about your most successful piece of writing.
    What made it successful?

Does your English teacher usually give you feedback? If so, is it usually given orally or in writing? What kind of feedback do you usually get? Content-based or grammar-based? How do you use this feedback?

What kind of writing have you done for standardized tests like AIMS?
    Have your classes focused on the writing on these tests?

Tell me about the writing you do in classes other than English
    Why do you think you write in your other classes?
    How is the writing different than in English class?
    Do you ever compose anything other than "papers"?

What are your personal goals in your English class?

What high school writing experiences (if any) do you think will help you most to succeed in writing at the University of Arizona?

Is reading important in your family? If so, what kind of reading materials do you have in the house? Are they in English or Spanish?

Writing Process

How would you describe your process of writing for a school assignment? Please describe all that goes into the process, from the time you receive the assignment to the time you submit the final product.

Include as much detail as possible, even details like whether you listen to music or eat a certain snack while you're writing

How is your process different when you write an email or send a text as opposed to something for school?

Do you revise your papers? Have you had many chances to revise during high school?

If so, describe the process—what does revising include?

Current Assignment

I want to talk about an assignment you're currently working on.

Tell me about the assignment you're currently working on in English class.

What kind of writing would you say it is? What is the purpose?

Where do you usually learn about (*this genre*) ?

Why is this a __________ and not some other genre?

What previous kinds of writing does it remind you of?

What do you think you have to do? How did you figure this out?

What do you think are your teacher's expectations for this writing?

How did you figure this out?

What are you thinking about as you develop this paper? What issues or challenge are you dealing with (with the topic? with the process of writing? with formal aspects of the paper? other?)

Wrap-up

How would you describe yourself as a writer right now?

That is the end of my prepared questions. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your writing?

(If has not chosen a pseudonym yet) ***Do you have a name in mind that you'd like me to use instead of your given name?*** *Remember you can let me know at any point if you would like to change your pseudonym.*

After Assignment Interview (Phase 1)

In this interview I'm interested in the most recent assignment you completed. Some of the questions may sound similar to our last conversation, but it's ok if your answer is now different (or similar)

General Questions about Assignment

What was your topic for the assignment? How was your topic chosen? How did you reach the point of developing a main point or thesis?

What kind of writing would you say it is? What is the purpose?
    Where do you usually learn about (*this genre*) ?
    Why do you think your teacher assigned (*this project*)?

Why is this a __________ and not some other genre?

What audience did you have in mind as you were writing?

What do you think were your teacher's expectations for this assignment?

Were there any differences between your previous experiences with writing and the expectations of this assignment that made it difficult for you to write the paper? (If yes:) Like what?

Writing Process

How long did you spend on this piece of writing?
    Do you think you had enough time to complete it?
    If not, how would you have improved with more time?

Tell me about your writing process for this assignment. Be as specific as possible.
    What texts did you consult? What music did you listen to? What snacks did you eat?
    Did you discuss this writing with anyone else?
        What did you talk about? How did it help you with your writing?

As you wrote, what kinds of writing from this class (or before) did you draw on to help you?

Discourse-Based Questions

Note: This section of the interview will be based on the actual writing produced by the student participant. These questions are samples of the kinds of questions that may be asked.

I'm interested in how your prior experience came into play in writing this paper. Can you point out any specific phrases or places as examples of this?

Can you tell me about the purpose of (*this word, this sentence, this choice, this strategy*)?
    (Where did you learn this?)

What were some of your other choices for saying (*this*), and why did you choose this way?
    (Where did you learn this?)

Focus on Authorship and Identity

What impressions do you think you are giving of yourself in your writing in general?

Which parts of the writing help construct these impressions?

Which of these impressions are you happy to be giving of yourself? Why?
Where do you see yourself in this writing? and where not?

Did you feel pressure to write any of this in a particular way? Which parts? Where did this pressure come from?

Feedback

Have you received feedback about this writing?
    Was it helpful? If so, what feedback was the most helpful? What feedback was the least helpful?

Can you explain to me (*this specific feedback*)?

What did you learn from writing this piece that will help you in future writing you do?

If you were to write (*this text*) again, would you do anything differently? If so, what?

That is the end of my prepared questions. Is there anything else you want to tell me about this writing?

End of High School Interview (Phase 1)

General Questions

How have you been since the last interview? Have you had any really positive or negative experiences at school? In your life outside of school?

What kind of writing have you done since the last time we talked? What has been your most difficult writing task? Why was it difficult? how did you deal with this difficulty?

What has been your favorite part about this semester? Your time at SHS?

What has been your favorite class? Least favorite? why?

How important has writing been to you this semester?

What is the most important writing you've done this semester?

Looking ahead to college

What are you most excited about in going to college? Most nervous?

How do you think college will be different from high school? Where did you get that information?

How do you think the writing at college will be different from the writing you did for high school?
    How did you get that idea?

How do you think studying at high school has prepared you for college? What areas do you think you will have to work on?

What challenges have you faced in learning English academic writing?

How has your family helped you progress as a student? Do you feel supported by them?

How have other factors outside of school helped or limited your growth as a student during your high school years? As a writer?

What goals do you have for your First-Year Writing course?

How would you describe yourself as a writer right now?

That is the end of my prepared questions. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your writing or your high school experiences?

Beginning of College Interview (Phase 2)

How was your summer? Did you do anything related to college (orientation, summer program, etc.)?

How has your experience at college been different than what you expected so far? How has it been similar?

Have you had any writing assignments so far? Based on first impressions, how do you think the writing demands of college will be different from high school?
    How do you think the reading demands will be different?

What has been the biggest challenge you've faced in adapting to college life?

Do you work? If so, what do you do? How many hours a week do you work?

What challenges do you have that interfere with your ability to complete your college work? How do you work with these challenges?

Do you have support from anyone?

What are the advantages of attending college in down? The disadvantages?

Tell me about your friends from high school: What are they doing now?

Have you made new friends at college?

How is your English class different than your high school classes? How does your teacher compare to your high school teachers? How did the class I saw compare to your normal classes?

How is the expectation for technology usage different in college? How is it similar?

Are you happy with your college decision so far?

How would you describe yourself as a writer right now?

That is the end of my prepared questions. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your writing or your initial transition to college?

Monthly Interview (Phase 2)

General Questions

How have you been since the last interview? Have you had any really positive or negative experiences at school? In your life outside of school?

What kind of writing have you done since the last time we talked? What has been your most difficult writing task? Why was it difficult? how did you deal with this difficulty?

Have you had any writing returned to you at all? [collect if so]

What has been your favorite part about this semester? Your time at UA?

What has been your favorite class? Least favorite? why?

How important has writing been to you this semester?

What is the most important writing you've done this semester?

During Assignment Interview

I want to talk about an assignment you're currently working on.

Tell me about the assignment you're currently working on in (*English or Gen ed class*).

What kind of writing would you say it is? What is the purpose?
    Where do you usually learn about (*this genre*) ?

Why is this a __________ and not some other genre?

What previous kinds of writing does it remind you of?

    What do you think you have to do? How did you figure this out?

What do you think are your teacher's expectations for this writing?
    How did you figure this out?

What are you thinking about as you develop this paper? What issues or challenge are you dealing with
    (with the topic? with the process of writing? with formal aspects of the paper? other?)

What are your goals in this class? (*if they have changed, Why?*)

That is the end of my prepared questions. Is there anything else you want to tell me about this writing?

After Assignment Interview

In this interview I'm interested in the most recent assignment you completed. Some of the questions may sound similar to our last conversation, but it's ok if your answer is now different (or similar)

General Questions about Assignment
What was your topic for the assignment? How was your topic chosen? How did you reach the point of developing a main point or thesis?

What kind of writing would you say it is? What is the purpose?
    Where do you usually learn about (*this genre*) ?
    Why do you think your teacher assigned (*this project*)?

Why is this a __________ and not some other genre?

What audience did you have in mind as you were writing?

What do you think were your teacher's expectations for this assignment?

Were there any differences between your previous experiences with writing and the expectations of this assignment that made it difficult for you to write the paper? (If yes:) Like what?

What are your goals in this class? (*if they have changed, Why?*)

Writing Process

How long did you spend on this piece of writing?
    Do you think you had enough time to complete it?
    If not, how would you have improved with more time?

Tell me about your writing process for this assignment. Be as specific as possible.
    What texts did you consult? What music did you listen to? What snacks did you eat?
    Did you discuss this writing with anyone else?
        What did you talk about? How did it help you with your writing?

As you wrote, what kinds of writing from this class (or before) did you draw on to help you?

Discourse-Based Questions

Note: This section of the interview will be based on the actual writing produced by the student participant. These questions are samples of the kinds of questions that may be asked.

I'm interested in how your prior experience came into play in writing this paper. Can you point out any specific phrases or places as examples of this?

Can you tell me about the purpose of (*this word, this sentence, this choice, this strategy*)?
    (Where did you learn this?)

What were some of your other choices for saying (*this*), and why did you choose this way?
    (Where did you learn this?)

Focus on Authorship and Identity

What impressions do you think you are giving of yourself in your writing in general?

Which parts of the writing help construct these impressions?

Which of these impressions are you happy to be giving of yourself? Why?
Where do you see yourself in this writing? and where not?

Did you feel pressure to write any of this in a particular way? Which parts? Where did this pressure come from?

Feedback

Have you received feedback about this writing?

    Was it helpful? If so, what feedback was the most helpful? What feedback was the least helpful?

Can you explain to me (*this specific feedback*)?

What did you learn from writing this piece that will help you in future writing you do?

If you were to write (*this text*) again, would you do anything differently? If so, what?

That is the end of my prepared questions. Is there anything else you want to tell me about this writing?

REFERENCES

Adler-Kassner, L. (2012). The companies we keep or the companies we would like to try to keep: Strategies and tactics in challenging times. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, *36*(1), 119–140.

Adler-Kassner, L. (2014). Liberal learning, professional training, and disciplinarity in the age of educational "reform": Remodeling general education. *College English*, *76*(5), 436–457. Retrieved from http://www.ncte.org/library/NCTEFiles/Resources/Journals/CE/0765-may2014/CE0765Liberal.pdf

Adler-Kassner, L., Majewski, J., & Koshnick, D. (2012). The value of troublesome knowledge: Transfer and threshold concepts in writing and history. *Composition Forum*, *26*(Fall), n.p.. Retrieved from http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/EJ985816.pdf

Alcoff, L. (1991). The problem of speaking for others. *Cultural Critique*, *20*, 5–32.

Alim, H. S. (2016). Introducing raciolinguistics: Racing language and languaging race in hyperracial times. In H. S. Alim, J. R. Rickford, & A. F. Ball (Eds.), *Raciolinguistics* (pp. 1–30). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Anson, C. M., Dannels, D. P., Flash, P., & Housley Gaffney, A. L. (2012). Big rubrics and weird genres: The futility of using generic assessment tools across diverse instructional contexts. *The Journal of Writing Assessment*, *5*(1), N/A. Retrieved from http://journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=57

Anson, C. M. (2015). Habituated practice can lead to entrenchment. In L. Adler-Kassner & E. Wardle (Eds.), *Naming what we know: Threshold concepts of writing studies* (pp. 77-78). Boulder, CO: Utah State.

Anson, C. M., & Moore, J. L. (Eds.). (2016). *Critical transitions: Writing and the question of transfer*. Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearinghouse and University Press of Colorado. Available at https://wac.colostate.edu/books/ansonmoore/

Anyon, J. (1980). Social class and the hidden curriculum of work. *Journal of Education*, *162*(1), 66-92.

Apple, M. W. (2004). Schooling, markets, and an audit culture. *Critical Quarterly, 47*(1-2), 11-29.

Applebee, A. N. (1981). *Writing in the secondary school: English and the content areas.* Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Applebee, A.N. (1984). *Contexts for learning to write: Studies of secondary school instruction.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Applebee, A. N., & Langer, J. A. (2011). "EJ" Extra: A snapshot of writing instruction in middle schools and high schools. *English Journal*, *100*(6), 14–27.

Aull, L. L., & Lancaster, Z. (2014). Linguistic markers of stance in early and advanced academic writing: A corpus-based comparison. *Written Communication*, *31*(2), 151–183. http://doi.org/10.1177/0741088314527055

Arizona Board of Regents [ABOR]. (2015). *Policies for the writing component of general education courses.* Retrieved from http://gened.arizona.edu/content/writing-component

Arizona Board of Regents [ABOR]. (2018a). *2016-17 Fact book - Students by ethnicity and gender - Undergraduates, graduates and first professional*. Retrieved from http://factbook.arizona.edu/2016-17/students/demographics

Arizona Board of Regents [ABOR]. (2018b). *General Education Curriculum*. Retrieved from http://catalog.arizona.edu/policy/general-education-curriculum

Arizona Board of Regents [ABOR]. (2018c). *2017-18 Fact book – Employees by ethnicity.* http://factbook.arizona.edu/2017-18/employees/ethnicity

Arizona Department of Education [ADE] (2016). Arizona October 1 enrollment figures. Retrieved from http://www.azed.gov/research-evaluation/arizona-enrollment-figures/

Arum, R. & Roska, J. (2011). *Academically adrift: Limited learning on college campuses*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays* (V. W. McGee, Trans.). Austin: University of Texas.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychology Review*, *84*(2), 191–215. http://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00090

Barajas, H. L., & Ronnkvist, A. (2007). Racialized space: Framing Latino and Latina experience in public schools. *Teachers College Record*, *109*(6), 1517–1538.

Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (2000). Literacy practices. In D. Barton, M. Hamilton, & R. Ivanič (Eds.), *Situated literacies: Reading and writing in context* (pp. 7–15). New York: Routledge.

Bawarshi, A.S. (2003). *Genre and the invention of the writer: Reconsidering the place of invention in composition.* Logan, UT: Utah State.

Bazerman, C. (1997). The life of genre, the life in the classroom. In W. Bishop & H. Ostrom (Eds.), *Genre and writing: Issues, arguments, alternatives* (pp. 19–26). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Beach, R. (2011, December). *Analyzing how formalist, cognitive-processing, and literacy practices learning paradigms are shaping the implementation of the Common Core State Standards*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Literacy Research Association.

Jacksonville, FL.

Beaufort, A. (2007). *College writing and beyond: A new framework for university writing instruction.* Logan, UT: Utah State.

Bergman, L. S., & Zepernick, J. (2007). Disciplinarity and transfer: Students' perceptions of learning to write. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, *31*(1–2), 124–49.

Berkenkotter, C., Huckin, T. N., & Ackerman, J. (1988). Conventions, conversations, and the writer: Case study of a student in a Rhetoric Ph.D. program. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *22*(1), 9–44.

Berkenkotter, C. (2001). Genre systems at work: DSM-IV and rhetorical recontextualization in psychotherapy paperwork. *Written Communication*, *18*(3), 326–349.

Bernstein, B. (1975). Class and pedagogies: Visible and invisible. *Educational Studies*, *1*(1), 23–41. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0305569750010105

Bhatia, V. (2002). Applied genre analysis: a multi-perspective model. *Ibérica: Revista de la Asociación Europea de Lenguas para fines específicos (AELFE)*, (4), 3-19.

Biggs, J. (1999). What the student does: Teaching for enhanced learning. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *18*(1), 57–75. http://doi.org/10.1080/0729436990180105

Blackburn, M. V. (2014). Humanizing research with LGBTQ Youth through dialogic communication, consciousness raising, and action. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. 43–57). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Blum, S. D. (2016). "*I love learning; I hate school:" An anthropology of college*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell.

Bourdieu, P. (1973). Cultural reproduction and social reproduction. In R. Brown (Ed.), *Knowledge, education, and cultural change: Papers in the sociology of education* (pp. 71–112). London: Tavistock, 1973.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language as symbolic power*. (G. Raymond & M. Adamson, Trans.) J.B. Thompson (Ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1990). Cultural capital and pedagogic communication. In *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (R. Nice, Trans.) (pp. 71-106). London: Sage.

Braziller, A. & Kleinfeld, E. (2014). *The Bedford book of genres: A guide.* Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.

Broad, B. (2003). *What we really value: Beyond rubrics in teaching and assessing writing.* Logan, UT: Utah State.

Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational Researcher*, *18*(1), 32–42.

Buck, R. H. (2018). *Reading matters: Three studies of situated literacy and a call for reading across the curriculum* (Doctoral dissertation, unpublished)

Canagarajah, A. S. (2006). The place of World Englishes in composition: Pluralization continued. *College Composition and Communication*, *57*(4), 586–619. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/20456910

Caraballo, L. (2011). Theorizing identities in a "just(ly)" contested terrain: Practice theories of identity amid critical-poststructural debates on curriculum and achievement. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, *8*(2), 155–177. http://doi.org/10.1080/15505170.2011.624939

Carroll, L. A. (2002). *Rehearsing new roles: How college students develop as writers.*

Carbondale: Southern Illinois.

Casanave, C. P. (2002). *Writing games: multicultural case studies of academic literacy practices in higher education.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Chiseri-Strater, E. (1991). *Academic literacies: The public and private discourse of university students*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Chiseri-Strater, E. (1996). Turning in upon ourselves: Positionality, subjectivity, and reflexivity in case study and ethnographic research. In P. Mortensen and G. Kirsch (Eds.), *Ethics and representation in qualitative studies of literacy* (pp. 115-133). Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Chiseri-Strater, E. (2012). "What goes on here?" The uses of ethnography in composition studies. In K. Ritter & P. K. Matsuda (Eds.), *Exploring composition studies* (pp. 199–210). Logan, UT: Utah State. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ000485

Clark-Oates, A., Rankins-Robertson, S., Ivy, E., Behm, N., & Roen, D. (2015). Moving beyond the Common Core to develop rhetorically based and contextually sensitive assessment practices. *Journal of Writing Assessment, 8*(1). Retrieved from http://www.journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=88

Coe, R. M., Lingard, L., & Teslenko, T. (Eds.). (2002). *The rhetoric and ideology of genre: Strategies for stability and change.* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

College Board (2014). *SpringBoard: English language arts* (Senior English). The College Board.

Collins, J. (1996). Socialization to text: Structure and contradiction in schooled literacy. In M. Silverstein & G. Urban (Eds.), *Natural histories of discourse* (pp. 203–228). Chicago: University of Chicago.

Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (Eds.). (1993). *The powers of literacy: A genre approach to teaching* *writing*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh.

Council of Writing Program Administrators [CWPA] (2014, July 17). WPA outcomes statement for first-year composition (v3.0). Retrieved from http://wpacouncil.org/positions/outcomes.html

Cushman, E. (1996). The rhetorician as an agent of social change. *College Composition and Communication*, *47*(1), 7–25. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/358271

Cushman, E., & Monberg, T. G. (1998). Re-centering authority: Social reflexivity and re-positioning in composition research. In C. M. Anson & C. Farris (Eds.), *Under construction: Working at the intersections of composition theory, research, and practice* (pp. 166–180). Logan, UT: Utah State.

Delpit, L.D. (2006). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children." In *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom* (pp. 21-47). New York: New Press.

Dennihy, M. (2015, December). "Forget what you learned in high school!": Bridging the space between high school and college. *Teaching English in the Two-Year College*, 156–170.

DePalma, M. J., & Ringer, J. M. (2011). Toward a theory of adaptive transfer: Expanding disciplinary discussions of " transfer" in second-language writing and composition studies. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *20*(2), 134–147. Retrived from http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2011.02.003

DeStigter, T. (2015). On the ascendance of argument: A critique of the assumptions of academe's dominant form. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *50*(1), 11–34.

Devitt, A. (2004). *Writing genres*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois.

Devitt, A. (2009). Teaching critical genre awareness. In C. Bazerman, A. Bonini, & D.

Figueiredo (Eds.), *Genre in a changing world* (pp. 337–351). Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearinghouse and Parlor Press. Retrieved from http://wac.colostate.edu/books/genre/

Devitt, A. J., Reiff, M. J., & Bawarshi, A. S. (2004). *Scenes of writing: Strategies for composing with genres*. New York, NY: Pearson/Longman.

DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it's so hard for White people to talk about racism.* Boston: Beacon.

Dias, P., Freedman, A., Medway, P., and Paré, A. (1999). *Worlds apart: Acting and writing in academic and workplace contexts*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Donahue, T. (2007, September). Notes of a humbled WPA: Dialogue with high school colleagues. *Writing Instructor*.

Donahue, C., & Foster-Johnson, L. (2018). Liminality and transition: Text features in postsecondary student writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *52*(4), 359–381.

Downs, D., & Wardle, E. (2007). Teaching about writing, righting misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning "First-Year Composition" as "Introduction to Writing Studies". *College Composition and Communication*, 58(4), 552–584.

Driscoll, D. L. (2014). Clashing values: A longitudinal, exploratory study of student beliefs about general education, vocationalism, and transfer of learning. *Teaching and Learning Inquiry: The ISSOTL Journal*, *2*(1), 21–37.

Dryer, D. (2012). At a mirror, darkly: The imagined undergraduate writers of ten novice composition instructors. *College Composition and Communication,* 63(3), 420-452.

Dukakis, K., Duong, N., Velasco, J. R. de, & Henderson, J. (2014). *College access and completion among boys and young men of color: Literature review of promising practices*. Palo Alto, CA: John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities.

Duncan-Andrade, J. M. R. (2009). When growing roses in concrete. *Harvard Educational Review*, *79*(2), 181–194.

Easley, N., Bianco, M., & Leech, N. (2012). Ganas: A qualitative study examining Mexican heritage students' motivation to succeed in higher education. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *11*(2), 164–178. http://doi.org/10.1177/1538192712440175

Ethnography of the University Initiative [EUI]. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.eui.illinois.edu/#

Fairclough, N. (1992). The appropriacy of 'appropriateness'. In N. Fairclough, Ed., *Critical Language Awareness* (pp. 33-56). New York: Longman.

Fischer, H. (2017, December 28). Judge blocks state from oversight, restrictions of TUSD "ethnic studies" programs. *Capitol Media Services.* Retrieved from http://tucson.com/news/local/judge-blocks-state-from-oversight-restrictions-of-tusd-ethnic-studies/article_9c443338-eb6b-11e7-a96f-2b0c6dfd88ea.html?utm_source=fc&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=fc

Fischer, H. (2018, April 9). 'Dreamers' will pay more to attend Arizona colleges, universities, court rules. *Capitol Media Services*. Retrieved from http://tucson.com/news/local/dreamers-will-pay-more-to-attend-arizona-colleges-universities-court/article_acf4437d-ad13-5850-836f-88fab0f86762.html

Fishman, J., Lunsford, A., McGregor, B., & Otuteye, M. (2005). Performing writing, performing literacy. *College Composition and Communication*, *57*(2), 224–252. Retrieved from http://www.editlib.org/p/22117

Fishman, J., & Reiff, M. J. (2011). Taking it on the road: Transferring knowledge about rhetoric and writing across curricula and campuses. *Composition Studies*, *39*(2), 121–144.

Flores, N., & Rosa, J. (2015). Undoing appropriateness : Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education. *Harvard Educational Review*, *85*(2), 149–172. http://doi.org/10.17763/0017-8055.85.2.149

Foster, D. & Russell, D.R. (Eds). (2002). *Writing and learning in cross-national perspective*. Urbana, Il: NCTE.

Foster Wallace, D. (2004, August). Consider the lobster. *Gourmet*. Condé Nast. Retrieved from http://www.gourmet.com.s3-website-us-east-1.amazonaws.com/magazine/2000s/2004/08/consider_the_lobster.html

Fox, T. (1999). *Defending access: A critique of standards in higher education.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Freedman, A. (1987). Learning to write again: Discipline-specific writing at university. *Carleton Papers in Applied Language Studies*, *4*, 45–65.

Freedman, A. (1995). The what, where, when, why, and how of classroom genres. In J. Petraglia (Ed.), *Reconceiving writing, rethinking writing instruction* (pp. 121–144). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Freedman, A. & Adam, C. (2000). Write where you are: Situating learning to write in university and workplace settings. In P. Dias & A. Paré (Eds.), *Transitions: Writing in academic and workplace settings* (pp. 31-60). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Freire, P. (2000) *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (M. B. Ramos, Trans., 30th Anniversary ed.).

New York: Continuum. (Original work published 1970)

Garcia, G. A. (2018). Decolonizing Hispanic-Serving Institutions: A framework for organizing. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *17*(2), 132–147. http://doi.org/10.1177/1538192717734289

Gee, J. P. (1991). What is literacy? In C. Mitchell & K. Weiler (Eds.), *Rewriting literacy: Culture and the discourse of the other* (pp. 2–11). New York: Bergin & Garvey.

Gee, J.P. (2001). Foreword. In C. Lewis, *Literacy practices as social acts: Power, status, and cultural norms in the classroom* (pp. xv-xix). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gee, J. P. (2008). *Social linguistics and literacies* (3rd ed.). New York: Routledge.

Gee, J. P. (2011). *How to do discourse analysis: A toolkit*. New York: Routledge.

Geisler, C. (1995). Writing and learning at cross purposes. In J. Petraglia (Ed.), *Reconceiving writing, rethinking writing instruction* (pp. 101–120). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gildersleeve, R. E. (2010) *Fracturing opportunity: Mexican migrant students & college-going literacy.* New York: Peter Lang.

Gilliland, B. (2016). Opportunity gaps: Curricular discontinuities across ESL, mainstream, and college English. In C. Ortmeier-Hooper & T. Ruecker (Eds.), *Linguistically diverse immigrant and resident writers: Transitions from high school to college* (pp. 21-35). New York: Routledge. *ProQuest Ebook Central*.

Giltrow, J. (2001). “Meta-Genre.” In R. Coe, L. Lingard, and T. Teslenko (Eds.), *The rhetoric and ideology of genre* (pp. 187-206). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Goldblatt, E. (2007). *Because we live here: Sponsoring literacy beyond the college curriculum.* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton.

Goldrick-Rab, S., & Stommel, J. (2018, December 10). Teaching the students we have, not the students we wish we had. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/Teaching-the-Students-We-Have/245290

Goldstein, D. (2017, August 2). Why kids can't write. *The New York Times*. Retrived from https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/02/education/edlife/writing-education-grammar-students-children.html

Graves, R., Hyland, T., & Samuels, B. M. (2010). Undergraduate writing assignments: An analysis of syllabi at one Canadian college. *Written Communication*, *27*(3), 293–317. http://doi.org/10.1177/0741088310371635

Green, K. (2014). Doing Double Dutch methodology. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. 147–159). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Hannah, M. A., & Saidy, C. (2014). Locating the terms of engagement: Shared language development in secondary to postsecondary writing transitions. *College Composition and Communication*, *66*(1), 120–144.

Hanstedt, P. (2012). *General education essentials: A guide for college faculty*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Harklau, L. (2001). From high school to college: Student perspectives on literacy practices. *Journal of Literacy Research*, *33*(1), 33–70. http://doi.org/10.1080/10862960109548102

Haswell, R. (2012). Methodologically adrift. *College Composition and Communication, 63*(3), 487-491.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge.

Hernandez-Zamora, G. (2010). *Decolonizing literacy: Mexican lives in the era of global* *capitalism*. Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters.

Herrington, A. J. & Curtis, M. S. (2000). *Persons in process: Four stories of writing and personal development in college.* Urbana, Il: NCTE.

Hesse, D. (2017). We know what works in teaching composition. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved from https://www.chronicle.com/article/We-Know-What-Works-in-Teaching/238792

Hillocks, G. (2002). *The testing trap: How state writing assessments control learning*. New York: Teachers College.

Holland, D., Lachicotte, W. S., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard.

Holm, T., Pearson, J. D., & Chavis, B. (2003). Peoplehood: A model for the extension of sovereignty in American Indian Studies. *Wicazo Sa Review*, *18*(1), 7–24. http://doi.org/10.1353/wic.2003.0004

Horner, B., & Trimbur, J. (2002). English only and US college composition. *College Composition and Communication, 53*(4), 594-630.

Horner, B., & Lu, M.-Z. (2010). Resisting monolingualism in “English”: reading and writing the politics of language. In V. Ellis, C. Fox, & B. Street (Eds.), *Rethinking English in Schools: Towards a New Constructive Stage* (pp. 141–157). London: Continuum.

Hyland, K. (2002). Authority and invisibility: Authorial identity in academic writing. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *34*(8), 1091–1112. http://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(02)00035-8

Hyland, K. (2004). *Disciplinary discourses: Social interactions in academic writing*. Michigan Classics Edition. Ann Arbor: Michigan.

Hyland, K. (2005). Stance and engagement: a model of interaction in academic discourse.

Discourse Studies, *7*(2), 173–192. http://doi.org/10.1177/1461445605050365

Hyland, K. (2015). Genre, discipline and identity. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *19*, 32–43. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2015.02.005

Inoue, A. B. (2014). Theorizing failure in U.S. writing assessments. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *48*(3), 330–352.

Inoue, A. B. (2015). *Antiracist writing assessment ecologies: Teaching and assessing writing for a socially just future*. Perspectives on Writing. Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearinghouse and Parlor Press, 2015. Web.

Irizarry, J. G. (2011) *The Latinization of U.S. schools: Successful teaching and learning in shifting cultural contexts.* Boulder, CO: Paradigm.

Irizarry, J. G. (2017). "For Us, By Us:" A vision for culturally sustaining pedagogies forwarded by Latinx youth. In D. Paris and H. S. Alim (Eds.), *Culturally sustaining pedagogies: Teaching and learning for justice in a changing world* (pp. 83–98). New York: Teachers College Press.

Irizarry, J. G., & Raible, J. (2011). Beginning with el barrio: Learning from exemplary teachers of Latino students. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *10*(3), 186–203.

Irvin, L. L. (2010). What Is "academic" writing? In C. Lowe and P. Zemliansky (Eds.), *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*, Vol. 1 (pp. 2–17). West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press. Retrieved from http://writingspaces.org/sites/default/files/irvin--what-is-academic-writing.pdf

Ivanič, R. (1994). I is for interpersonal: Discoursal construction of writer identities and the teaching of writing. *Linguistics and Education*, *6*(1), 3–15. http://doi.org/10.1016/0898-5898(94)90018-3

Ivanič, R. (1998). *Writing and identity: The discoursal construction of identity in academic writing*. Amsterdam: John Benjamin.

Ivanič, R., & Camps, D. (2001). I am how I sound: Voice as self-representation in L2 writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*(1–2), 3–33. http://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(01)00034-0

Jacobson, B. (2015). Teaching and learning in an "audit culture": A critical genre analysis of Common Core implementation. *Journal of Writing Assessment, 8*(1). Retrieved from http://www.journalofwritingassessment.org/article.php?article=85

Johns, A. M. (1997). *Text, role, and context: Developing academic literacies.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge.

Johns, A. M. (1999). Opening our doors: Applying socioliterate approaches (SA) to language minority classrooms. In L. Harklau, K. M. Losey, & M. Siegal (Eds.). *Generation 1.5 meets college composition: Issues in the teaching of writing to U.S.-educated learners of ESL* (pp. 159-171). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Johns, A. M. (2008). Genre awareness for the novice academic student: An ongoing quest. *Language Teaching*, *41*(2), 237–252. http://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444807004892

Johns, A. M. (2011). The future of genre in L2 writing: Fundamental, but contested, instructional decisions. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *20*(1), 56–68. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2010.12.003

Kamberelis, G. (1998). Genre development and learning: Children writing stories, Science reports, and poems. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *33*(4), 403–60.

Kapoor, I. (2012). *Celebrity humanism: The ideology of global charity.* New York: Routledge.

Kelly-Riley, D. (2017). Common Core State Standards Initiative for writing program administrators. *WPA: Writing Program Administration, 40(*2), 193-220.

Kimme Hea, A. C., Mapes, A. C., Ribero, A. M., & Peres, A. S. (2015, Fall). How do student writers experience writing in their lives? *UA Longitudinal Study of Student Writers Newsletter, 1*(2), 1.

Kirsch, G. (1999). *Ethical dilemmas in feminist research: The politics of location, interpretation, and publication.* Albany, NY: SUNY.

Kornhaber, S. (2018, Feb 22). Drake and the strange spectacle of charity. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2018/02/drake-gods-plan-charity/553790/

Kuh, G. (2008). *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges & Universities.

Labaree, D. F. (1997). Public goods, private goods: The American struggle over educational goals. *American Educational Research Journal*, 34(1), 39–81.

Labaree, D. F. (2008). The winning ways of a losing strategy: Educationalizing social problems in the United States. *Educational Theory*, 58(4), 447–460. http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.2008.00299.x

Lancaster, Z. (2014). Making stance explicit for second language writers in the disciplines: What faculty need to know about the language of stance-taking. In T. M. Zawacki & M. Cox (Eds.), *WAC and second-language writers: Research towards linguistically and culturally inclusive programs and practices* (pp. 269–298). Fort Collins, CO: The WAC Clearinghouse and Parlor Press. Retrieved from http://wac.colostate.edu/books/l2/chapter11.pdf

Lane, D., & Oswald, F. L. (2016). Do 45% of college students lack critical thinking skills?

Revisiting a central conclusion of *Academically adrift*. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, *35*(3), 23–25.

Lave, J. & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge.

Lea, M. R., & Street, B. V. (1998). Student writing in higher education: An academic literacies approach. *Studies in Higher Education*, *23*(2), 157–172. http://doi.org/10.1080/03075079812331380364

Lea, M. R., & Street, B. (1999). Writing as academic literacies: Understanding textual practices in higher education. In C. N. Candlin & K. Hyland (Eds.), *Writing: texts, processes and practices* (pp. 62–81). London: Longman.

LeCourt, D. (1996). WAC as Critical Peadgogy: The Third Stage? *JAC*, *16*(3), 389–405.

Leki, I. (1995). Good writing: I know it when I see it. In D. Belcher & G. Braine (Eds.), *Academic writing in a second language: Essays on research and pedagogy* (pp. 23–46). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Leki, I. (2007). *Undergraduates in a second language: Challenges and complexities of academic literacy development*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Li, X. M. (1996). *"Good writing" in cross-cultural context*. Albany, N.Y.: SUNY.

Lillis, T., & Curry, M. J. (2006). Production of English-medium texts. *Written Communication*, *23*(1), 3–35.

Lillis, T. (2008). Ethnography as method, methodology, and "deep theorizing": Closing the gap between text and context in academic writing research. *Written Communication*, *25*(3), 353–388. http://doi.org/10.1177/0741088308319229

Luke, A. (1996). Genres of power? Literacy education and the production of capital. In R. Hasan

& G. Williams (Eds.), *Literacy in society* (pp. 306–338). London: Longman.

Matsuda, P. K. (1999). Composition studies and ESL writing: A disciplinary division of labor. *College Composition and Communication*, *50*(4), 699–721. http://doi.org/10.2307/358488

Matsuda, P. K. (2001). Voice in Japanese written discourse: Implications for second language writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *10*(1–2), 35–53. http://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(00)00036-9

Matsuda, P. K. (2006). The myth of linguistic homogeneity in U.S. college composition. *College English*, *68*(6), 637–651. http://doi.org/10.2307/25472180

Matsuda, P. K. (2012). Let's face it: Language issues and the Writing Program Administrator. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, pp. 141–163.

Matsuda, P. K., & Tardy, C. M. (2007). Voice in academic writing: The rhetorical construction of author identity in blind manuscript review. *English for Specific Purposes*, *26*(2), 235–249. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2006.10.001

Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

McCarthy, L. (1987). A stranger in strange lands: A college student writing across the curriculum. *Research in the Teaching of English, 21*(3), 233-265. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40171114

McComiskey, B. (2012). Bridging the divide: The (puzzling) *Framework* and the transition from K-12 to college writing instruction. *College English*, *74*(6), 537-540.

Meeting the General Education Tier One and Tier Two writing requirement (2017, January). *The General Education Monthly News.*

Melzer, D. (2014). *Assignments across the curriculum: A national study of college writing*. Logan: Utah State.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009. Print.

Merz, S. (2010). *In pursuit of literacy: Institutional literacy and the teaching of first-year writing* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from *ProQuest*.

Miller, C. (1984). Genre as social action. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *70*, 151–167. Retrieved from http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00335638409383686

Mitchell, M., Leachman, M., & Masterson, K. (2016). Funding down, tuition up: State cuts to higher education threaten quality and affordability at public colleges. Washington, DC: Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. Retrieved from https://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/5-19-16sfp.pdf

Moll, L. C., & Ruiz, R. (2002). The schooling of Latino children. In M. Suárez-Orozco & M. Páez (Eds.), *Latinos: Remaking America* (pp. 362–374). Berkeley, US: University of California.

Moll, L. C., Soto-Santiago, S. L., & Schwartz, L. (2013). Funds of knowledge in changing communities. In K. Hall, T. Cremin, B. Comber, & L. Moll (Eds.), *International handbook of research on children's literacy, learning, and culture* (pp. 172–183). West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons. http://doi.org/10.1002/9781118323342.ch13

Monahan, R. (2015, March 31). How Common Core is killing the textbook. *The Hechinger Report*. Retrieved from https://hechingerreport.org/how-common-core-is-killing- the-textbook/

Moore, J. (2012). Mapping the questions: The state of writing-related transfer research.

Composition Forum, (26), 1–13.

Motha, S. (2014). *Race, empire, and English language teaching: Creating responsible and ethical anti-racist practice.* New York: Teachers College.

National Census of Writing. (2017). *Four-year institution survey*. Retrived from https://writingcensus.swarthmore.edu/survey/4

National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers [NGA]. (2010). *Common Core State Standards for English language arts and literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects*. Washington, DC: National Governors Association Center for Best Practice, Council of Chief State School Officers.

The New London Group. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures." *Harvard Educational Review, 66*(1), 60–92.

Newell, G. E., VanDerHeide, J., & Olsen, A. W. (2014). High school English Language Arts teachers' argumentative epistemologies for teaching writing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *49*(2), 95–119.

Nowacek, R. (2011). *Agents of integration: Understanding transfer as a rhetorical act*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois.

Nuñez, A. M., Hoover, R. E., Pickett, K., Stuart-Carruthers, A. C., & Vázquez, M. (2013). Latinos in higher education and Hispanic-Serving Institutions: Creating conditions for success. *ASHE Higher Education Report (39)*1. *ProQuest Ebook Central*.

Nuñez, A. M., Ramalho, E. M., & Cuero, K. K. (2010). Pedagogy for equity: Teaching in a Hispanic-Serving Institution. *Innovative Higher Education*, *35*(3), 177–190. http://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-010-9139-7

Odell, L., Goswami, D., & Herrington, A. (1983). The discourse-based interview: A procedure for exploring the tacit knowledge of writers in nonacademic settings. In P. Mosenthal (Ed.), *Research on writing: Principles and methods* (pp. 221–236). New York: Longman.

Olinger, A. R. (2014a). On the instability of disciplinary style: common and conflicting metaphors and practices in text, talk, and gesture. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *48*(4), 453–478.

Olinger, A. (2014b). *Styling academic discourse: A sociocultural account of writing styles across disciplines* (Doctoral dissertation). *ProQuest*.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2002). Racial formation. In P. Essed & D. T. Goldberg (Eds.), *Race critical theories* (pp. 123-145). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Ortmeier-Hooper, C. (2008). “English may be my second language, but I'm not ‘ESL.’” *College Composition and Communication*, *59*(3), 389–419.

Pajares, F. (2003). Self-efficacy beliefs, motivation, and achievement in writing: A review of the literature. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, *19*(2), 139–158. http://doi.org/10.1080/10573560308222

Paltridge, B. (2012). *Discourse analysis: An introduction* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Bloomsbury.

Paltridge, B., Starfield, S., & Tardy, C. M. (2016). *Ethnographic perspectives on academic writing.* Oxford, UK: Oxford.

Paré, A., & Smart, G. (1994). Observing genres in action: Towards a research methodology. In A. Freedman & P. Medway (Eds.), *Genre and the new rhetoric* (pp. 146–154). Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis.

Paris, D. (2011) “A friend who understand fully”: Notes on humanizing research in a multiethnic youth community. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *24*(2), 137-149. DOI: 10.1080/09518398.2010.495091

Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (2014). What are we seeking to sustain through culturally sustaining pedagogy? A loving critique forward. *Harvard Educational Review*, *84*(1), 85–100. http://doi.org/10.17763/haer.84.1.982l873k2ht16m77

Paris, D., & Alim, H. S. (2017). What is culturally sustaining pedagogy and why does it matter? In D. Paris and H. S. Alim (Eds.), *Culturally Sustaining Pedagogies: Teaching and Learning for Justice in a Changing World* (pp. 1–21). New York: Teachers College Press.

Paris, D., & Winn, M. T. (2014). Preface. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. xii-xx). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Parker, K. N. (2017). Response: Never use "I". In C. E. Ball & D. Loewe (Eds.), *Bad ideas about writing* (pp. 134-138). Morgantown: West Virginia University Libraries. Retrieved from https://textbooks.lib.wvu.edu/badideas/badideasaboutwriting-book.pdf.

Parks, S. (2001). Moving from school to the workplace: Disciplinary innovation, border crossings, and the reshaping of a written genre. *Applied Linguistics*, *22*, 405–438. http://doi.org/10.1093/applin/22.4.405

Pennington, M. C., & Hoekje, B. J. (2010). Language program as ecology: A perspective for leadership. *RELC Journal*, *41*(3), 213–228. http://doi.org/10.1177/0033688210380556

Pimentel, O. (2013). An invitation to a too-long postponed conversation: Race and composition. *Reflections*, *12*(2), 90-109.

Pimentel, O., & Wilson, N. (2016). Éxito (Success). In I. D. Ruiz & R. Sánchez (Eds.), *Decolonizing rhetoric and composition studies: New Latinx keywords for theory and pedagogy* (pp. 125–136). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Poe, M. (2013). Re-Framing race in teaching writing across the curriculum. *Across the Disciplines*, *10*(3), 87–105. Retrieved from http://wac.colostate.edu/atd/race/poe.cfm

Poe, M., Inoue, A. B., & Elliot, N. (2018). Introduction: The end of isolation. In M. Poe, A. B. Inoue, & N. Elliot (Eds.), *Writing Assessment, Social Justice, and the Advancement of Opportunity* (pp. 3–39). Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearinghouse and University Press of Colorado.

Prior, P. (1998) *Writing/Disciplinarity: A sociohistoric account of literate activity in the academy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Prior, P. (2009). From speech genres to mediated multimodal genre systems: Bakhtin, Voloshinov, and the question of writing. In C. Bazerman, A. Bonini, & D. Figueiredo (Eds.), *Genre in a changing world* (pp. 17-34). Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearinghouse and Parlor Press. Retrieved from http://wac.colostate.edu/books/genre/

PUENTE (2018). About. *The Puente Project*. Retrieved from https://puente.berkeley.edu/about

Ramanathan, V., & Atkinson, D. (1999). Individualism, academic writing, and ESL Writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *8*(1), 45–75.

Ravitch, D. (2010). *The death and life of the great American school system* (revised and expanded ed.). New York: Basic Books.

Reichert Powell, P. (2014). *Retention and resistance: Writing instruction and students who leave.* Boulder: University Press of Colorado.

Reiff, M. J., & Bawarshi, A. (2011). Tracing discursive resources: How students use prior genre knowledge to negotiate new writing contexts in First-Year Composition. *Written Communication*, *28*(3), 312–337. http://doi.org/10.1177/0741088311410183

Reiff, M. J., Bawarshi, A., Ballif, M., & Weisser, C. (2015). Writing program ecologies: An introduction. In M. J. Reiff, A. Bawarshi, & M. Ballif (Eds.), *Ecologies of writing programs: program profiles in context* (pp. 3–18). Lafayette: Parlor Press.

Rendón, L. I. (2002). Community college Puente: A validating model of education. *Educational Policy*, *16*(4), 642–667. http://doi.org/10.1177/0895904802016004010

Rendón Linares, L. I., & Muñoz, S. M. (2011). Revisiting validation theory: Theoretical foundations, applications, and extensions. *Enrollment Management Journal*, *5*(2), 12–33. http://doi.org/10.1300/J050v03n02_08

Rodríguez, B. A. (2014). The threat of living up to expectations: Analyzing the performance of Hispanic students on standardized exams. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *13*(3), 191–205. http://doi.org/10.1177/1538192714531292

Rodríguez, R. J. (2017). Leave yourself out of your writing. In C. E. Ball & D. Loewe (Eds.), *Bad ideas about writing* (pp. 131-133). Morgantown: West Virginia University Libraries. Retrieved from https://textbooks.lib.wvu.edu/badideas/badideasaboutwriting-book.pdf.

Rogers, P. (2010). The contributions of North American longitudinal studies of writing in higher education to our understanding of writing development. In C. Bazerman, R. Krut, K. Lunsford, S. McLeod, S. Null, P. Rogers, & A. Stansell (Eds.), *Traditions of writing research* (pp. 365–377). New York: Routledge.

Rogoff, B. (1990). *Apprenticeship in thinking*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Roozen, K. (2009). From journals to journalism: Tracing trajectories of literate development. *College Composition and Communication*, *60*(3), 541–572.

Roozen, K. (2015). Writing is a social and rhetorical activity. In L. Adler-Kassner & E. Wardle (Eds.), *Naming what we know: Threshold concepts of writing studies* (pp. 17-19). Boulder, CO: Utah State.

Roozen, K., & Lunsford, K. J. (2011). "One story of many to be told": Following empirical studies of college and adult writing through 100 years of NCTE Journals. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *46*(2), 193–209.

Rosa, J., & Flores, N. (2017). Unsettling race and language: Toward a raciolinguistic perspective. *Language in Society*, 1–27. http://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404517000562

Rose, M. (1985). The language of exclusion: Writing instruction at the university. *College English*, *47*(4), 341–359.

Ruecker, T. (2013). High-stakes testing and Latina/o students: Creating a hierarchy of college readiness. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, *12*(4), 303–320. http://doi.org/10.1177/1538192713493011

Ruecker, T. (2014). Here they do this, there they do that: Latinas/Latinos writing across institutions. *College Composition and Communication*, *66*(1), 91–119.

Ruecker, T. (2015). *Transiciones: Pathways of Latinas and Latinos writing in high school and college.* Boulder, CO: Utah State.

Rupkalvis, D. (2015, Sep. 4). Tucson's largest employers. *Inside Tucson Business*. Retrieved from http://www.insidetucsonbusiness.com/news/tucson-s-largest-employers/article_84bac4f2-525c-11e5-a946-c7bcc58bb756.html

Russell, D. R. (1991). *Writing in the academic disciplines: A curricular history*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Russell, D. R. (1995). Activity theory and its implications for writing instruction. In J. Petraglia

(Ed.), *Reconceiving writing, rethinking writing instruction* (pp. 51–78). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Russell, D. R. (1997). Rethinking genre in school and society: An activity theory analysis. *Written Communication*, *14*(4), 504–554.

Russell, D. R., & Yañez, A. (2003). “Big picture people rarely become historians”: Genre systems and the contradictions of general education. In C. Bazerman & D. R. Russell (Eds.), *Writing Selves/Writing Societies* (pp. 332–362). Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearinghouse and *Mind, Culture, and Activity*. Retrieved from https://wac.colostate.edu/books/selves_societies/russell/russell.pdf

Saidy, C. (2018). Inez in transition: Using case study to explore the experiences of underrepresented students in First-Year Composition. *WPA Writing Program Administration, 41*(2), 17-34.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.

Schryer, C. (1993). Records as genre. *Written Communication*, *10*, 200-234.

Schryer, C., McDougall, A., Tait, G. R., & Lingard, L. (2012). Creating discursive order at the end of life: The role of genres in palliative care settings. *Written Communication*, *29*, 111–141. http://doi.org/10.1177/0741088312439877

Schwaber, J. (2018). About. Retrieved from https://www.scrum.org/about

Selingo, J. J. (2017, August 11). Why can’t college graduates write coherent prose? *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/08/11/why-cant-college-graduates-write/?utm_term=.400846aa87b9

Shay, S., Moore, R., & Cloete, A. (2002). Roles under construction: The intersection of writer agency and task design in South Africa. In D. Foster & D.R. Russell (Eds.) *Writing and learning in cross-national perspective* (pp. 272-318). Urbana, IL.: NCTE.

Shipka, J. (2005). A multimodal task-based framework for composing. *College Composition and Communication*, *57*(2), 277–306. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/30037916

Shipka, J. (2011). *Toward a composition made whole*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh.

Shoenberg, R. (2005). *Why do I have to take this course? A student guide to making smart educational choices*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Shohamy, E. (2006). *Language policy: Hidden agendas and new approaches.* New York: Routledge.

Smit, D. W. (2004). *The end of composition studies*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois.

Soliday, M. (2004). Reading student writing with anthropologists: Stance and judgment in college writing. *College Composition and Communication*, *56*(1), 72–93. http://doi.org/10.2307/4140681

Soliday, M. (2011). *Everyday genres: Writing assignments across the disciplines*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Spinuzzi, C. (1996). Pseudotransactionality, activity theory, and professional writing instruction. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, *5*(3), 295–308. http://doi.org/10.1207/s15427625tcq0503

SpringBoard (2015). English language arts FAQs. The College Board. Retrieved from http://springboardprogram.collegeboard.org/english-language-arts/faqs/

Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air. How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *The American Psychologist*, *52*(6), 613–629. http://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.52.6.613

Sternberg, R. J. (2010) *College admissions for the 21st century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Sternberg, R. J. (2011, February 8). Who is really adrift? *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2011/02/08/a_critique_of_academically_adrift_and_the_test_behind_many_of_the_findings

Sternglass, M. S. (1997). *Time to know them: A longitudinal study of writing and learning at the college level.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Street, B. V. (1995). *Social literacies: critical approaches to literacy development, ethnography, and education.* London: Longman.

Street, B. (2012). New literacy studies. In M. Grenfell, D. Bloome, C. Hardy, K. Pahl, J. Rowsell, & B. Street (Eds.), *Language, ethnography, and education: Bridging New Literacy Studies and Bourdieu* (pp. 27–49). New York: Routledge.

Stuckey, E. J. (1991). *The violence of literacy.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Tardy, C. M. (2006). Researching first and second language genre learning: A comparative review and a look ahead. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *15*(2), 79–101. http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2006.04.003

Tardy, C. M. (2009). *Building genre knowledge*. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press.

Tardy, C. M. (2012). Voice construction, assessment, and extra-textual identity. *Research in the Teaching of English*, *47*(1), 64–99.

Tardy, C. M. (2016). *Beyond convention: Genre innovation in academic writing*. Ann Arbor:

Michigan.

Tardy, C. M. (in press). Is the five-paragraph essay a genre? In A. M. Johns & N. Caplan (Eds.), *Changing practices for the L2 writing classroom: Moving beyond the five-paragraph essay* (pp. 24-41). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Thaiss, C., & Zawacki, T. M. (2006). *Engaged writers, dynamic disciplines.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Thompson, C. A., Eodice, M., & Tran, P. (2015). Student perceptions of general education requirements at a large public university: No surprises? *The Journal of General Education*, *64*(4), 278–293.

Tremain, L. (2015). *"I feel confident most of the time:" A study of the relationships between writing transfer, dispositions toward learning and writing, and perceptions of classroom contexts* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from *ProQuest*.

Trimbur, J. (1991). Literacy and the discourse of crisis. In R. Bullock & J. Trimbur (Eds.), *The politics of writing instruction: Postsecondary* (pp. 277–295). Portsmouth: Boynton/Cook.

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. (2014). R-words: Refusing research. In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. 223–247). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Tuhiwai Smith, L. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples* (2nd ed.). London: Zed Books. *ProQuest Ebook Central.*

United States Census Bureau (2017, July 1). QuickFacts, Tucson city, Arizona. Retreived from https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/tucsoncityarizona/PST045217

Valenzuela, A. (1999) "*Subtractive schooling" U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring.*

Ithaca: SUNY.

Vélez-Ibáñez, C. G. (1996). *Border visions: Mexican cultures of the Southwest United States.* Tucson: University of Arizona.

Villanueva, V. (2001). The politics of literacy across the curriculum. In S. H. McLeod, E. Miraglia, M. Soven, & C. Thaiss (Eds.), *WAC for the new millennium: Strategies for continuing Writing-Across-the-Curriculum programs* (pp. 165–178). Urbana, Il: NCTE.

Wardle, E. (2007). Understanding "transfer" from FYC: Preliminary results of a longitudinal study. *WPA: Writing Program Administration*, *31*(1–2), 65–85.

Wardle, E. (2009). "Mutt genres" and the goal of FYC: Can we help students write the genres of the university? *College Composition and Communication*, *60*(4), 765–789. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40593429

Wardle, E. (2012). Creative repurposing for expansive learning: Considering "problem-exploring" and "answer-getting" dispositions in individuals and fields. *Composition Forum*, *26*(26), n.p..

Wardle, E., & Clement, N. M. (2016). Double binds and consequential transitions: Considering matters of identity during moments of rhetorical challenge. In C. M. Anson & J. L. Moore (Eds.), *Critical transitions: Writing and the question of transfer* (pp. 161–179). Fort Collins, Colorado: The WAC Clearinghouse and University Press of Colorado.

Wells, C. A. (2016). Realizing General Education: Reconsidering conceptions and renewing practice. *ASHE Higher Education Report 42*(2). Retrieved from https://ebookcentral.proquest.com

Wells, J. M. H. (2012). *Millenials strike back: Students' reports of knowledge transfer from high school to college* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from *ProQuest.*

Wenger, E. (1998) *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge.

Wenger-Trayner, E. (2013). The practice of theory: Confessions of a social learning theorist. In V. Farnsworth & Y. Solomon (Eds.), *Reframing educational research: Resisting the "what works" agenda* (pp. 105–118). Routledge. http://doi.org/10.4324/9780203590737

Wenger-Trayner, E., & Wenger-Trayner, B. (2014). Learning in a landscape of practice: a framework. In E. Wenger-Trayner, M. Fenton-O'Creevy, S. Hutchinson, C. Kubiak, & B. Wenger-Trayner (Eds.), *Learning in landscapes of practice boundaries, identity, and knowledgeability in practice-based learning* (pp. 13–29). New York: Routledge.

Wingate, U. (2015). *Academic literacy and student diversity: The case for inclusive practice*. Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters.

Yancey, K. B. (2004). Made not only in words: Composition in a new key. *College Composition and Communication*, *56*(2), 297–328. http://doi.org/10.2307/4140651

Yancey, K. B., Robertson, L., & Taczak, K. (2014). *Writing across contexts: Transfer, composition, and sites of writing*. Logan, UT: Utah State.

Young, I. M. (2011). *Responsibility for justice.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zehr, M. A. (2000, November 15). Arizona curtails bilingual education. *Education Week*. Retrieved from https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2000/11/15/11biling.h20.html