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Teaching as Analogous Personalization:

A pragmatic inquiry into expert teachers' process for fostering synchrony in educational

dialogs, in post-secondary writing

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by

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ABSTRACT


Teaching as Analogous Personalization: A pragmatic inquiry into expert teachers' process

for fostering synchrony in educational dialogs, in post-secondary writing


by


Joshua David Kuntzman

Descriptive understandings of what human learning is, and so normative expectations

of what teachers can and should do as educational leaders, has shifted greatly in society over

the past century. The learning metaphors have moved from mechanical transfer to organic

transformation; the educational approaches have moved from behavioral response-training to

social-emotional facilitating: encouraging students not merely to repeat experts but to think

like members in those knowledge-based communities, not merely to mimic disciplines'

methods but to participate personally in the ongoing discourse of those fields. In an

immediate sense, this shift is progress.

Yet, in a larger sense, it is merely cycling back to acknowledge an old and persistent

thread of practical wisdom among educators: that people learn complexly as emotional-

social-intellectual creatures, and so that a teacher's work is to entice interest and effort, to

foster a sense of belonging and trust, and to persuade students toward personally connecting

with and valuing those same integral parts of a subject-matter that the teacher has already

beneficially personalized for themselves. This longstanding rhetorical and pragmatic view of

a teacher's educational role is now being supported directly by empirical research that shows

the sense-bound, neurologically integrated, socially attuned, identity-and-meaning motivated character of human feelings, thoughts, and dispositions.

I introduce the term "analogous personalization" to capture this synthetic (experience-based, scientifically supported) understanding of teaching as complexly social-emotional, intellectual, persuasive work. I then focus on educational dialogs—specifically within post-secondary writing-based courses—as a means of exploring how expert teachers foster synchrony between their own and their students' personal connections to (i.e., emotional inclination toward, social affiliation with, intellectual/practical understanding of) subject-matter.

First, this dissertation offers a synthetic overview of some emergent mind-brain-body findings, and points out the fundamental educational realities that those findings substantiate. On that foundation, it next overviews insights from the field of rhetoric-and-writing about how teachers can usefully conceptualize the learner-knowledge-environment relationship from a dialogic perspective, to achieve effective (intentional, situated, synchronous) educational exchanges. Building from those scientific and practical literatures, it offers a flexible research method for studying the pragmatic arc of an educational exchange (from teacher intention to student take-away): by using the teacher's own personal, practical, principled framework of educational ideals and approaches; comparing their stated intentions with  students' stated learning experiences, and tracing the arc of that educational dialog through actual classroom recordings. Finally, it enlists this radically situated research method to analyze three expert university writing teachers' practices: their idiosyncratic understandings of a teacher's role (from their own perspective); their experience-based manner of forming learning-centered relationships with students (from my observing perspective); and their apparent, persuasive self-investment in the course's subject-matter

and the students' learning (from students' perspectives). It concludes with observations about

the role of a teacher's sincerity (both practiced and perceived) in developing professional

expertise and achieving synchrony with students in educational exchanges.

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**WHAT RHETORIC-AND-WRITING CONTRIBUTES TO THE FIELD OF**

**TEACHING AND LEARNING:**

**Insights regarding knowledge personalization, practical expertise, and principled**

**dispositions in the educational work of coordinating understandings through dialog**

"Education is power; it changes [you as a person]. … And if you can speak about what you

care about to a person you disagree with, without denigrating or insulting them, then you

may actually be heard. And you may even change their mind, or they may change yours."

– Amy Poehler (actress/comedian), "News: Ask Amy" Youtube, 15 July 2013

**CHAPTER 1**

**INTRODUCTION: A RHETORICAL VIEW OF EDUCATION IS SITUATED, PERSONAL**

A core aim of Western education, at its unified beginnings, was to refine human perception and communication: the *trivium*, once the foundation of university schooling, combined lessons in grammar, logic, and rhetoric to develop the student's fundamental capacity for deriving "truth" from their experiences, and thereafter conveying those truths to others. All further fields of learning in the curriculum extended from this, the individual's ability to make sense of and find meaning through one's senses. Though education has grown since 11th century into a more complex and public institution, with more vast and specialized fields of knowledge, still this foundational reality remains: learning is based in personal, first-hand understandings and interpersonal, experience-sharing dialogs.

Accordingly, in the literature surrounding educational dialogs, there has been a consistent push by ecologically-minded educators—John Dewey and Lawrence A. Cremin, Alexander R. Luria and Lev Vygotsky, Mikhail Bakhtin and Paulo Freire, James Moffett and Ray McDermott, et cetera—to look at learning as a complex, integrated, situated and social human process: one which involves higher conscious/moral thought (reason or *logos*), supportive guiding emotions (feeling or *pathos*), and actual customary habits (character or *ethos*) together within the learner *in situ*. This holistic conception of learning is, again, rooted in the premises of rhetorical philosophy, and consistently borne out by educators'

teaching and learning experiences across times and cultures. Even in eras where views of human thinking and schooling have leaned toward the more objective and technical, still these integrated conceptions have persisted; not 'prevailed,' per se, but remained strongly present within the values and visions of educational dissenters and reformers, their humanistic arguments taken up and carried on by generations of educators. This is because educational work requires engaging and influencing all of these domains—responsive affect, conscious attention, driving motive—and approaches to schooling which neglect this whole reality risk impoverishing the educational exchange.

This link, that an individual's broader reality is directly relevant to their specific educational efforts and outcomes, has been long and amply supported by anecdotal evidence among educators in the field: from accounts of teacher-student relationships or sociocultural incongruities negatively effecting educational environments (e.g., Cothran & Ennis 1997; Gutierrez, Larson, & Kreuter 1995; Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larson 1995), to observations and reflections (e.g., Graf & Liu 2009; Nathan, Eilam, & Kim 2007; Richards 2006; Waring 2008, Wells & Arauz 2006) by both students (e.g., Ciani, Middleton, Summers, & Sheldon 2010; Feldman 1989b; Gross, Lakey, Edinger, et al. 2009; Schussler 2009) and teachers (e.g., Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Shultz 2009; Newberry 2010) of how close human interactions set the foundation for learners' attitudes, efforts, and achievements in learning (e.g., Bergin & Bergin 2009; Murphy, Wilkinson, Soter, Hennessey, & Alexander 2009; Nystrand 2006; Rose 1995/2010; Witt, Wheeless, & Allen 2004). And now, recent scientific research in neurology and psychology is providing fundamental support for these   assertions about healthy educational environments, via mounting evidence that is compelling scientists toward more holistically integrated views of human function and development: the embodied nature of awareness (e.g., Barsalou 2008; Beukeboom & de Jong 2008; Damasio

& Damasio 2006; Wilson & Golonka 2013), the emotional nature of problem-solving (Baas, De Dreu, &Nijstad 2008; Forgas & East 2008; Immordino-Yang & Damasio 2007; Panksepp 2012), the identity-based nature of motivation (Brophy 2009), and the narrative nature of understanding (Fotopoulou, Conway, Tyrer, Birchall, Griffiths, & Solms 2008; Wilson & Gilbert 2003).

  This humanitarian paradigm-shift in the sciences freshly illuminates the relevance of rhetorical insights to the work of educational scholarship in general. Both areas have, since their tethered inception, been centrally focused on the how-and-why of persuading others toward socially beneficial changes in experiencing, perceiving, and acting. And over time, as scientific understandings have shifted the underlying social perceptions of human learning and interaction, composition scholars' and educational scholars' complimentary views of human influence—toward an effective and ethical rhetoric, toward a pragmatic and democratic education—have moved closer together (Figure 1). So now, at this point in science and humanities history, the two are well-positioned for a synthesis.

<div align="center">

**EDECATION**
_____/^\\_____
/        \

**A NOTIONAL / INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH**   **A RHETORICAL APPROACH**
(episteme / techne)        (phronesis)
\\          /
\\          /

*~Aims~*
"Good, useful education …

</div>

| …provides an individual right knowledge & proven methods for finding such knowledge" | ...facilitates individual's adaptation to a variety of situations and environments" |
|---|---|

<div align="center">

more **Objective, Scientific**   |   more **Personal, Practical**
\\      |      /
\\   →   when *Integrated*:   ←   /
includes **Knowledge + Environment + Learner Subjectivity**

*~Content~*
"An educated understanding …

</div>

| ...passes from teacher (delivering content, dictating work) to student (demonstrating reception, practicing exercises)." | ...develops between teachers and students, in dialog (both sides sharing, questioning, modeling, learning)." |
|---|---|

more **Rational, Mechanical**     |     more **Practical, Principled**

\\\\     |     /

\\\\ → when *Integrated*: ← /

includes **Notions + Processes + Orientations**

*~Manner~*

"Educating others means …

| ...compelling change in knowledge & skills by instructing students to value particular moral standards & ethical codes, to think & communicate via particular ideas & words, to learn & develop using particular strategies & tools." | ...persuading for change in dispositions & actions by stimulating an audience's awareness of particular experiences, attention to particular meanings, & interest toward particular aims." |
|---|---|

more **Dogmatic, Didactic**     |     more **Principled, Personal**

\\\\     |     /

\\\\ → when *Integrated*: ← /

includes **Emotion + Cognition + Motivation**

*Figure 1.* An overview of two educational orientations, as compliments.

Aristotle provides an excellent launching point for this comparison of notional/ instructional versus rhetorical approaches by differentiating between propositional scientific knowledge (*episteme*), which is concerned with translating provable truths into cognitively transmissible abstractions; technical craft knowledge (*techne*), which is concerned with translating goals of production into effective methods of production; and prudent practical wisdom (*phronesis*), which is concerned with translating general human values into situated virtuous acts (Birmingham 2004). Notional/instructional approaches have, historically, bent toward *episteme* and *techne*, as they support the expansion of knowledge fields and the efficient dissemination of information—a path toward definition and certainty, proof and dissemination. Alternately, rhetorical approaches have tended to elevate *phronesis*, as it emphasizes the pragmatic honing of ideals-into-action and the effective influence of individuals in society—a path of complexity and ambiguity, principle and reflection.

Clearly, the marriage of *phronesis* with *techne* and *episteme* within educational environments invites conflict: between focusing on messy human relationships or high-minded concepts, validating personal development or technical refinement, achieving utilitarian goals or questioning their moral meaning (Figure 1). But, it has been argued, this dialog concerning the *phronetic* aspects of education is essential for recognizing the social, moral complexity of teaching (Birmingham 2004); the concrete practicality of representational knowledge (Jones 2011); and the personal, reciprocal nature of learning (Kakkori & Huttunen 2007) in academic institutions.

American universities, impressed in the 1800's by the German ideal of pure scientific research (Connors 1997), came to value the scholarly aim of "learning for the sake of increasing human knowledge" over the aim of teaching and disseminating that knowledge in society—and so tacitly to devalue the "overtly pragmatic," less neatly empirical, and "feelings"-stimulating field of rhetoric (176-9). And this academic emphasis on building objective, scientific knowledge translates well into more rational, mechanical views of educating: where teachers deliver truth and dictate process, where students demonstrate reception and practice the prescriptive 'right' way. John Dewey (1900) describes well the educational exchange that conventional school chairs and lesson-books are tailored toward: toward the attitude of "passivity, absorption"; the cognitive "dependency of one mind upon another"; the act of "listening." Thus these academic aims and scholastic structures proliferate manners of education which are more dogmatic and didactic, compelling changes in students' values, thought currencies, and behaviors which are expected to take a pre-determined, measurable form in students: adhering to certain ethical codes and standards, communicating with specific ideas and words, developing by using particular strategies and tools. Thus conventional knowledge, in its conventional forms, advances.

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The difference between this conventional scholastic approach and a more rhetorical one is—as Nathaniel Gage (2009) distinguished well—that whereas the above attends to "instruction," all the objects and media through which students interact with subject-matter content, a rhetorical approach focuses more heavily on "teaching," the work of arranging student's interactions with that media, organizing and innovating to direct those learning-centered interactions. "Instruction" invites less autonomy; compels stricter adherence to approved organization and application, serving the ends of educational consistency and efficiency. "Teaching" invites more professional adaptation; compels critical attention and responsive adjustment in service of educational appropriateness and depth.

Rhetorical aims are more personal and practical, oriented toward effective adaptation and application of knowledge to a variety of situations and environments—where it may be used in discourse to convey and sharpen understandings of truth (Bizzell & Herzberg 1990, in Herrick 1997), to question disparities between linguistic constructions of reality and actual experience (Bernard-Donals 1994, in Covino 2001), and to actively improve community welfare (Scott 1980, in Hobbs & Berlin 2001). This in turn translates to more practical, principled views of educating: where understanding develops between teachers and students in dialog, as both sides share and question and model agreed-upon practices toward negotiated learning aims; where the students' innate capacity and desire to communicate and be communicated with (F. N. Scott 1922, in Berlin 1984) provide the foundation for an educational exchange.

The Socratic method, perhaps the most familiar iteration of the dialogic educational exchange, uses questions and discussions to illuminate particular ideas and stimulate critical thinking. This approach provides a concrete image, then, of how interpersonal relationships contribute *directly* to the propagation of societal knowledge; how education is fundamentally

"based in a relationship … [where] discourse should be used as a means to uncover absolute truth, not merely to induce belief in probably truth or received wisdom" (Burke 1954, in Bizzell & Herzberg 2001). As denoted by the 'should' in this statement, acknowledging these rhetorical aims and dialogic structures in education validates the aspects of educational practice which are intrinsically personal and explicitly values-laden aspects: where scholars persuade for change in others' dispositions by stimulating their awareness, attention, and interest toward particular experiences, meanings, and aims—and where teachers observe and nurture others' changes of perception, value, and motive, in the various personalized forms those changes take.

This rhetorical educational aim, of shaping greater understandings to fit particular persons and their circumstances, might appear at first blush to contradict the scholastic aim of "pure" scientific research, since it validates complex subjective experience in a way that integrates instinctive emotion, rational thought, and identity-oriented motivation. But now that current scientific understandings of human thought mirror this integrated image, educational theories (see, e.g., Dai & Sternberg 2004) are extending beyond the intuitive-but-innacurate positivistic notion that humans can divorce themselves from subjective biases and perceive reality in purely empirical, logical, rational terms; returning once again to the older integrated notions of thinking and learning, which treat both learning and the sharing thereof as more complexly and honestly human endeavors.

As Desiderius Erasmus (1535) explains this educative work in *Ecclesiastes*: "Our purpose in teaching is to have our hearer understand,… Our purpose in persuasion is to have our hearer want to embrace the honorable and the useful, such as when we persuade a wealthy miser to share his riches with the needy." Teaching is an inherently persuasive endeavor, infused with disciplinary knowledge and values, intent on sharing not only

meaningful understandings but also "honorable" attitudes coupled with "useful" practices—
i.e., dispositions—which in combination foster goodness and rightness in the world. And
toward that end, Erasmus challenges the academic integrity, scholastic efficacy, and
experiential appeal of coldly prescriptive, rational instruction (the dialectical approach), in
favor of the more warmly mutual, persuasive, and pleasant rhetorical approach:

> [dialectical teaching]—besides its deceitful subtleties and the dangerous
>
> nooses of its *para*logisms [fallacious, superficially logical arguments]—
>
> seems actually to compel and to drag a man by force, bound in chains, as it
>
> were, toward its own point of view. But who would trust a schemer, and how
>
> many would not prefer being led to being dragged? (Erasmus 1535: trans. By
>
> James L. Butrica, in Bizzell & Herzberg 2001, p.628)

In Erasmus's view, an educator who de-emphasizes the subjectivity of knowing gains no
protection against biased perceptions or flawed justifications, only the pretense of rational
objectivity, as they profess knowledge. Moreover, asserting truths to which others must
conform, and toward that end concealing one's uncertainties, neither convinces nor engages
attentive learners—let alone the moral suspectness of 'scheming' and the aesthetic
undesirableness of that learning experience. The image of good, effective teaching that
Erasmus intimates is one founded on a trusting relationship—less a reasoned compulsion
toward prescribed truths, more a mutual journey toward a synchronized perception.

So the argument for more complex views of teaching is not a new one. The art of
rhetoric is—at its core—the work of creating enjoyable, coherent, motivating educational
exchanges. And even as universities have wandered away from their rhetorical roots, the
voices of humanistic educators have continued to revisit, and reinvigorate, the rhetorical
approach to educational exchanges; recognizing both educators and learners as whole

individuals within complex environments, engaged dialogically in learning-centered

relationships which are personal, practical, and principled.

## An Opportunity to Synthesize Rhetorical Insights and Scientific Findings

This educational argument has long played out as a fundamentally philosophical one:

how learning *should be* viewed metaphorically and guided ethically. But much in those

perpetual vacillations between favoring objectivity or subjectivity, scholarly curriculum or

student experience, in educational encounters came from gaps in empirical understandings

about the complexities of human cognition: how learning *is* realized naturally and influenced

environmentally. Empirically-oriented research findings are converging on a recognition that

the human mind-body is integrated, subjective, situated; and that a person's complex of

emotional states, cognitive processes, and driving purposes are crucial as a sum to their

healthy learning and function in and across natural environments. This, in turn, is tacitly

settling a great many philosophical volleys in purely pragmatic terms: beneath metaphors of

blank-slate or nurtured-garden minds, beneath appeals for efficient performance or rich

immersion, these findings lay a stabilizing bedrock of dependable and observable patterns in

humans' learning relationships with the physical and social world.

For educators, these basic empirical findings across neurobiology and psychology

close many debates—largely by dissolving the artificial divisions between mind and body,

self and environment,  knowledge and knower which extend from a long ontological

tradition of separateness in Western society (Beech 1999) of man from animal, culture from

nature, good from evil, and absolute truth from relative perception. This dissolution, in turn,

points freshly toward rhetoric's integrated conceptions and pragmatic strategies regarding

human learning. These ancient insights—on how humans socially propagate private personal

understandings; on how we pragmatically stimulate growth and change in others' felt orientations, thought images, and practiced habits; and on how we persuasively coordinate our purpose and action within dialogic moments—are now ripe to be reexamined for their value in educational thought and practice.

**The space in educational scholarship for rhetoric's practical wisdom.**

The *trivium*—that integrated foundation for critical thinking in the medieval university— relied on the instructive and persuasive power of rhetorical technique to compliment an individual's grammatical ability at defining their sensual perceptions (i.e., making knowledge) and logical ability at analytically relating those mental conceptions together meaningfully (i.e., forming personal understanding): rhetoric concerns the aspect of human learning where those individual and experience-based notions, processes, and orientations are transmitted outwards—as shared ideals, practices, and values. As such, it is arguably the most pedagogically-directed aspect of the ancient university.

Now, with a modern resurgence of integrated views on human learning, rhetorical scholarship is auspiciously positioned to once again inform conversations regarding educational values, attentions, and practices in modern American universities. Science- minded brain/psychology researchers have made great epistemic contributions to educators' understandings of how human learning operates; craft-minded educational researchers have adopted these scientific frameworks to inform their technical theories and strategies for educating students effectively; and practice-minded rhetoric-and-writing researchers have explored the moral complexity and situational variety of applying educational intentions in learning-centered interactions between teachers and students.

Scholars in each area, to some degree, have voiced their perspectives on this topic as a whole: how propositional knowledge about natural human learning might inform technical methods of education and elucidate experiential wisdom about the attributes of "good" or healthy educational exchanges. Each area's disciplinary scholarship informs a part of this larger, integrated educational understanding: from brain/mind researchers, the personal foundations of learning; from general educational researchers, the practical theories for propagating culturally valued learning; and from rhetorical educators specifically, the principled details of achieving those academic intentions socially though situated dialogs.

Even though rhetorical scholarship is continuously evolving within communication-oriented disciplines such as rhetoric-and-writing, the basic position of the discipline is still that within the original trivium: a scholarship dedicated to absorbing scientific knowledge and educational understandings, and combining them into phronetic—or "wise"—practices. This review will highlight specifically how insights from rhetoric-and-writing can be used to compliment and expand current educational theories and practices.

**The structure of this review of literature.**
Accordingly, this review of literature will discuss the progress from education's notional aims, to its technical understandings, to its expert practices. It will trace this progression twice: first with a broader educational view, exploring how scholarly understandings of learning and its transfer across contexts have evolved into more personal and situated notions in light of current, integrated understandings of human learning. Then it will re-trace that progression in a more discipline-specific manner, exploring the unique educational insights that rhetoric-and-writing has to offer about teaching and learning, from its principles to its intentions to its practices. Specifically, it will explain how educational exchanges can

be pragmatically approached from a more complexly personal and situated perspective—wherein basic emotions, formative experiences, and situated motivations are recognized as essential in persuading for healthy, meaningful, and transformative changes in learners' native understandings, practical dispositions, and moral characters.

Each section will be presented first by introducing basic concepts and definitions, then progressing to a list of essential insights from that literature (*under headings marked with asterisks), and then concluding briefly with an overview of related literature. In this way, these sections will highlight both how current scientific knowledge concretely informs these educational values and approaches, and how other fields of scholarship are analogously applying these integrative insights. This twin-literature review will then conclude by distilling the particular facets of effective educational exchanges that rhetoric-and-writing scholarship highlights with its disciplinary emphasis on the dialogic, learning-centered, persuasive work that teachers do with students—clarified through the voices of expert practitioners.

# CHAPTER 2


# LITERATURE – LEARNING & EDUCATION

## Developing and disseminating human understanding

## is an *Ecological*, *Transformative* (situated, personal) process


Learning is a natural process; people learn continuously and complexly as they interact with their environment. Education is the intentional practice of supporting and directing individuals' experiential learning paths. The essential work of educators, then, is to shape environments in ways that  encourage "good" learning among specific individuals. As Lawrence A. Cremin (1976) explains this learning-centered relationship ecologically, defining education as "the deliberate, systematic, and sustained effort to transmit, evoke, or acquire knowledge, attitudes, values, skills, sensibilities, as well as any outcomes of that effort." By these "outcomes," Cremin means *all* the learning that results from educational exchanges, whether direct or indirect, intended or unintended. This makes the definition of "good learning" crucial in formulating practical scholastic aims; it creates a clear guiding image for educational plans, applications, and revisions as each level sinks further into the wild mess and moral ambiguity of actual, situated human learning.

Currently, the metaphoric notion of learning "transfer" has risen to prominence among scholars as an educational aim. As a practical concept (see e.g., Beech 1999), it has evolved into an ecological image in step with Cremin's definition of education: that

individuals spread knowledge though shared systems of activity, in dynamic relations wherein the individuals, the systems, and the knowledge or relational realty itself are continuously adjusting. In regard to educational aims, *transfer* asserts the idea that learners can usefully elicit and apply their past learning in new situations, provided that they can somehow practically connect that prior learning to their immediate environment. This premise is bolstered by scientific research which demonstrates that individuals' understandings of and responses to their environments are situated and experience-based— from basic, concrete awareness to highly advanced, abstract levels of cognition. And this notion implies that educational practices should foster that innate human capacity to consciously notice, meaningfully connect, and usefully apply personal learning experiences across situations.

What insights into the educational aim of learning transfer does the field of rhetoric have to offer, given its disciplinary focus on conveying experiential understandings among individuals, in situation-appropriate ways? Answering this begins by understanding the evolution of transfer as a metaphorical concept, and the ways in which scientific findings have resolved and clarified that image's connection to the actual reality of situated human learning.

**Defining Learning Transfer as Propagation, Transformation in Educational Theory**

**Moving from Rote Acts to Embodied Understandings and Actions**

Put simply, *transfer* emphasizes the idea that learners can usefully elicit and apply past learning in new situations provided that they can somehow practically connect that prior learning to this immediate environment. The importance of this, as an educational aim, is

that it extends pedagogical focus beyond getting learners to retain or "remember" information, which is a past-oriented goal on its own. Valuing learning transfer means attends to how learners then make sense of or "understand" that remembered information, as they use it for new learning, problem-solving, and questioning in their future (Mayer 2002). This expanded notion of "using" learning requires that individuals *construct* a personally meaningful understanding of new knowledge by connecting it to their own unique knowledge frameworks, and relating its general principles to specific situations in one's experiences. It further requires individuals to *apply* that knowledge procedurally in tasks and problem-solving; to break things apart analytically, seeing their relations to one another and to their containing structures; to judge evaluatively a situated phenomenon's sufficiency and quality, its internal consistency of standards, and its adherence to externally imposed criteria; and ultimately to to reorganize and form parts creatively into new coherent patterns or structures.

This ideal image of a situated learner—continuously adding to and connecting their stores of experience-based knowledge as they move through diverse task environments— mirrors a research-based image of how a person's knowledge and thinking operate in the real world: individuals amass context-specific experiences, through which they develop general cognitive skills, that they can then apply roughly when dealing with contexts that are unfamiliar, and can apply much more accurately when dealing with contexts where they've had ample learning experiences (Perkins & Salomon 1989; Haskell 2001). It is this ability to recognize similarity across time and among diverse happenings in one's life, and to creatively combine insights from old experiences into solutions for new challenges, that educational researchers refer to as 'transfer.' Getting learners to a place where they can transfer their learning expertly across contexts has been an aim for educators since antiquity.

Essentially, this fluent dialog—between one's specific, situated experiences and one's general, personalized principles for dealing with experiences—boils down to two interrelated notions: that of one's "general knowledge" and that of one's "knowledge-base." One's general knowledge is the collection of problem-managing strategies, thinking skills, and habits of mental self-regulation that one carries into every situation. One's knowledge-base is the well of situated experiences that one continuously adds to, distills, and organizes to make it useful and readily available. The breadth and depth of that experiential knowledge-base (and the individualized clarity of its organization), then, ultimately support the accuracy and efficacy of one's general knowledge when applied in real-life situations.

As Haskell (2001) points out, experiences provide an individual with a rich mass of information, not all of which may immediately relevant or useful, but which provides fundamental material for making connections between situations, perceiving where information is needed, and pursuing further understanding: " learners must have a knowledge base in a subject in order to even know enough to ask questions about it… [because people] don't function on the basis of disembodied intellect. To think well requires something to think about—and again, lots of it." The more an individual gradually refines and orders that basic mass of embodied knowledge,, the better able they are to access, add to, apply, and convey that knowledge.

This final outcome of peoples' situated and personal learning—a seemingly "universal" general knowledge that experts often wield in their fields with great accuracy and efficiency—was for a long time emphasized by educators as a sensible practical aim for schooling. The Formal Disciplines approach in ancient and classical educational theory held that training in certain disciplines such as Latin or logic would allow learners to perceive a discipline's sense or structure, and transfer that automatically to their everyday thinking and

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doing (e.g., their language use or critical reflection in general); the General Principles notion in the early 1900's held that once learners understood the abstract principles underlying phenomena, they could apply those to various concrete situations where the principle is relevant (e.g., that once children learned about refraction of light in water, they could successfully utilize that information to hit underwater targets with darts) (see review: Haskell 2001).

This generalist view remained prevalent even into the 1950's, e.g., in mathematics, where heuristics (generalized strategies such as breaking problems into simpler sub-problems, representing the problem in different ways, examining special cases to glean insights, etc.) were being identified for memorizing, inventing, decision-making, problem-solving, mental management and so on. These repertoires of heuristics were viewed as crucial in solution-finding, whereas localized, domain-specific knowledge was viewed as less important (Perkins & Salomon 1989). But the warrants for this view and approach were intuitive and rational, rather than research-based.

Research on how we as humans make use of our learning, and what that implies about best educational supports for learners' "good thinking," began by challenging the accuracy and efficacy of this generalist view (see review: Perkins & Salomon 1989). First, studies of experts, such as chess masters in the 1960's and '70s, showed that masters are no better than novices at memorizing randomly positioned pieces, but are far better at memorizing boards that arise naturally through game play: such findings led to a profile of expert performance based in an individual's knowledge of many *domain-specific* (as opposed to general) patterns, coupled with an ability to recognize quickly the situations where those patterns apply, and to reason "forward" from those situational givens and familiar patterns to a solution for the unknown—whereas novices, not readily recognizing situational patterns,

tend to reason "backward," focusing on unknowns and seeking rules wherein they can fit situational knowns to provide them an answer (Chi, Glaser, & Rees 1981). Congruent with this, Artificial Intelligence research in the 1980's showed that while heuristics were useful for people and computers in solving simple problems, they were "weaker" than specifically informed approaches at solving complex and domain-specific problems: real power in solving those problems arose over time, as solution-seekers repeatedly applied general methods, learned from those experiences, and built up rich databases to refine their methods—in place of those more general, less powerful heuristics. Finally, practical educational research on learning transfer in the 1970's and 80's showed both that learning disciplinary knowledge had no measurable influence on general thinking abilities, and conversely that learning context-independent thinking strategies yielded no observable benefits outside the domains in which they were learned. Thus, research findings implied that useful skills need to be learned within-context, and likewise that transfer of learning needs to be stimulated within the learning environment.

This research does not deny the value of general knowledge. Rather, it illuminates the base of experiences that generalities root into, that gives them meaning and use in the quick and complex realities of everyday living. Expert knowledge is experience-situated and slow-grown: a locus of context-bounded understandings that is made accurate and effective through multiple layers of unique and diverse learning interactions between self and environment. Extending one's prior knowledge beyond those familiar tasks and domains, into new activities and situations, therefore, is a complex and creative ecological process: discovering what is similar, learning what is distinct, and attuning existing conceptions and behaviors to function effectively in that environment. This has been the core finding of research into transfer of learning.

Studies of learning transfer (see reviews: Haskell 2001; Tuomi-Grohn, Engestrom & Young 2003) began with the work of laboratory research psychologist Edward Thorndike in 1901, from whose studies arose the "identical elements" notion of transfer: that between two experiences or learning events, there must be a common set of concrete identical elements for transfer to occur. Later behaviorist laboratory research demonstrated, on a physiological level, how this basic-level stimulus generalization occurs: once researchers reinforce a subject's response to a stimulus, a new stimulus that is sufficiently similar may evoke a response that has not been specifically learned. Yet these behaviorist models asserted a rather reductive, mechanical notion of the mind as "a machine for making particular reactions to particular situations.... conditioned by the nature of the data in each particular case" (Thorndike & Woodworth 1901: in Tuomi-Grohn, Engestrom & Young 2003).

Charles Judd's work moved beyond this close, concrete notion of identical elements, showing that individuals could also usefully transfer more abstract understandings across situations. His gestalt psychological view of transfer asserted that systems of ideas in an individual's mind can "illuminate and clarify human experiences by raising them to the level of abstract, generalized, conceptual understanding" (Judd 1936: in Tuomi-Grohn, Engestrom & Young 2003). This paved the way for cognitive psychologists in the 1980's, conducting knowledge schema research, to develop a constructivist information-processing model wherein learners use hypothetical mental structures (called "schemata") to organize and utilize information: interpreting, learning from, and internalizing incoming experiences in terms of their pre-existing schemata. This model recognizes that people both draw connections between past and current learning experiences (e.g., via isomorphic relations, metaphorical reasoning, analogical reasoning, or exemplification) and also metacognitively monitor and regulate those mental processes within themselves.

Yet, such notions of transfer still never moved beyond rationalist or empiricist models of the mind—wherein the learner's process of recognizing similarity is seen as either as an innate property of the mind (a similarity-imagining machine), or else as an effect of external objects and situations (which are creating those internal mental structures).

The next moves in transfer theory turned focus onto the socially and historically situated nature of individual thinking: Jean Lave, in the late 1980's critiqued the artificial dissociation of cognition from context in these psychological approaches. James G. Greeno added to this situated view of learning the notion that what "transfers" for individuals is not knowledge between tasks, but patterns of participation across situations: that is, people learn social *practices*, and so the socially constructed *meanings* of properties within situations— e.g., people perceive chairs as "sit-on-able" and paths as "walk-on-able" (Greeno, Smith, & Moore 1993: in Tuomi-Grohn, Engestrom & Young 2003). Since these personal meanings develop largely within communities of practice, while the individual is participating socially with others, Greeno posits that these patterns of personal, situated interaction may commonly act as the general structure that enables learning transfer across situations—more so even than abstract symbolic representations. In this way, the socially situated image of learning transfer not only "switches the locus of learning from an isolated Cartesian individual to a novice participating in a community of practice," but alters the central metaphor for learning from knowledge 'transfer' to cultural 'participation' (Tuomi-Grohn, Engestrom & Young 2003).

These two perspectives of learning are so complimentary in their differences (from their focus on the internal versus external world of the learner, to their tightly controlled versus organic and subjective approaches to studying those learning processes) that they beg for a synthesis of perspective.

The ecological model of the mind provides this conceptual resolution. Within this view, the individual and environment are not seen as separate nor static, but as dynamically related, constantly producing and experiencing changes within that relationship. Learners do not subserviently participate, but proactively *create* tasks within their multiple social organizations; do not isolately imagine or perceive similarities across situations, but collectively and historically *link* situations together. So the metaphor for transfer of learning within this relational model is one of growth and development; individuals experience continuity and change in themselves, with their environments, and that ongoing process of being and becoming constitutes learning.

Within some iterations of this ecological view, individual learners are seen as subsumed within larger cultural-historical activity systems, yet still somewhat independent from that environment. V.V. Davydov's (1990) notion of 'learning activity,' for example, attends to how individuals form their own theoretical relationships with reality by identifying general relationships within a system, and finding their myriad incarnations operating across environments. Building on this notion, Tuomi-Grohn and Engestrom's (2003) notion of 'expansive learning' focuses on the learning, i.e., change, that individuals catalyze within activity systems when they challenge the status quo. Acts like questioning or resisting a system's default patterns of response create opportunities for interactive debates, analysis, and re-formulations of current activities, which may then lead to individuals implementing, practicing, refining, and proliferating new practices: an expansive learning cycle that spreads—step by step and person by person—as a change through the activity system. Both of these developmental models emphasize that (A) learning occurs by a process of personalization within individuals, that (B) the learned content, whether a mode of perception or a way of action, is transformed as it passes among individuals, and that (C) in

this way, individuals and the activity systems in which they act "learn" together: both the individual and the environment are developmental in nature.

Both of these "expansive" ecological notions, though, promote a somewhat contentious view of the learner-environment relationship. "Learning activity" focuses on an individual's struggle to form independent theories in the face of pressure to build fluency with system-embedded actions, while "expansive learning" focuses on moments of disruption within the system's status quo. By this focus, both distort the full image of an ecological learner-environment relationship—which is as much about continuity as it is about changes.

Rather than viewing growth and development as self-assertion or as system improvement, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979: in Tuomi-Grohn, Engestrom & Young 2003) describes these life-shaping changes in the learner-environment relationship as 'ecological transitions,' which occur "whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting, or both… every ecological transition [being] both a consequence and an instigator of developmental processes." King Beach (1999) connects this notion of personal change explicitly to learning, by describing it as a process of knowledge propagation by individuals within society; "the continuity and transformation of knowledge, skill, and identity across various forms of social organization." Beach refers to this ecological process of shaping both one's self and society's knowledge as 'generalization.' He distinguishes this notion as broader than 'knowledge transfer' because it implies that individuals are not passively transporting, but rather actively *constructing* knowledge (Beach 2003): personalizing and enacting knowledge among various social organizations creates links among those environments which may reinforce, as well as disrupt, systems of human

artifacts and activities. Thus, whether facilitating continuities or drawing out contradictions in those environments, the personal propagation of knowledge is a constructive act.

### *The take-away: learning and transfer as an ongoing self-environment relationship.*

So what has remained stable in the concept of "learning transfer," since its inception, is this: learning is change; a process of growing accordingly *with* one's environment, noticing patterns and forming responses that manage those situations effectively. "Transfer" is the tenacious continuity of a given internal change across various external environments; a process of connecting and applying one's past learning as one engages in new activities with different cultural artifacts and social others.

Furthermore, as scholars have researched and developed their understanding of *how* learning transfers within and among individuals, a personal and situated image has emerged: the individual, who is a complex and continuous locus of experience, learns and propagates knowledge socially as a natural part of its relationship with the environment (which is a multifarious and dynamic source of experience).

This research-based conception of what learning is (change), what transfer is (continuity), implies an accordingly ecological view of education: a system of social activity wherein teachers and students work to propagate human understandings, practices, and values in ways that promote the continuity (transfer) of ostensibly positive changes (learning) across human activity systems.

## Expanding from School Performance to Personal Integration

The notion of learning and transfer has been enriched and expanded by psychological and sociological research, to a point far past its initial focus on "training" basic mental functions like memory and attention, to a focus now on "becoming" a socially integrated individual who uses learned understandings well across one's diverse and ongoing experiences. This evolution of the concept of human learning has shifted both the the image of educational aims, metaphorically, and the intention behind  educational approaches, practically, toward integration—the personalization of knowledge, via situated interaction with knowledge, in an environment that recognizes person and knowledge and environment as mutual influences. The specific implications of this, at the level of language and of practice, are detailed below.

*\* Point #1 – at the level of ideas and language:*

*explicit awareness of human learning's intricate psychosocial complexity.*

First, it is important to note that learning is a constructed label that connects a complex set of ongoing processes, activities, and products into an overly neat-and-simple package (because otherwise, it would be very difficult for people to discuss efficiently). Learning itself, even in a single moment, is polyphasic (Henry 1963): we are always learning multiple things together—sometimes the intended message—but always more so the 'noise' of unintended communications and ancillary experiences around that message. Learning is also, for a single individual across moments, polycontextual (Tuomi-Grohn, Engestrom & Young 2003): acquiring expertise requires a learner in the field to operate in, and move between, "multiple parallel activity contexts" that supply various rules, patterns, and tools which may be complimentary but also conflicting, and which the expert must negotiate and combine in context.

This self-environment relationship results in growth and change—learning—that is more realistically viewed as a "renovation and expansion of previous knowledge via the experience of dealing with new situations in new settings … than as a series of discrete acquisition events" (Hager & Hodkinson 2009). So real learning is a THICK-layered and unbounded phenomenon, making the use of metaphors in thinking and talking about learning, pragmatically, inescapable. And choosing conceptual metaphors that maintain learning's core attributes (i.e., that it is personal, situated, ongoing) is crucial to maintaining conceptual accuracy and practical balance/health in discussions of educational work.

Paul Hager and Phil Hodkinson (2009) succinctly trace this pragmatic link between learning metaphors and educational attitudes. Under more propositional- and skill-learning lens, they explain, individuals are seen learning 'things': products that are independent of the learner and separate from the context in which they were learned—invoking the metaphor of learning as *acquisition*. This objective treatment of learning further produces an image of successful learners as carrying the things they learn from place to place, using them appropriately—invoking the metaphor of *transfer*: the mind is a container, filled with knowledge as a substance. These images, in turn, tend to propagate educational attitudes such as that all questions have a correct answer, answering all questions correctly is successful learning, and the extent of an individual's learning can be gauged accurately and numerically by tallying correct answers.

Alternately, a socially and culturally focused lens on learning invokes the metaphor of *participation*: learning is an activity done within a larger system, a socially contextualized field of practice that shapes and reshapes its members. This image leads to a view of the learner as a participant, of the artifacts being learned as complex social constructions, and of successful learners as those who move from less to more significant roles and

responsibilities within their field. Complimenting this, an expansive lens on learning invokes the metaphor of *transformation* and *reconstruction* of the learner and/or their environment: the learner grows and builds out their current understanding on an internal scaffold of existing understanding. This image leads to a view of the learner as an evolving being, of learned understandings as a way of being in relation with the environment, and of successful learning as the new understandings and contexts that form as learning progresses.

These ecological views of learning, in turn, support educational approaches that recognize individuals (students and educators) as complex embodiments of academic content, and as active creators of that knowledge in their environment—propagated through experiences and activities, shaping interactions and social organizations.

There is room for synthesis in these views of learning: Hager and Hodkinson imply that 'acquisition' and 'transfer' are metaphors to move beyond, for their objectification of learned content, and for their divorce of that content from learner and context. But as true as this is—that human knowledge is inescapably contained within persons, and that learning is situated within interactive and social life processes—notions like 'transformation' and 'participation' carry their own biases of focus toward internal/phenomenological "first-person" perspectives and social/ontological "third-person" perspectives of educational environments. Even Beach's all-encompassing dialectical/existential metaphor for learning, as 'consequential transition' (1999) and 'knowledge propagation' (2003), runs into boundary issues: the expansiveness of that image, which includes individuals maintaining and transforming their social roles as well as creating new tasks and situations in their relationship with the environment ('transition' and 'propagation' respectively), begins to reference living generally as much as it does learning specifically.

That is to say, these three metaphorical perspectives each draw forward specific aspects of the educational exchange: that people can learn and carry perceivable, continuous 'things' that pre-date and transcend themselves; that people learn these shared human 'things' (i.e., knowledge) actively, through social interactions and other environmental exchanges; and that this situated learning relationship changes both the person and their environment. These notions, in concert, provide a balanced image of the basic elements involved in transfer (Marini & Genereux 1995): the subject or activity (e.g., core concepts, processes, orientations and tasks for experiencing and applying such learning), the learner or individual (e.g., their emotions and attitudes, thoughts and beliefs, motivations and identities), and the context or environment (e.g., physical and social setting, norms and expectations, student relationships and teacher leadership). These dynamic elements all feed into a learning experience.

*Point #2 – at the level of descriptive and normative claims:*

*valuing learners' feelings, experiences, dispositions.*

Second, it is important to note that an educational exchange's subjects, learners, and contexts will inform what "good" learning is, practically, in that situation: the types of knowledge that can and should form as personal experiences are distilled into meaningful understandings (a la the  metaphor of knowledge as a "thing" educators pass on) the prior learning contexts that educational leaders can and should recognize as they help students transfer their existing knowledge into current situations (a la the metaphor of knowledge as an "activity" learners engage in); and the ideal person-environment relationship that can and should form as a learner progresses from novice to expert (a la the metaphor of knowledge as a "becoming" that shapes a learner's way of being in the world). Clearly stating these

descriptive notions of the learning process, and normative notions of its full potential, provides educators with a set of guiding values for their practice.

Though situationally distinct in their details, those values should generally reflect some basic truths about the subject-environment-learner relationship: that *knowledge* is embodied by learners, through a process that can be emotionally intense, corporeally demanding, and identity-challenging; that *transfer* of knowledge across diverse situations requires explicit practice at attending to situational patterns, noticing opportunities to use relevant knowledge, and actually applying that knowledge; and that *expertise*—that pinnacle state of learner-subject-environment connection—is ultimately motivated by an individual's personal affiliations with a subject's knowledge-base and communities of practice, making learner dispositions (however those end up being influenced by an educational exchange) a critical determinant of long-term educational outcomes.

***Things we come to "know."*** Over the years and across disciplines, scholars have offered multiple taxonomies for classifying the meaningful understandings that people amass through life experience. Among these, Bloom's learning taxonomy is perhaps the most notable: it began by graduating cognitive-domain learning into the levels of knowing, comprehending, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and synthesizing—and has since been variously revised and expanded to keep pace with modern understandings of cognition (e.g., imaginitive and creative processes beyond synthesis) and the other domains of human learning (e.g., the affective, sensorimotor, and social) that compliment it (Dettmer 2006). Essentially, these taxonomies all harken back to that medieval trilogy of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (discussed in the this chapter's introduction): grammatically defining sensual perceptions, meaningfully relating those perceptions within one's continuing experience, and applying those distillations of experience usefully to one's

incoming perceptions. In modern parlance, these might translate roughly to declarative/procedural knowledge, metacognitive/dispositional learning transfer, and personal/situated expertise. These current understandings of knowledge, transfer, and expertise will be discussed in turn.

Classification schemes for knowledge may vary, being either pared down or subdivided based on particular  theory or research focuses, but tend to be subsumed under these basic categories of knowledge as it has been observed functionally (Haskell 2001): **Declarative knowledge** – information of or about something, which provides analogs for understanding new knowledge, and general frameworks for assimilating that new knowledge; **Procedural knowledge** – how to do something, which provides steps and strategies for accomplishing tasks within specific situations (driving a car, baking a cake, writing an essay); **Strategic knowledge** – conscious self-monitoring, provides  a sense of one's own mental processes (how we learn and remember); and **Conditional knowledge** – when / where / how to apply knowledge appropriately, provides a guiding sense for responding and adjusting to context (explaining effectively to children versus field professionals, dressing well for a casual interview).  Haskell adds to these conventional categories that of **Theoretical knowledge** – a unifying understanding of  phenomena's deep level causal and explanatory relationships, provides a way of perceiving and sense-making that is connected.

All these types of knowledge may further, and alternately, be categorized by the way that individual learners encounter them: either as intuitive and expected within the environment and culture, or as somehow jarring and confusing given the learner's current framework for making sense of the world. David Perkins (1999: in Meyer & Land 2006) calls this individual-based category **Troublesome knowledge** – "knowledge that is 'alien,' or

counterintuitive or even intellectually absurd at face value," providing a stimulus for situated

self-examination and growth. Types of knowledge that learners may have encountered as

troublesome include *Ritual  knowledge*, which is often routine and carries unexamined

meanings which are difficult for individuals to explain readily (e.g., social rituals like

naming, common operations like arithmetic); *Inert knowledge*, which is actively but

uncritically used in specific situations, then left dormant rather than being connected to and

utilized in other areas (e.g., cliché vocabulary); *Conceptually difficult knowledge*, which is

made difficult by a mix of perceptual hurdles for the learner such as their erroneous

impressions of common experience, their well-reasoned but inaccurate expectations, or the

sheer novelty and complexity of an expert's view on a subject; *Alien knowledge*, which

extends from a perspective that conflicts with the learner's, and so appears counter-intuitive;

and *Tacit knowledge*, which individuals are practically and implicitly conscious of, but have

not examined in depth to make those understandings' complexities and distinctions more

orderly and conveyable.

A third way to categorize knowledge, specifically within educational environments,

is by the essential value that it holds within a community of practice, such as a scholarly

discipline: whether that knowledge is an incidental detail, or is more centrally and

profoundly tied to fundamental patterns and relationships for understanding throughout a

field's knowledge-base. This latter type of knowledge, in the typical terminology of

university teachers, is called a **Core concept** – a necessary conceptual building-block for

progressing in one's understanding of a subject, provides some perception-orientating

element that is essential to a community's way of viewing phenomena. Core concepts have to

be understood within a field, but do not necessarily lead to an individual adopting a

qualitatively different view of subject matter—when this is the case (Meyer & Land 2006),

this sub-category is referred to as a **Threshold concept** – distinct because a threshold—if accepted by the learner—fundamentally changes their way of thinking about, perceiving, and interacting with the world in some regard. Thus threshold concepts, across subjects, is likely to be: *Transformative* (once understood, shifts the learner's perception of a subject), probably *Irreversible* (this perspective change, once catalyzed in the individual by a threshold concept, is unlikely to be forgotten or unlearned, except by significant effort),  Integrative (that is, it "exposes the previously hidden interrelatedness of something"), often *Bounded* (it will have terminal borders where it meets thresholds into new conceptual areas), and potentially *Troublesome* (it may appear counterintuitive in its discrete elements, incoherent in its organizing principle for those elements, or alien to one's culture or discourse).

These three functional ways of viewing knowledge (i.e., by alternately highlighting the situated function of knowledge within an individual, the ongoing influence of the individual's environment relationship upon that knowledge relationship, and the potential influence that an alternate knowledge-environment relationship can have on an existing individual-knowledge relationship)offer again a reminder of the personal and situated nature of learning in an educational exchange. Knowledge works within and for individuals, so it must be personalized by those individuals in order to be transferred across situations. And that ongoing knowledge-personalization process occurs through environmental interactions—which, at moments where they most acutely transform that learner's perceptions, are likely to be *emotionally intense*, *experientially complex*, and *identity/inclination challenging*.

When describing functionally how knowledge transfers within learners, these issues of emotion, experience, and inclination continue to play a central role in the nature and efficacy of the process.

***Transfer of things we know.*** Etymologically, 'transfer' means to "carry over."  In regards to an individual's situated learning and personalized knowledge, transfer means seeing similarities across  diverse life experiences so that that knowledge carries over usefully: this makes transfer crucial to all learning, from low-level skills to high-level theorizing. Transfer at its simplest level means seeing a connection or comparison to past learning, e.g., analogies and metaphors: "X is like Y, or reminds me of Z"; next comes applying that learning in a situation, and then in a slightly different environment; beyond that comes applying learning to similar situations, then to quite dissimilar situations, e.g., analogical reasoning: "child-rearing is like animal raising—you train yourself first"; and at its most complex, transfer means creating new concepts, e.g., combining insights and synthesizing experiences into new perceptions of similarity: "If it's not cold enough for gloves, it's not cold enough for shoes."

How "far" transfer of learning can reach is hard to say. There is no standard definition of "task" (the activity where learning is applied) and "domain" (the knowledge area where learning is applied) nor classification scheme for splitting tasks into domains, so the dividing lines between near/far and specific/general, in-domain/cross-domain and cross-domain/cross-task transfer vary among researchers. Yet there *is* a clear distinction between *distance* of transfer, which is the difference between the original learning tasks or contexts and the new transfer tasks or contexts, and the *generality* of transfer, which is the breadth or variety of tasks and contexts across which that original learning is successfully applied (Marini & Genereux 1995). So describing the extent of learning transfer must include both the *distance* and the *generality* of *cross-task* and *cross-context* applications of original learning—and could range from "near, specific, on-dimensional transfer (involving only one task or context only slightly different from original learning)... [to] far, general,

multidimensional transfer (encompassing a wide variety of tasks and contexts very different from original learning)."

Transfer can also occur within and across many categories (Haskell 2001): content-to-content and skill-to-skill (when prior knowledge or procedures are used in learning or doing something new), content-to-skill (when learning about something facilitates doing something) and skill-to-content (when practical experience in an area helps in learning more abstract knowledge from that area), metacognitive strategy (when knowledge about and monitoring one's mind activities supports future thinking and learning), conditional (when knowledge about applying learning appropriately in one context is used to apply learning in another context), theoretical (when understanding deep cause-effect relationships in one area helps make sense of to another area), backward (when existing knowledge is re-viewed and modified in light of similarities to new information), proportional (when patterns are transposed), relational (when the same structure is seen between two things that have no underlying causal relationship), and so on.

These variants are myriad, and are fundamental to many diversely labeled human processes—induction, abstraction, classification, logical inference, isomorphic relation, analogical reasoning, figurative communication, meditation, improvisation, invention—but all levels and categories have to do with that essential learning process of *judging similarity*.

More ecological and transformative views of the transfer process include Tuomi-Grohn, Engestrom, and Young's (2003) notion of "boundary-crossing" types of mental processing, e.g., innovative and creative thinking, which involve a "retooling" of cognition as the individual transports ideas, concepts, and instruments from unrelated domains into current situations. The focus, here, is placed on the individual adjusting to the demands and

differences of "a territory in which we are unfamiliar and, to some significant extent therefore, unqualified."

Similarly, but with a more mutual perspective of the learner-environment relationship, Beach explains transfer through two related processes: the first, essentially a change in the individual's environmental role; the second, that individual's construction of knowledge within that system. During a "consequential transition" (1999), the individual changes developmentally in their relation with one or more social activities, via a change in the individual and/or activity, which is *consequential* when it ultimately alters the individual's biographical perception of self and social perception of their place among others: various iterations of this process include *lateral transition* – the individual moving uni-directionally from one activity into another (e.g., from school to work, from dating to parenting); *collateral transition* – the individual participating in multiple activities somewhat simultaneously (e.g., doing part-time school between shifts at work); *encompassing transition* – the social activity itself changing progressively, and individuals adapting to circumstances (e.g., newcomers entering a community of practice, workers responding to new rules or technologies); *mediational transition* – an educational activity projects or simulateing involvement in an activity not yet fully experienced, and the individual developing through participation in that mediating system (e.g., a classroom mock-trial, vocational education, work-based apprenticeships). Furthermore, individuals generalize from their learning when "propagating" knowledge (2003), which Beach emphasizes in NOT an act of passively transporting, but of actively constructing *associations* (be they continuities and constancies or distinctions and contradictions) among social organizations. This is a creative process within the individual, which may disrupt as well as reinforce the systems of artifacts and activities around them.

That is to say, the pinnacle potential—the farthest possible reach—for transfer of learning occurs through a knowledge-learner relationship wherein a person's ways of thinking are *connected to their ways of being*: where robustly, across diverse situations, the educated individual maintains and develops learned notions, skills, or orientations as a part of their character—seeing them as somehow right, useful, good for self and environment together. This ontological change is an essential part of the educational process, as Meyer and Land's (2006) notion of "threshold concepts" alludes to, by denoting a subject-matter's potential to shift a learner's worldview.

As they describe it, being "in the threshold," as a learner, means experiencing a liminal state of *being*: characterized by emotional and behavioral oscillations, uncertainty about "identity of self and purpose in life." In education, whether academic or professional or commonly in society, such uneasy transitions are often seen as a "rite of passage," i.e., a point where one's state or status transforms: one becomes aware of beginning to "think like" a scientist, writer, physician, teacher, and so on, and consequently feels more connected to and engaged with that social activity system—taking personal ownership of that learned material and of one's opinions about it.

Self-identification with a knowledge community's ways of perceiving and being is a necessary element of deep and lasting learning, and is crucial to the continuity of every scholarly discipline: when learners creatively propagate knowledge, that is the mechanism by which human knowledge continues to exist and develop. Thus, the learner's identity-deep inclination toward "using" a community's knowledge—i.e., relevantly referencing, effectively acting upon, and persistently carrying that learning into diverse life situations—is as important as fundamentally"having" that understanding.

In this way, an ecological and transformational lens on education, which recognizes *transfer as an ability in the learner* (rather than as an event with the subject matter) exposes two distinct and interdependent aspects of transfer (Bereiter 1995): transfer of the Principle – that understanding of a generalizable idea or value, and awareness of its relevance within various life situations; and transfer of the Disposition – that inclination to deal with such situations in an accordingly "reflective and principled" way, and self-control to do so effectively within the situation's complex and pressing immediacy.

As Bereiter explains, *dispositions* are personal characteristics (e.g., persistence, willingness to risk-take) which dispose a person toward doing something, and so "full transfer of a concept or principle is only achieved when it is incorporated so thoroughly into the cognitive system that it becomes like a part of one's personality. … a natural, spontaneous way for the person to think," feel, and act. This applies with equal relevance to the transfer of moral principles, like respect for human life, and scientific principles, like the nature of gravity: without the disposition to act ethically in an emotionally-heated situation, or to seek evidence-based explanations in an unknown situation, moral and scientific principles have no robust means of becoming personal practice—no matter how deeply they are understood as concepts or procedures. This makes principles and their complimentary dispositions both distinctly necessary for successful learning transfer.

What this means is that, in educational practice, a learner's dispositions and knowledge are procedurally intertwined in the act of learning transfer.

Having knowledge- and skill-resources alone gives an individual the ability to demonstrate learning in performance-testing scenarios. But the student's awareness of their learning's relevance, easy access to that learning, and desire to act in opportune moments must *all* be present for transfer—that adaptable, flexible application of learning within a

variety of situations—to take place. Thus, the three basic human requirements for transfer of learning within the learner are, together (Marini & Genereux 1995): content/concept knowledge (including basic facts, core ideas, and schematic relationships among and between facts and ideas), procedure/strategy knowledge (including steps and strategies for performing tasks, and metacognitive practices for evaluating and directing one's own thinking and learning experiences), and appropriate dispositions (including openness to experiences, self-confidence, perseverance, desire to do one's best, and willingness to risk-take).

Fundamentally, this means recognizing that learners' feelings and thoughts work together in applying learning to situated tasks. Feelings are psychological events, like perceptions (Paul Ricoeur: Haskell 2001); they arise from first-order emotional experiences as do perceptions from first-order sensory experiences, providing fundamental input for the substance and direction of present-moment thinking. Efklides' (2006) model of metacognition provides a useful entry-point for understanding, from the standpoint of an educator interested in good thinking habits, how a person's feelings and thoughts connect functionally in the active transfer of learning. Within a situated activity, she explains, an individual's metacognitive experiences act as "the interface between the task and the person," crucially connecting metacognitive knowledge with metacognitive skills. *Metacognitive experiences* (a person's real-time awareness during a cognitive endeavor, including feelings, judgments and projections, and working memory's current in-use knowledge) are a joint product of metacognition and affect, i.e., perceptions about thinking, plus associated pleasant-unpleasant mental states—examples include feelings of familiarity, difficulty, or satisfaction; estimates of effort, or time spent on task; judgments of correct solution, and of learning. In an actual moment of applied learning, an individual's

metacognitive experiences receptively monitor ongoing cognitive responses, their fluency, and their effectiveness—thus informing both what knowledge a person activates to *make sense* of those cognitive activities, and which metacognitive skills a person uses to *control* those activities.

Since a learner's experience consists of awareness, feelings, and projective judgments functioning *together* as they access knowledge and apply skills, that learner's thinking dispositions—i.e., personal desires and inclinations which *orient* their metacognitive awareness, affective responses, and evaluative perceptions—essentially drive the use of intellectual ability. *Dispositions* are "tendencies toward particular patterns of intellectual behavior"—and include such inputs as personal values, attitudes, motivations, and habits of mind (Tishman & Andrade 1996). Dispositions influence the way one attends to the world— what is noted, internally, externally, and relationally as salient, significant, and worth responding to. This in turn determines whether and how one will use, and develop the use of, their abilities. And while good, effective thinking—i.e., intelligence in a learner—is a normative notion that varies among educators, lists of "intelligent dispositions" generally focus around tendencies such as "open-mindedness, reasonableness, curiosity, and metacognitive reflection" (Perkins, Tishman, Ritchhart, Donis & Andrade 2000)—all associated with a person making timely and effective use of their learning in actual situations.

In testing situations, displays of intelligence tend to foreground individuals' abilities—but in everyday life, where opportunities for engaging thoughtfully are not clearly marked or explicitly defined, but rather more subtle and complexly interwoven, intelligent behaviors depend considerably on individuals' dispositions. Shari Tishman (2007) has labelled this gap, between what people are able to do functionally and what they are inclined

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to do realistically, the "disposition effect," which she explains in this way: for a person's abilities to become *dispositional behaviors*—timely and effective uses of learning in actual situations—that person must perceive opportunities for applying their learning, must feel some internal drive to apply that learning, and must have on-hand the practical means to follow through with that intention. These three psychological components, an individual's *sensitivity*, *inclination*, and *ability*, must *all* be present to activate dispositional behaviors. And researchers have found—through, e.g., tests of peoples' sensitivity to situation salience, self-ratings of disposition, and studies of peoples' reasoning bias in evaluating arguments— that one's sensitivity and ability are, in fact, separate factors;  that sensitivity, surprisingly more so than inclination, seems to contribute chiefly to effective use of intellectual ability; and that inclinations toward curiosity and inquisitiveness seem to foretell one's ability to think and act critically in opportune moments for such engagement (Perkins & Tishman 2000).

Such integrated connections between what people notice, what they feel, and how they consequently use and apply their learning in complex daily situations (beyond controlled schooling and testing environments) makes educational attention to learners' thoughts and knowledge, procedures and skills, and experiences and dispositions crucial—as a *whole*—to the environmental facilitation of students' learning transfer: specifically, transfer beyond classroom performance, into real-life, community-situated personal behavior.

The educational emphasis, then, becomes more than students exercising receptive learning *ability* and demonstrating *proficiency*; it is a matter of students building generative learning *dispositions* and pursuing *expertise*.

***Expertise with things we know.*** The normative distinction between aims of proficiency and aims of expertise may be best clarified by the notion of "low road" versus

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"high road" mechanisms for transferring specific skills and knowledge (Perkins & Salomon 1989): the *"Low road"* to transfer involves extensive practice, in a variety of situations, leading to a high-level of mastery and near-automaticity; the *"High road"* to transfer depends on practice which leads beyond mere performance, to the learner's "deliberate mindful abstraction of a principle," either by connecting a current situation to prior experiences with analogous problems and finding a relevant principle, or by projectively anticipating how a current situation might be useful in other circumstances and formulating an appropriate principle. Through repeated cycles of "high road" experience and connection-making, learners may move from the "routine expertise" which restricted and localized knowledge allows, to the "adaptive expertise" which a more extensive knowledge base allows—and which enables more flexible application, adaptive modifications, and creative invention of procedures in response to situational demands (Haskell 2001).

Generally, rote training leads to more routine expertise (and narrow transfer within the area), while knowledge-based deep learning leads to adaptive expertise and creativity (broad transfer extending beyond an area). But achieving that deep learning requires both ample knowledge-fueling experiences (that generative, ecological relationship) and knowledge-building dispositions (that transformation-driving character). An extensive knowledge base in one's long-term memory, and a useful organizing structure for that knowledge, together allow competent problem-solvers—i.e., experts—to perceive patterns and note similarities readily in new situations, and to engage efficiently with unique problems by accessing their supportive base of understanding. But what gets the expert there, to a personal, practical, and principled relationship with their knowledge, is their feelings; what drives an individual to notice and remember, to generalize from and internally

organize experience, in a thematically focused and sustained way, is based in a person's *character*—their tendencies in feeling, perceiving, and acting.

Personal feelings influence approaches to learning: its goals, strategies, and outcomes. Consequently, one's feelings in an educational environment will fundamentally influence the type of learning experience one has in that educational exchange (John Biggs: in Haskell 2001). When one's felt need-or-motivation is merely extrinsic (a means toward an outside end, like a job), when goals and strategies have a limited focus (on the concrete and literal), and when the outcome is effective recall of unconnected details—with no desire to seek or see personal meaning in a task—that is *Surface learning*. When that extrinsic need-or-motive is more social (e.g., achieving and having high grades), leading to more mastery-oriented goals and strategies (e.g., systematic, organized study skills), and so to performance-oriented outcomes (e.g., efficient and organized learning of material, with a desire for immediate end-products such as high grades), that is *Achievement learning*. And when that felt need-or-motivation is actually intrinsic (a felt interest in the subject matter), leading to more ecologically integrated goals and strategies (e.g., to maximize understanding, by getting involved and focusing on the meaning and value of a subject beyond its literal-immediate aspects), and so to more transformative outcomes (e.g., reading widely, discussing and exploring, theorizing and seeing relations to other knowledge, and feeling personally close to the material and attached to one's work), that is *Deep learning*.

If a person does not *care* (i.e., feel *connected* with something deeply enough to channel perceptions and direct personal efforts toward that object, over time and across situations), they will not learn deeply. All acts of "intelligence"—mindful attention, metacognition, reflection, similarity-seeing, principle extraction, generalization, knowledge propagation and expert problem-solving—rely, fundamentally, on the individual's inclination

toward that way of being, in a given circumstance; their "psychological, emotional, and motivational disposition toward deep learning" (Haskell 2001) in that environment.

A personal and emotional connection with a field of practice allows the learner to infuse incoming information with *meaning*, making it personal, practical, principled— *transferable* knowledge. And this meaning arises not from receiving abstract universals directly, though expert monologues or rote recitations, but from experiencing meaningful interactions in specific situations and organizing them into a generalizing framework in one's own mind. In this way, emotion, motivation, and cognitive understanding are always connected in an educational exchange.

### * Point #3 – at the level of practical aims:

### seeing academic and interpersonal environment as indivisible.

Third, it is important to note what this understanding of "good" deep, genuine, useful learning imply regarding ideal educational practices; what an educational exchange should provide to the learner, and what that might look like, where the aim is a learner's ongoing ecological attunement and mindful character.

This ecological and transformative view of teaching for transfer challenges educators to design instructional contexts and tasks which foster learners' internal resources for personalizing knowledge and carrying it beyond the classwork and classroom. Practically, this implies that educators seek and maintain a clear understanding of their students' initial characteristics, as well as the subjective demands of each targeted learning task (Marini & Genereux 1995), so that they can shape the educational space appropriately—and so persuade or encourage students toward learning-centered aims: noticing appropriate transfer situations, drawing readily on their personal resources when such opportunities arise, and feeling motivated to act with purpose in these opportunities.

Marini and Genereux emphasize here that, in teaching of transfer, these elements—awareness, skill, and disposition—are all, always, involved: only the proportions of these, when being combined in the practice of education, are open (perpetually) to principled, situated debates. For example, a learner's general metacognitive awareness of thinking and learning strategies may support their breadth of transfer across tasks and environments, while their content knowledge provides the grist of experience through which expertise gradually develops within specific domains, while their positive dispositions toward mindful engagement in thinking and learning provides the fundamental pulse of attention, reflection, and volition that drive forward their amassing of practical experience and their refining of personalized frameworks for understanding.

Pedagogical variations aside, the general approach to teaching for transfer centers on concrete, differentiated repetition. Research on transfer learning, as discussed prior, has shown that developing a supportive knowledge-base for transfer requires original learning where core concepts are repeatedly reinforced through multiple examples, drawn from various contexts, supported by related concepts and familiar analogs.

Stated simply, teaching that promotes transfer "involves returning again and again to an idea or procedure but on different levels and in different contexts, with apparently 'different' examples" as a means to help learners see their learning within *and* beyond school studies as connected (Haskell 2001). Haskell describes the four-fold value of this reiterative and connective process for the learner: seeing learned concepts as alike, as *same* in essence (i.e., a cognitively integrated relationship), helps to ease an individual's memory load by "chunking" learning into concept-clusters, facilitates memory-retrieval by associating concepts and their related material together, leads to deeper understanding as each concept reinforces the notions of others, and encourages revelations by juxtaposing and comparing

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the unique qualities of each concept together. Thus, environments that set foundations for learning transfer support the economical use of individuals' learning resources and drives as they work toward deeper, more generative learning.

Finally, these transfer-oriented approaches require that educators attend to the complex combination of both experiential and academic realities in an educational environment: that is, to learners' subjective dispositions as well as their subject-matter understandings.

Educators bring nuanced layers of situated emotional cues, relational dynamics, and conceptual presentations into the educational exchange. And these work—jointly—to influence learner's task-focused attentions, efforts, and motivations during a learning experience, as well as their performance-related causal attributions, their changes in self-concept within that domain, their additions to metacognitive knowledge, and ultimately their adjustments in self-regulated learning processes after those educational experiences (Efklides 2006).

Anastasia Efklides has amassed a body of research illustrating numerous channels through which educational environments influence students' metacognitive experiences as they interact with learning tasks: situational factors such as task difficulty (complexity, cognitive demands, structure and environment), instructional mode (task presentation, examples, explanations, practice opportunities), task context (affective tone of instructions, attentional emphasis on task difficulty or interest, relative nature of tasks that precede or follow), affective context (personal mood, self-concept regarding task area, affect cues in task instructions or feedback), and personal characteristics (self-perception and others' perception of self, metacognitive self-understanding, intrinsic states created by current self-task-environment relations).

In this light, the role of an educational environment is relational and organic—more warmly so than  might be implied by curriculum-centric descriptions or quantitatively-focused assessments of teaching:  the work of education entails simultaneously constructing meaningful experiences of disciplinary learning for students *and* nurturing disciplinary notions of intelligent disposition within those students. This means that, in the messy reality below neat disciplinary knowledge frameworks, field-related values and notions and practices are *inextricable* from the individuals and activity structures that embody those understandings in that environment. And that environment—that learning-centered, educationally-structured culture of an academic course—is framed by teachers and filled by students who enter with distinct backgrounds and orientations, and who must  therefore coordinate their values and attitudes, beliefs and experiences, methods and dispositions in service of studying the course's core subject-matter.

This disposition-rich, socially complex view of academic environments reveals educating as less an act of content transmission than of disciplinary *enculturation*.

As an example of what this implies for educational exchanges, Ron Ritchhart and David Perkins have worked toward "enculturating mindfulness" as a disposition by constructing social learning spaces which stimulate and encourage open and creative states of consciousness, so as to gradually cultivate that disposition in learners (2000). Their practical principles for enculturating mindfulness, based on experimental research findings by Ellen J. Langer (e.g., 2000, 2011, Haas & Langer 2014) and others, present a concrete image of "good" thinking dispositions: looking closely and attentively one's environment, noticing ambiguities in situations which highlight connections among phenomena, and exploring alternative realities and non-immediate perspectives within one's world.

The practical strategies that they have found useful for enculturating this disposition (Ritchhart & Perkins 2008), making mindful thinking "visible" in a culturally catching way, consistently describe that educational process in mutual and dialogic terms: teachers and students alike are actively encouraged to externalize their thoughts as a social means of perceiving, responding to, and improving those thoughts; and the learning environment is shaped through teachers' relational patterns and conversational language-use with students, and developed through a professional culture of peer discussion. Observed outcomes from these enculturation-focused approaches have included teacher-and-student group orientation toward learning rather than work within classroom activities, students' augmented awareness of their own thinking strategies and increased belief that their perceptions were valued, and teachers' self-reports that ongoing dialogs enable them to more accurately assess students' understanding.

That is, the conceptual turn of viewing educational practice as disciplinary/dispositional enculturation, through learning-centered relationships, focused on interpersonal knowledge propagation leads to practices which explicitly value and actively emphasize a mutual sense of connection, genuineness, and purpose among learning students and teachers in the work of education. Stated more plainly: viewing educational exchanges' aims, processes, and outcomes as simultaneously relational and academic—as research suggests is accurate—promotes more dialogic frameworks within educational environments.

Tishman, Jay, and Perkins (1993) play out a hypothetical scenario exemplifying how this turn toward cultivating dispositions (here, to being planful and strategic) can shift a teacher's internal focus framework toward educational dialog:

> [K]nowing that abilities alone are not enough, you also want to develop
>
> students' sensitivity to planful and strategic thinking occasions: … You might

begin to cultivate such sensitivities by modeling them yourself: "As I was

working on such and such a project," you might say aloud to the class…

Because you recognize that sensitivity develops through frequent stimulation,

you aim to keep the idea of planfulness visually alive in the classroom. …

Finally, you foster students' inclination toward planful and strategic thinking

by explicitly valuing such behaviors in the classroom, that is, by expecting

and rewarding,when appropriate, the making of plans and the use of thinking

strategies. (Tishman, Jay, and Perkins 1993, p.148)

That is, teaching to foster others' dispositions requires an educator's awareness, not only of

their  objective subject-matter knowledge, but of their perceivable *embodiment* of that

subject-matter, and of student's socially mediated classroom *experiences* with that subject-

matter, and of the whole group's value-laden *manner of relating* to one another's emerging

personalizations of that subject-matter.

Complimentary to that internal expansion of professional self-awareness, James

Barber (2012) exemplifies how this turn toward ecological, transfomative educational aims

can shift a teacher's framework for professionally accessing student learning again toward

moments of dialog. In his Grounded Theory analysis of interviews with college students,

looking for signs of their integration of subject-matter learning beyond traditional academic

and disciplinary boundaries (i.e., seeing continuities among multiple environments,

experiences, and identity roles through which learning is intended to transfer), three main

categories of integration emerged: connecting, applying, and synthesizing learning. The most

basic, seeing a connection between distinctive ideas or skills, was signaled by student

language such as 'compare' 'contrast' 'connect' 'relate' 'analogy' 'is like'. The next level,

actively applying  knowledge or skills from one context usefully in another, was commonly

signaled by student language such as 'apply' 'use' 'transfer'. Integration of learning at its

pinnacle, as synthesizing new knowledge or understanding from one's available information,

experiences, or skills, was linked to student language such as 'incorporate' 'adapt' 'interpret'

'collaborate' 'put together' 'bounce ideas off one another'.

Notice that observable learning synthesis, the most cognitively complex category of

integration, becomes distinctly *dialogic*: it observably transcends individual continuity-

finding or knowledge-using, and becomes a relational process of using others' perspectives

and experiences to augment one's own. Two examples within Barber's study illustrate how

both individual-internal and cooperative-conversational acts of learning synthesis are fueled

by ecological relationships:

> [Internal – Colin describes processing different opinions he encounters in
>
> classes] "I take them all in and chew on them and then go to through the
>
> digestive process, mentally check it against what I think or thought and how I
>
> kind of add this to my ideas and subtract some of the stuff and then combine
>
> it all. Kind of getting what I feel is the best of everything."
>
> [Conversational – Tom describes how discussion can lead to new
>
> understanding] "…in that act of contributing, it becomes a much more active
>
> engagement, at least for me, when I'm having to just talk about what I think
>
> about something, and then as I'm talking the thought sort of folds out on itself
>
> and it leads somewhere and it doesn't lead somewhere unless somebody else
>
> picks it up and takes it somewhere. It works really well to get into
>
> understanding and to go about it that way." (Barber 2012, p.605)

Whether privately or observably, students' dialogic relations with their educational

environment—its activity structures, relational atmosphere, and concrete social exchanges—

demonstrably contribute to personal integration disciplinary knowledge, skills, and dispositions at its highest level. Within an ecological an transformative framework, this realization factors into teachers' awareness of both the educational frameworks there are personally-professionally constructing, and the learning experiences that students are creating interpersonally within those frameworks.

Circumscribing this learning-centered relationship, Beach (1999) describes how a turn toward social-relational views of learning shifts the educational role of schools in society as well in a dialogic direction: from being socially privileged or isolated knowledge dispensaries to being socially integrated contributors and receivers of ecological changes; one of society's *many* locuses of transition:

> Consequential transition is the conscious reflective struggle to reconstruct knowledge, skills, and identity in ways that are consequential to the individual becoming someone or something new, and in ways that contribute to the creation and metamorphosis of social activity and, ultimately, society. … [This sanctions] a broader educational focus on students' participation across schools, families, workplaces, and communities … [as well as] educational practices that enact change in the educational activities themselves and, thus, developmental changes in the coupling of students with activities that support learning. … It may also involve local curricula affording student experiences in creating new systems of artifacts for particular mathematical, historical, literary, or scientific purposes: producing culture in addition to mastering that which already exists. … Clearly, consequential transition happens without the intervention of teachers or schools. It happens at work and in our homes and communities. It also

happens between school and these institutions. Therefore, schools need not

struggle to be society's sole source of consequential transitions. (Beach 1999,

pp.130-131)

When the notion of subject-matter knowledge evolves from being fixed or contained within

a discipline to being dynamic and shared within society, this compels a much more

integrated approach knowing, and thereby learning, thereby educating, and thereby academic

structuring itself: the central academic assets of a school, rather than its catalog of artifacts

and tools, become its community of participants and their dialogs; rather than the

representations of wisdom established from past experience, the personalizations of wisdom

being uniquely conceived within current human exchanges.

Herein lies the subtle and crucial importance of metaphors like knowledge

"propagation" and descriptions like dispositional "enculturation" in explaining educational

aims and means: they dissolve the illusory distinctions between knowers and knowledge,

experiences and conceptions, social relations and educational purposes; by their integrated,

mutual, and dynamic nature, these conceptions produce a more *realistic* image of human

scholarship as an evolving and situated understanding of anthropocentric experiences and

values, and so create *validated* space for educators to expand beyond didactically proffering

a static subject-matter for students to acquire, and instead dialogically persuading fellow

learners to form their own experience-based understandings of something mutually valued—

through a combination of felt orientations, meaningful notions, and useful processes.

  *\* Point #4 – implications for practice:*

   *extending from instructive monolog to persuasive dialog.*

So: educationally valuing a student's transfer of academic learning across life situations, and

therefore regarding personal dispositions as crucial to developing *useful* subject-matter

understandings, implies the pedagogical aim of personal transformation by way of situated participation—by engaging in a learning-centered environment, and taking part in constructing its culture. Thus the aim of "enculturating" learners, by creating with them educational microcosms of larger learning disciplines, turns the classroom into a rhetorical environment: one where leading the group educationally requires not just *having* subject-matter expertise, but *being* socially accessible as a person, rationally acceptable as a narrative, and persuasively relevant as a leader of action in that learning-centered community.

Accordingly, within transformational and ecological views of educational practice, teaching suggestions commonly proffered by educational scholars carry a clear rhetorical emphasis. For example, in discussions of "threshold concepts" and "troublesome knowledge" (Land, Cousin, Meyer & Davies 2006), they recognize the importance of assessing rhetorical situation and audience: i.e., that crucial to student learning is the teacher being aware of a discipline's core insights, but also of how their disciplinary perspectives and students' perspectives interact; tolerating those students' uncertainties, learning-recursiveness, and thought-variation; and sensing students' engagement, understanding, and self-reconstitution as the educational exchange progresses by moments and by months.

Scholars also recognize the academic impact of educator ethos: i.e., that a teacher's practical means of interacting and guiding educational exchanges in a course environment functionally define the ultimate moral ends—the evident disciplinary values—promoted by a course (Dottin 2009); that a teacher's style of observational reasoning roughly coheres with their professional actions in addressing the needs of learners (Johnson & Reiman 2007); and that, through such relations, a teacher's own characteristic dispositions influence the larger ethos—the values and behaviors—of a learning environment (Katz & Raths 1985), which

consequently informs students' experience of and receptivity to disciplinary notions, processes, and orientations.

On this last point, Katz and Raths emphasize that in educational practice, the learning environment is defined by the sum of all interactions among learners and educators: there is no dividing between the official and the off-hand, the intended and unintended; rather, the educational atmosphere emerges organically from "the relationships of participants, the content of their formal and instructional interactions, and their informal noninstructional interactions" altogether as a cultural whole. They also note that, as educational exchanges cannot be neatly separated into the academic and personal, neither can teachers' roles be: a teacher's dispositions are not simply professional intentions-become-actions; rather, teachers' characteristic attitudes as individuals predispose them toward certain actions, which their characteristic moods will shape and color  as they engage with their students in the classroom. Johnson and Reiman's (2007) research bears out this point by showing, for example, how congruent beginning teachers' personal styles of reasoning can be with their patterns of professional classroom behavior.

Finally, transfer- and disposition-oriented educational scholars recognize that the elements of subjective feeling, reasoning, and motivation are entwined in educational exchanges and are mutually supportive (or undermining) in learning outcomes.

One concise example of this is Robert M. Gagné's work (see review: Driscoll 2000), which inclusively taxonomizes learning outcomes into five essential types spanning the affective, cognitive, and psychomotor domains, each with associated critical learning conditions. These conditions, as presented by Gagné, are acutely relational, persuasive, and values-oriented, once again evoking a personal, practical, principled image of education's aims and processes. In the cognitive domain, individuals learn verbal information and

intellectual skills: essentially memorizing the sign systems one shares with one's communities, and developing a capacity to sort out experiences meaningfully into linked classes of phenomena and to respond to those situations purposefully using combinations of rules. In the affective and motivational domain, individuals learn cognitive strategies and attitudes: figuring out ways to guide their own learning, feeling, thinking, and acting, and forming values-oriented affective states which influence one's choice of personal actions in particular situations. In the psychomotor domain, individuals learn motor skills: refining the precision, fluency, and timeliness of physical acts' performances.

Conditions required for such learning (Driscoll 2000) include: (for cognitive aspects of learning) educators drawing attention to distinctive features, providing meaningful contexts for encoding, providing cues for effective recall and generalization, stimulating that recall and providing spaces for that generalization in practice; (for affective and motivational aspects of learning) educators describing and modeling situations and strategies, establishing expectations for learners, fostering learner identity with admired human models, and providing guiding feedback about learners' practices; and (for psychomotor aspects of learning) educators providing space for repeated practice, giving guidance and cues during routines, sharing immediate feedback on performance, and encouraging mental practice between performances.

Again, these conditions for facilitating learning (shaping relational space, guiding others' attentions and experiences, and intentionally promoting valued courses of thought, feeling, and behavior) are acutely relational, persuasive, and values-oriented. Gagné's image of education is, in line with many other scholars' observational summaries, a profoundly rhetorical one: pointing toward the personal, situated, and dialogic nature of educational work.

**The Take-Away:**

**Facilitating Learning and Transfer in Academia is Personal, Situated Work.**

In summary: progressive research on learning has led to a common understanding, shared by both experience- and transfer-focused camps (Barber 2012), that at the center of learning processes is the ongoing interaction between individual and context. That cumulative experience shapes an individual's perceptions, their interpretations and expectations, in the moment. And over time, those most emotionally resonant exchanges influence an individual's sense of self-in-environment more robustly, arising across contexts as a familiar pattern for making sense of new situations. This synchrony is reflected in current metaphors for learning as an "ecological" and "transformative" occurrence, and consequently in current approaches to education, which recognize the operational link between personal-situational realities and objective-generalizable ideals of schooling: from the learner-environment relationships among students and educators, through the learner-knowledge interactions that occur within those relationships, toward the academic outcomes of knowledge personalization and development.

This attention to deep learning and transfer (as individual and situated at the micro-level), through propagation of knowledge and dispositional enculturation (as interpersonal and systemic at the macro-level), moves conceptual images of school practice—at its ideal best, as healthy, effective, and sustainable—in the direction of holistic integration: where mind and body, emotion and reason, person and environment/society are treated as organically coherent. And within this complex image of educational reality, teaching practice looks less and less like a monolithic tower shedding light into darkness; more and

more like an approachable face sharing reasonable understandings in a persuasive manner. That is, less a didactic and more a rhetorical act.

## Warranting the Educational Aim of Deep Learning & Disposition Transfer

**An integrated human reality warrants an integrated approach to education**

These more personally and environmentally integrative conceptions of human learning and connection, of knowledge carry-over and use, did not begin in the fields of educational scholarship, but branched up into educational frameworks and terminologies from out of more fundamental discoveries in other fields. In arguing the validity of these theories, it is important to note explicitly that they are not philosophically or metaphorically based rational inferences; they are knowledge frameworks based on concretely observable realities about how humans interact with their environments, and robustly evident patterns in the relationships among individuals' dynamic emotional states, continuous motivating purposes, and the psychological processes that individuals engage in to maintain their bodies and minds—through those moments and toward those ideals.

Through these veins of advancing research, old dual-mode conceptions of the mind having distinct higher and lower areas of function, clean lines between the world of sensory experience and abstract imagination, are now increasingly viewed as inaccurate (Barsalou 2008; 2010). The basic acknowledgment that  brain/mind function is unified, as a physical and psychological nexus (Damasio & Damasio 2006), has led to a renewed appreciation for the emotional foundations and motivated orientations of human cognition. And acknowledging that body/mind function is likewise indivisible, in its cycles of bottom-up and top-down feedback and response between (internal or external) environmental stimuli

and mind-mediated attempts to maintain balance (Panksepp 2015; Fotopoulou, Conway, Tyrer, Birchall, Griffiths & Solms 2008), has led to increased attention to the social and storied nature of personal experience and sense-making.

These foundations will be reviewed here only cursorily, and quite pointedly, as a means of illustrating how fundamental biological realities and psychological characteristics in human beings—specifically our embodied consciousness and emotion-directed learning, our self-sustaining narratives and perceptual biases, our social mind-perceptions and situated self-definitions, our efficient habits and responsive attentions—validate the central role of biographical experience, subjective emotions, and situated motivations in all levels of cognitive activity, thereby learning, and ultimately thereby education. The ecological and transformative view of educational aims transcends the status of a metaphor or philosophy, in light of such research; it is an accurate and useful description of what functional human learning looks like, and grist for creating an ideal image of what healthy educational ends and means might look like: environmentally informed self-awareness, contextually responsive self-monitoring, and socially situated self-realization.

The following sections will look in turn at the four scientific research areas mentioned above, and conclude with some basic connections between these emergent understandings and a few longstanding theoretical/pragmatic claims about the work of education.

### Point #1: Environment, Body, Mind—as a continuum.

The first point emphasized about learning in recent educational scholarship, above, is that it is not a mechanistic process (acquiring knowledge-objects and transporting them from task to task) but an organic process  (changing one's relationship with an environment and sustaining/transforming that change across environments). This experience-grounded,

environment-situated vision of personal learning and transfer reflects some root understandings within neuropsychology about the embodied nature of individual awareness: from its foundations of somatosensory consciousness to its rafters of abstract sense-making frameworks, which interpret and contextualize that experience in relation to the learner's ongoing life.

Human awareness is corporeally grounded, constantly influenced by and influencing the body, and these cycles of brain-body interaction clearly underscore the importance of one's physical, emotional, and mental states to each other. Although the body is not always at the forefront of one's conscious awareness, research shows that the body, in most all its aspects, is continuously represented in the brain, faithfully and currently, at a level below conscious awareness—the "body loop"—and also, projectively and preemptively, in an "as-if body loop," where the brain's map simulates body states not yet present in us (Damasio & Damasio 2006).

This as-if body loop turns emotions to perceptions that we literally feel in our flesh (e.g., Krossa, Bermana, Mischelb, Smith & Wager 2011) – but because the original of those perceived feelings is *internal* (not, e.g., a beautiful painting, but the *body state* that results) they can be acted on and modified: when emotionally reacting to an external object, a person can change their body state (posture, breathing, relaxing muscles), so alter the signals transmitted from it, and so change their thoughts about that object, while the object itself remains in tact. This dynamic body representation is the basis of our personal consciousness (our awareness of self) and also our understanding of others (where we use these representations to simulate equivalent states in others).

When our brains generate neural patterns about sensed objects, about changes that those objects cause in our internal states, and then a second-order account relating those two

patterns together, this establishes our *core consiousness*: a subjective relationship between

organism and object. This simple and stably-operating biological phenomenon does not

require memory, reasoning, or language (e.g., "this ground beneath me gives my feet a cool

and wet sensation"). When this perceived relationship extends beyond the here-and-now into

our past and anticipated future (e.g., "my childhood injury on wet ground, my present fear of

it, my future need for aversion therapy regarding it"), this becomes our *extended*

*consciousness* – a complex biological phenomenon that evolves over a lifetime, is layered

across levels of information, dependent on memory and enhanced by language (Damasio &

Meyer 2009).

At the basic level of core consciousness, our mind requires some low-level attention

(i.e., wakefulness) to function normally; this basic consciousness, in turn, underlies all the

more advanced processes that one undertakes: a person's higher-level focus, working

memory and extended memory formation, language and communication, and "intelligent

manipulations of images (e.g., planning, problem-solving, and creativity)" (Damasio &

Meyer 2009). The basic sense of self that emerges in core consciousness, *core self*, is

transient: it is recreated each time we interact with an object. It is through extended

consciousness that the more traditional notion of self, the *autobiographical self*, emerges as

a "relatively stable collection of unique facts that characterize a person" (Damasio & Meyer

2009): conscious memories acquired from past situations, shaped into a more enduring sense

of that central self (an identity and personhood, persisting over time).

*As it relates to learning and education*, what this basic reality of situated

consciousness and interdependent mind/body function means is this: fundamentally and

intrinsically, we as people are defined through our relationships with our environments, and

the content we learn (e.g., emotional responses and associations, perceptual patterns and

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connections, valuative interpretations and frameworks) is integrated into that ongoing sense

of self, with its unique internal canon of experiential memories and connective meanings. So

there is no such thing as objective knowledge: no such thing as an idea perceived except

through the tinted lens of a self being sensed and projected, no such thing a mental

understanding formed except up through the roots of somatosensory stimulation and

personal response. In order for individuals to form meaningful and practicable

understandings of anything, that knowledge must be *personalized*.

### *Point #2: Emotions, Motivations, Thoughts—as a search for balance.*

The second point emphasized about learning, then, extends from this first: that the

emergence of our learning—from our initially tenuous and disorganized perceptions

gradually toward more experience-informed and application-organized understandings of a

situation—is bound in a personal narrative; a story that distills lessons and defines progress,

making memories of success practically useful and histories of mistakes educationally

valuable in the long-run of our biography. This means that our emotions (which direct our

interests and attentions), motivations (which channel our efforts and intentions), and

thoughts (which catalyze our actions and reflective sense-making) all work together in our

story of development, along our path toward expertise. No one learns deeply or lastingly for

the abstract sake of perfecting their rational intellect; we learn *toward* a perceived ideal

much more holistic and human than that: of feeling stable, interacting functionally, and

belonging purposefully in our environment. This makes individuals' attitudes, goals, and

dispositions essential to their personalized understandings and use of the knowledge they

encounter in learning environments.

This values-laden, aspiration-driven, and aesthetically storied conception of people's

educational trajectories reflects current scientific research regarding the emotional basis of

our higher cognition, the deep psychological drive to achieve and maintain functional environmental relationships, and the practical ways that humans can both protectively distort and productively refine those environmental perceptions.

An individual's basic emotions underlie even there most advanced psychological processes: cross-species research in affective neuroscience is yielding an ever-greater understanding how the human brain/mind (like that of other animals) builds on primary emotional responses (SEEKING, RAGE, FEAR, LUST, CARE, PANIC/GRIEF and PLAY) that in turn support secondary processes of learning and memory, and so too tertiary processes like conscious thinking and rumination (Panksepp 2012). Essentially, all of our brain/mind processes are synthetically integrated in primal emotional networks, within which individuals can develop their top-down regulatory controls (e.g., conditioned responses, cognitive regulation) as a mediator for their inherent-bottom up evolutionary controls (e.g., emotional learning and development, affective influences on ruminations and thoughts). It is that *practical wisdom* – gaining awareness and experience at controlling one's synthetic bodily and mental functions – which, Panksepp asserts, represents the most integrated and healthy natural state a human can achieve within their intrinsic machinery.

In seeking understanding of and coherence with one's environment—an essential attribute not just for immediate physical survival but for ongoing mental balance—humans form and  pursue ideal narratives (whether intentionally or subconsciously). These personal stories of normalcy and social integration are functionally important at the basic level of coping with and sustaining one's willful existence: for example, patients' emotional breakdowns have provided neuropsychological evidence that persistent denials of impairment (anosognosia) are not a sign emotional disability, but are in fact a symptom of the mind protecting itself from potential emotional trauma (Turnbull, Jones & Reed-Screen

2002). Related to this, studies of individuals' *confabulations (*spontaneous false-memory

creations) show that where emotional regulation fails, creating ideal-oriented narratives—in

the form of positive and pleasing memory distortions—help individuals to cope in mind and

body: among amnesiacs' confabulations, more depressed patients exhibit more positive

content creation, with distortions that cater to their desire for personal functionality and

support their emotional balance (Fotopoulou, Solms, Turnbull, Conway, Tyrer, et al. 2004,

2007, 2008).

These more extreme cases of biological trauma and psychological management offer

an exaggerated display of how normal minds more subtly—but as pervasively—distort

everyday attention, interpretation, and memory for the emotional and practical benefits of an

enhanced self-image. For example, people in normal populations dependably exhibit the

tendency to seek positive images of themselves and their environments (Mezulis, Abramson,

Hyde & Hankin 2004), to be overly conservative or confident when making observation-

based predictions about self and environment (Hilbert 2012), to make up stories that explain

decisions retroactively—regardless whether they have *actually* made the decisions being

attributed to them (Wilson & Bar-Anan 2008)—and to steadfastly resist perceiving these

biases in themselves, regardless their level of cognitive ability and awareness of bias in

others (West, Meserve & Stanovich 2012).

Such acts of repression, suppression, and intentional or complete forgetting can

interfere with individuals attaining fuller self-knowledge and environmental awareness

(Wilson & Dunn 2004). Yet, at the more fundamental level of self-*support* and

environmental *survival* that enables that intellectual growth, individuals are using these

sense-making processes to minimize the emotional-physical health impact of events,

especially negative ones (Wilson & Gilbert 2003). For example, our distorting biases and

resolving explanations help us to react less emotionally and attentively to minor events as they recur, thus making available greater attention and emotion during unpredictable or hard-to-identify events (Wilson & Gilbert 2008) where speed and accuracy may be more vitally important; they help to attenuate the experience of suffering, which is physical as well as emotional (Kross, Berman, Mischel, Smith & Wager 2011); and they facilitate fuller and faster recovery from personal stresses—as in the placebo's top-down capacity to psychologically regulate bottom-up pain experiences in the body (Meissner, Bingel, Colloca, Wager, Watson & Flaten 2011).

These naturally occurring biases and distortions are always involved as individuals interpret the present and forecast the future. Such psychological firewalls in our perception are, in a real sense, vitally important; they reflect, and serve, a basic human desire for emotional-physical stability that precedes (evolutionarily) and underlies (functionally) all advanced philosophical-spiritual aims of personal growth and development. These subjective bends and blind-spots can interfere with the objective accuracy of individuals' understandings, but fundamentally keep that individual alive and functioning while their understandings grow. Furthermore, a person's *expectancies* – their sustaining beliefs about the future – shape their affect and emotions, trigger their interest and memory, and inform their adaptive behaviors within an environment (Atlas & Wager 2013). That is to say, internal preparations for imminent environmental realities, based on associated past experiences, motivate and orient individuals' learning.

Researchers have found that they can influence these internal responses to environment, in ways that predictably and dependably increase an individual's awareness and decrease their stress, by priming them to focus attention away from future worries and toward present experiences. For example, by shifting attention from expectation of pain

(e.g., through providing cues that signal painful heat) to somatic experience in the body (e.g., through eliciting responses that discriminate among sensations of heat), an individual can reduce their pain expectancies and promote pain relief (Johnson, Atlas, & Wager 2012). By shifting an individual's coping efforts from making affective forecasts (and thus forming negative expectations about one's future states) to raising meta-awareness of current emotional-motivational-physical states (and thus priming personal regulatory strategies), they can more successfully quell anticipatory emotions and adjust perceptions (Denny, Ochsner, Weber & Wager 2014). Although environmental stresses may undermine an individual's deliberate forms of emotional regulation (e.g., an electric shock can impair individuals' learned fear-reduction strategies: Raio, Orederu, Palazzolo, Shurick & Phelps 2013), still individuals can develop such attitudes and habits more robustly as they put in more time and effortful practice.

At a basic level, such emotional awareness and regulation has been directly associated with maintaining physical and mental health: for example, *alexithymia* – an individual's difficulty expressing emotion – has been linked with emotion-regulation difficulties and consequently with health issues (Dubey, Pandey & Mishra 2010). At a more advanced level, individuals show evidence that they are incipiently aware of their lack of conscious self-knowledge – and can work to increase that awareness: for example, by introspection, seeing through others' eyes, inferring one's unconscious from one's own behaviors, etc. (Wilson & Bar-Anan 2008).

***As it relates to learning and education***, what these fundamental observations about human beings' emotion-primed cognition, psychologically-regulated affect, perception-changing forecasts and self-maintaining narratives is this: we as people are emotionally motivated to learn. Our emotions compile multiple body responses into unified signals about

the importance and value of stimuli that we encounter (Nelson, Lau & Jarcho 2014), not only facilitating our orchestrated responses to environments but also facilitating our *learning* in those environments by enhancing senses, homing attention, and stimulating memory-formation in the direction of that we value.

At a primal intuitive level, we emotionally value and are motivated to learn toward that which supports our survival—that innate "motivational triad" of pleasure seeking, pain avoidance, and energy conservation (Lisle & Goldhamer 2003). At more advanced levels of experiential learning, these emotional values and motives become much more subtle and complex—involved in the discovery and actualization of one's true self (Ruf 2009); our unique personal nature, situated within a more common "specieshood," extending from that basic animal nature (Maslow 1968). But importantly, there is no clean dividing line between that animal base and that individual personhood: our emotional values are intimately entwined with the acts of cognition that they motivate.

Physically, this connection is visible: our brain's evolutionary structure (Panksepp 2012) and functional behavior (Phelps 2006) show the supportive interplay in neural networks between conscious executive functions and automatic social-environmental responses. And in language-use, likewise, this connection is evident: our mind's metaphorical means of sense-making, building abstract concepts up from concrete experiences (Lakoff & Johnson 1980), and narrative means of biographical learning, distilling and weaving moments of experience into emotion- and purpose-rich frameworks for perceiving self-world relationships (Bamberg 2011), show how intimately a human's deep emotions, values and motives interweave with their highest-level attentions, interpretations, and identities.

That is to say, there is no way of educating an individual's rational cognition without directly involving their emotions and motivations in that educational change; such subjective change (in ideas and meanings, in manners and habits, in attitudes and character) is personal, experience-grounded, and values-saturated. To educate an individual, thus, requires not merely conveying information, but persuading forth emotions; not merely invoking standard forms to be learned, but evoking the learner's connection to the human values within those forms:

> We speak then of a self, a kind of intrinsic nature which is very subtle, which is not necessarily conscious, which has to be sought for, … The job of the psychotherapist (or the teacher) is to help a person find out what's already in him rather than to reinforce him or shape or teach him into a prearranged form, which someone else has decided upon in advance ... the job of any helper, and furthermore the first job of each of us for ourselves, is to uncover and discover what we ourselves are. … This involves self-discovery, self-acceptance, and self-making; discoveries about both one's commonness and one's uniqueness (Maslow 1968, pp. 688-689)

Having other well-experienced humans to relate to and interact with is crucial in a person's education because those individuals—having personalized knowledge for themselves—are capable of recognizing stages in that learning process, intuiting what kinds of support and guidance might help a fellow learner progress through their current stage, and so facilitate their *analogous personalization* of that knowledge.

*Point #3: Individual, Social, Universal Self-Awareness—as a disposition for connection.*

The third point being emphasized about learning, consequently, relates to one essential way that  human learners develop this personal stability, awareness, and control in their environments: through social exchanges. Our minds and bodies are geared to synchronize with others through their observable expressions and behaviors, to infer their inner states and intentions, and to expand our own understandings through that imagining of their experience. Thus, people are environments for each others' learning, stimulating internal changes through interpersonal connections: this is a basic educational reality, supported by ongoing research in the field of social psychology regarding theory of mind, social decision-making, and self-actualization.

Part of a human's innate machinery is the ability to perceive others' mental states. Two specific abilities, seemingly unique to humans (or at least uniquely pronounced in our behaviors), are the ability to form a representational *Theory of Mind* – distinguishing how another person may perceive the world from how the world actually is or appears in our own eyes, and the ability to perceive *triadic relationships* – recognizing the simultaneous complex connection between self, another, and a mutually perceived object (Saxe 2006). Together, these allow individuals to imagine others' subjectively distinct ways of interpreting the environment (e.g., "I know that you are thinking about that food, and doing so with your own personal motives and beliefs and tastes"), and to be constantly aware of those different minds and shared objects relating together (e.g., "You are trying to show Me where the Food is; You plus Me collaboratively relating to This,"). Both the emotional and cognitive sides of this innate social machinery (i.e., feeling and reasoning about others' mental states) are crucial to a person's function in human environments: neuropsychological studies suggest that deficits in 'emotional empathy' are associated with autism, and deficits in 'cognitive empathy' (that Theory of Mind) are associated with psychopathy and antisocial behavior.

These specialized social abilities are evident in human actions from an early age: infants attend to human faces, toddlers understand goal-directed actions, and children by about age 5 can develop a representational theory of mind – each ability corresponding to specific areas of the human brain (here, the EBA, pSTS, and TPJ, respectively).

Having this specialized perceptual hardware influences the natural way people are inclined to feel and think when relating with their environments. For example (Waytz, Gray, Epley & Wegner 2010), individuals will seek to perceive minds in other entities, their intentional agency and affective experience, whether or not there is a mind to be perceived (e.g., a machine that is uncooperative, an angry storm). Such social dispositions in thinking and feeling shape our natural processes in experiential learning. For example, when a person perceives their own mind in a moral context (e.g., an act of charity, an act of violence), it can compel them to see others' minds as well, since contemplating a moral event requires socially imagining a moral agent who *does* and a patient who *feels*. Likewise, these social dispositions influence our motives an interests in learning. For example, when perceiving a common need or situation, individuals are highly attuned at inferring others' inner states via verbal, facial, gestural, and other cues (Echterhoff, Higgins & Levine 2009). Children develop this ability quickly in their formative environments to infer their caretakers' beliefs ("this tastes good"), feelings ("this works well"), and attitudes ("that is dangerous"), and demonstrably understand such statements through a host of non-verbal cues before they ever become linguistically proficient.

Such social dispositions in human attention and learning stay strong in individuals not just in childhood development, but throughout life. For example, in adult decision-making, emotional information like facial expressions and social factors like perceived moral character clearly factor into human responses: after seeing angry facial expressions,

consumers will pour less, consume less, rate less favorably, and price lower the drinks they are assessing, while happy faces have the opposite effect; in games of trust, trustees will form a sense of partners' characters, based on their unrelated interactions with other individuals, that influence the trustees' subsequent decisions when partnered with them (Phelps & Sokol-Hessner 2012).

While these social influences on personal decision-making may be somewhat instinctive and unconscious, it is also clear that individuals can apply their social-emotional attention purposely. For example, individuals will use others' environments and actions to draw inferences about their underlying mental states, and so intuit those agents' beliefs and goals (Baker, Saxe, & Tenenbaum 2009). Exercising perception and reason about others' thoughts, beliefs, and intentions has been shown to promote individuals' development of advanced human traits such as acceptance, empathy, and open-mindedness. For example, internally, individuals showing higher measures of social-emotional brain activity during reflection tended to blame agents less for accidental harms to others (Young & Saxe 2009). Additionally, environmental factors can both actively hinder and actively support this personal development of interpersonal awareness and connection. For example, while social distance and group boundaries can dampen individuals' empathetic responses and motivation to alleviate others' suffering, interventions like role-playing, perspective-taking, and intergroup contact having been shown to facilitate increases in empathy, positive attitudes, and willingness to help outgroup members (Cikara, Bruneau, & Saxe 2011).

These deep-set social foundations in people's thoughts and feelings prove elemental, not just to daily problem-solving, but to the most advanced stages of individual growth and development, i.e., self-actualization. *Self-actualization*, or the realization and expression of one's true unique human nature (Maslow 1968/71/87: in Rathunde 2001), is *not* a narrowly

self-focused process but an interpersonal one of contextualization and connection; of discovering one's most healthy and productive way of being, as a human, who naturally seeks belonging and purpose with and for other humans. In fact, Maslow (1987: in Rathunde 2001) describes self-actualizing people as those who are resolving the unhealthy and impeding dichotomy between self and social surroundings. To give more operational detail, self-actualization is essentially a high level of emotional development (Ruf 2009) that entails such characteristics as acceptance (including self-awareness, empathy toward others, efficient perception of reality), autonomy (reflective judgment, resistance to enculturation, responsibility), and immediacy (sponteneity, freshness of appreciation, a philosophical sense of humor and authenticity).

These personal characteristics, as described, clearly incorporate together self and social sense—including emotional and rational facets of that sense—in relating at peak potential, responsively and sustainably, as an individual with the world. And the level of development that an individual has reached can be gauged, along these lines, by their practical ability to emotionally manage, cognitively cohere, and motivationally sustain their ongoing pursuit of self-situating social purpose (Ruf 2009): constructing ideals, based on values that incorporate both the self and larger sustaining environment;  pursuing those ideals in a personalized and dependable ways; and accepting a concrete reality that is distinct from those creative ideals, while still maintaining both a sense of inner peace and outward devotion to service. Research into areas such as personal authenticity (Goldman & Kernis 2002) and individual / social needs fulfillment (Tay & Diener 2011) show a relation between this sustaining truth-to-self—as well as the perception of both one's own and one's community's needs being met—to healthy psychological function and positive subjective well-being, respectively.

*As it relates to learning and education,* what these basic observations about the deeply social nature of human motivation and learning, feeling and thinking, growing and self-actualizing underscore is this: academic education, at all levels, is a socially mediated learning process—one where teachers and students, through establishing goal-directed community frameworks and therein coordinating their interpersonal efforts, embody and experience together the orientations, notions, and processes of an agreed-upon academic discipline.

The developmental process toward self-actualization, i.e., an individual negotiating their way through a series of developmental crises and resolving these in a personally coherent manner (Ruf 2009), is essentially what an educational environment is *designed* to facilitate: an educative growing, learning process that effects both an individual's self-image and social view; that refines the social perceptions and feelings which inform and direct those individuals' decisions, predictions, and judgments in personal and professional environments; and so that is essential to their process of maturing as a self-driven individual, and as a socially integrated member of society.

So academic learning is not only intended toward social ends, but driven by and practically accomplished through social interactions which concretely stimulate and infuse that learning. Together with the previous observations, this triad of scientific understandings – that sensory experiences are the prerequisite for meanings, that people are highly adept at and motivated to find and cohere meanings in their experiences, and that people are biologically tooled to learn through social affiliation and exchange – helps to make sense of the narrative and dialogic frameworks that pervade human traditions of education, entertainment, et al. interpersonal transmissions of value, insight, and skill (from the visual stories painted on cave walls across continents; to the sung poems of Gaelic bards, West

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African griots, and Indonesian dalangs; to the educative dialogs of Confucius and Socrates; to the transcribed interviews and asynchronous discussion forums that circulate information in modern media culture). These forms of experience-sharing all commonly rely on evocations or reproductions of vocal, facial, and gestural enactment (in words, in images, in recordings); all commonly pursue pooling experiences, coordinating ideals, and refining activities through the social, imaginative interplay of human beings in physical proximity.

Scientific research continues to provide detailed insights into the reasons these narrative, dialogic, personal approaches pervade human educational interactions. For example, in educational psychology, regarding issues of verbal and non-verbal processing (Dual-Coding Theory, see Clark & Paivio 1991): that learners' tested performance and transfer improves when vocal questions and interactions prime their attention and reflection (Mayer, Dow & Mayer 2003), when that voice is human (Mayer, Sobko & Mautone 2003; Atkinson, Mayer & Merrill 2005), when that voice's words address the learner personally (Moreno & Mayer 2004; Mayer, Fennell, Farmer &Campbell 2004), and when that voice conveys respect and responsiveness to minimize social-emotional or "face" threat to the learner (Wang, Johnson, Mayer, Rizzo, Shaw & Collins 2008); that learners find important expository material more interesting and can more effectively recall it when that material is linked to concrete elaboration or examples, and when the narrative structure signals value and importance (Sadoski 2001; also Paivio, Walsh & Bons 1994); that learners better attend to and retain this important material, as conveyed, when effective story-telling techniques are used to lessen the stresses of active mental processing—e.g., by breaking up scenes and focusing storylines (segmenting and weeding), foreshadowing and emphasizing important content (pretraining and signaling), communicating precisely and with coordinated actions (eliminating redundancy and aligning/synchronizing elements), adjusting responsively to the

people in audience (individualizing) (Mayer & Moreno 2003); and that a slew of personal and social factors influence the outcomes of these narrative, learning-centered exchanges— e.g., through the motivational effects of students' interests, beliefs, and achievement goals; the metacognitive effects of their creative interaction and prior practice with information; the emotion- and identity-related achievement effects of peer support, class size, classrooms, homework, and genuine opportunities for discovery (see review: Winne & Nesbit 2010).

That is to say, teachers and students at all levels of education rely on their social connections and intersubjective exchanges to coordinate and reach their academic goals. Defining community roles and group activities, establishing personal characters and professional relationships, synchronizing understandings and efforts: all of this is radically *social* work and is essential—not incidental—to learners intentionally perceiving and connecting with a course's academic content. The way that educational leaders *embody* their personalized relationships with a field's knowledge, and *convey* that relationship in social exchanges, directly stimulates students' most innate learning pathways in forming analogous personal relationships with that knowledge.

*Point #4: Habits, Mindfulness, Expertise—a recursive path toward situated self-realization.*

Finally, the fourth point about learning concerns the ideal endpoint of that personal, experiential learning path: what human balance and awareness and effective responsiveness look like, and so what environmental stimuli might support learners developing these attributes. Specifically, the environmental stimulus of learner-educator dialogs stands out as a central interaction for attracting students' interests, fostering their understandings, and garnering their motivated efforts in learning experiences. In genuinely mutual dialogs, all

participants actively receive and contribute to shared public attitudes, understandings, and goals. In this way, educational dialogs serve socially to stimulate learners' reflective, critical awareness (e.g., of their experience-based habits, intuitions, and feelings); their present, flexible attention (e.g., to their own and others' interplaying responses and alterations to public objects); and their projective, synthetic imagination (e.g., about immediate activities' deeper purpose, broader relevance, and longer-term value in their lives).

The practical educational importance of such collaboratively decided, synchronously produced, and explicitly purposed experiences to student learning outcomes is underscored by current research on expertise, mindfulness, and gifted individuals' self actualization: each of these areas highlights, respectively, how experiences with making consequential judgments, observing environments' present attributes, and creating self-situating values frameworks gradually set a foundation for individuals' advanced growth and development.

To begin with, practical expertise in individuals centers on the ability to make timely, accurate, functional decisions when responding to complex situations. Two distinct models of intuitive decision-making exist: the Naturalistic Decision-Making (NDM) model, which focuses on intuitions in authentic fields of practice (and so defines expertise based on a history of successful outcomes) and the Heuristics and Biases (HB) model, which focuses on intuitive predictions in controlled experimental environments (and so defines expertise based on quantitative performance measures). Yet, the underlying conceptions about what distinguishes expert judgments from overconfident biased impressions are quite similar, between these theories' respective researchers (Kahneman & Klein 2009). Both agree on the basic definition of *skilled intuition* as, quite simply, recognition: situations provide objective cues, which prime the expert to access related information in their memory, which provides an answer in that situation. Developing intuitive skill, they further agree, relies on two main

factors. The first is *experience* in "high validity" environments, such as poker games and battlefield scenarios, where the systems are neither too complex to predict accurately, nor so simple that outcomes can be predicted every time—making feedback easily misinterpretable and misleading. The second is adequate *opportunity* to practice their skill, to learn the rules of that environment: for example, perceiving relevant cues, making decisions, reacting, and receiving direct feedback about the outcomes.

Their evidence shows that, within the bounds of one's experience and relevant memories, individuals can make skilled, appropriate, and successful intuitive judgments. But their evidence likewise shows that people can develop heuristics and biases that lead to overconfident, misapplied, and blatantly wrong impressions: for example, when those impressions are based in insufficient experience and overly simplified interpretations. One common instance of this inexpert situational interpretation—attribution substitution— illustrates how a foundation of complex experiences, along with active practice and learning, can prove crucial to the accuracy of an individual's environmental sense-making:  when individuals are told that a girl was a "fluent reader at age 4" and are asked to guess her high school grade-point average, individuals will project her reading ability onto her likely GPA, forming the impression that her GPA is likewise outstanding. This automatic process of misattribution "produces intuitive judgments in which a difficult question is answered by substituting an easier one" (Kahneman & Klein 2009).

Studies of affective forecasting also illuminate how human imagination and emotion can distort people's predictions about *themselves* in environments: for example, people will less accurately predict their response to an event when they receive only information about the event itself, versus only information about a neighbor's reaction—and if told beforehand this will occur, people unanimously resist believing it (Gilbert, Killingsworth, Eyre &

Wilson '09). Nonetheless, people can also find ways of utilizing their biases productively in their environments. As one example, when individuals will themselves to think about losing what they do have, a natural  affective forecasting error spurs them to appreciate those things more, and so improves their affect (Koo, Algoe, Wilson & Gilbert 2008).

Effectively managing such automatic processes requires repeated environmental exposure and feedback. Expert intuition develops *gradually,* over time, and not as an inherent trait of that individual but as an an emergent outcome of their experiential learning. And likewise, calibrating one's projections with reality is a process of constant self-discovery: imagining a possible future, being surprised by one's internal experiences and external responses as it occurs, and motivating one's self to seek out more experience and adjust those approaches accordingly, toward better emotional, motivational, and conceptual outcomes.

Regarding those practical outcomes: objective skill at intuitive decision-making is marked by attributes such as recognizing anomalies (situations that are not typical or familiar) and appreciating the boundaries of one's expertise (the limits of one's recognition, past which one's intuitions and confidence may not be reliably valid for making appropriate decisions). That is, expert decision-making is not simply about knowing one's environment, but about learning to be openly aware of one's environment. This is a stark contrast to the mindset of mere subjective confidence, which is based on the internal consistency of information, rather than its quality: inexpert confidence is marked by attributes such as relying on redundant or weakly connected evidence and holding judgments with a markedly high degree of confidence (i.e., being self-confirmed rather than grounded in experience and recognition). Such overconfidence can come from "lucky" judgments and decisions made in irregular or unpredictable environments (where "true skill cannot develop") or from the

"fractionation of skill," where experts make judgments in areas beyond the bounds of their skills (Kahneman & Klein 2009). So again, that true professional expertise, and the expert decision-making that demonstrates its presence, is based in personal experience and situational awareness; a foundation that develops through individuals taking opportunities to learn the regularities of their environment, and so to recognize relevant cues in the moment.

As for skill in the intentional regulation of one's internal experiences, subjective previews (imaginative event simulations) and premotions (pre-feelings) are by nature always comparative, unrepresentative, and essentialized for each oncoming experience (Gilbert & Wilson 2009). But as mentioned above in point #4, deliberate forms of emotional regulation and attentional focus can be developed more robustly over time and with effortful practice.

Recently, the concept of mindfulness has become a popular area of study which further illuminates the human value of developing cognitive awareness and control of one's underlying emotions and motivations. *Mindfulness* is—as a general operational definition— attention to present-moment experience, sensory awareness, and the forestalling of judgments and categorizing in service of maintaining a more immediately oriented and perceptually open state of awareness. In neuroscience, mindfulness has been linked to self-regulations in those with mood disorders, protecting individuals from depression by buffering against negative rumination and facilitating nor-reactivity to inner states (Paul, Stanton, Greeson, Smoski & Wang (2013), so reducing negative emotion and self-evaluation, and facilitating self-compassion and empathy (Farb, Anderson & Segal 2012).

This "quieting" effect of mindfulness in the brain has been linked to *disidentification,* a personal state where one maintains a temporary distancing from the self and emotions. Again, as with expert intuition, this is not an inherent personal trait, but a personal ability achieved through effortful practice. The ability to quiet one's brain is related

to the skill that Eastern philosophers call *bare attention* (an apprehended subjectivity, wherein the mind refrains from attributing subjective significance to emotions), and which brain-activity studies show individuals can evoke through practices like directed meditation, where awareness in focused openly rather than self-referentially (Ives-Deliperi, Solms & Meintjes 2011).

Automatic recognition and mindful attention, then, work together in a complimentary and interrelated manner, one mode exploring and adapting critically to the present moment, the other mode accessing and responding efficiently based on past moments of experience. While mental modes associated with automatic processes, practiced routines, and habitual responses may be categorized as "less-mindful," they conserve energy and effort in ways that support mindful states.

The influence of learning environments in facilitating individuals' mindful, expert states is evident on a practical level, for example, when looking at group organizations that exhibit timely, adaptive, resilient management of unexpected events: a capacity which suggests both established repertoires of practice and innovative novel use of those familiar routines (Levinthal & Rerup 2006). Such groups demonstrate some key practical dynamics involved in situated learning and mindful expertise development. First, regarding the *environment* itself: complex environments tend to create stimuli far more varied than the categories an individual has associated with their sets of routines. This means individuals will often need to think flexibly and adaptively as they decide which routine is appropriate and how best to apply it (adjusting to unfamiliar stimuli and novel contexts by relating them to familiar categories and prior experiences). Second, regarding *learning* from those experiences:  in reality (where circumstances and responses are seldom neat or ideal), the ambiguities of both weak successes and manageable failures require individuals to mindfully

reflect, interpret, and encode subtle outcome variations. Their careful attention to cues and feedback must be combined with retrospective sense-making in order to aggregate their experiences into larger and coarser schemes of what should be done or not done by default day-to-day (see also: Fowler 2008; for teachers: Borko & Livingston 1989). Third, regarding the *continuation* of this situated individual growth: mindfulness is sustained in these environments by acknowledging individuals' finite capacity for mindfulness, and accordingly developing routines that nurture the "routinization of mindfulness" (Levinthal & Rerup 2006), that is, a culture of mindful values and practices—where expectations and activity structures support open attention and deep reflection.

The influence of learning environments on individuals' growth is also evident on the personal level, for example, when looking at how people socially develop their will and well-being. Studies of high-ability individuals (those showing prowess in intelligence, creativity, talents) show that "giftedness" is essentially a state of heightened sensitivity and responsivity: from childhood, gifted individuals are noted for feeling emotions more deeply and being reactive to low levels of sensation (including the emotions of others). This can lead to increased motivation to help others, but also to avoidance of empathy-inducing stimuli, efforts at self-distraction or desensitization, adopting attitudes of indifference, etc. (Lovecky 2009). Thus, these individuals underscore the reality that innate ability is not necessarily innate advantage (it guarantees neither healthy self-management nor functional community participation), and so provide special cases for studying the place of motivation and affect development in a person's learning process.

These high-energy, high-arousal individuals often exhibit  emotional overexcitability that can become either demoralizing or motivating for them (Piechowsky 2009). For example, their acute sensitivity supports a capacity for empathy, which can make them feel a

strong sense of duty where they see a purpose in the world, or conversely a strong sense of pointlessness and uselessness in its absence. This intensity can also evoke in such individuals a sense of personal connection with abstract concepts, which may lead to habits of "positive maladjustment" (i.e., truth to one's self, beliefs, and ideals in the face of morally compromised or ethically subversive social acts) where a moral and ethical sense are nurtured. But this emotional connectedness can also conversely lead to patterns of "harsh emotions like ambition, striving for power, ruthless competition, a drive to win at all cost (without regard for cost to others)" where their empathetic capacity is distorted or imbalanced by an undeveloped sense of care and compassion (Piechowsky 2009).

Together, these practical and personal dynamics illustrate the interdependence of mindful/less-mindful processes and rational/emotional development in the ongoing experiential learning of individuals. Whether intentionally or subconsciously, individuals are persistently oriented toward maintaining a functional mental balance and pursuing internalized ideals: an ongoing process of responsive adaptation and reflective narration that is inextricably emotional, cognitive, and motivated. Gaining awareness of and control over this process is central to personal learning and development, well-being and interactive functionality: from the most basic internal to the most advanced societal levels. And social environments that support such human growth rely on subjective understandings those personal experiences which gradually lead individuals from novice, distracted, unstable states to expert, mindful, self-assured perceptions.

***As it relates to learning and education,*** what these basic observations about expertise, habits and mindfulness, and the growth of "gifted" individuals underscore is this: intended educational outcomes for learners, such as mindful presence and expert knowledge and a foundation of functional situated habits, evolve through participation, which is active,

dialogic, and values-directed: passive reception by learners is ill-suited for stimulating critical thought and investment, fostering a sense of ownership and purpose, and ultimately facilitating personal identification with an environment and functional fluency in its activities.

*Interaction* is crucial to education because within any given community a person learns by participating, their identity (which surrounds their performance) then changing in relation to other members as their knowledge and skill changes, and their "mastery" ultimately being defined within the processes and relations of that practicing community (Lave 1991). When taking educational context into account in this way, identity and learning are part of the same process, and the end of that learning is not private internalization of knowledge but connected membership within a sustained community of practice. And *dialog* is crucial within those educational interactions because it brings to surface the *general human reasons and values* behind those *specifically situated academic beliefs and practices*—making academic activities not merely repeatable but explorable, negotiable, changeable, and so generative, personalized, and useful. In this way, achieving truly successful educational exchanges, which engender positive and genuine growth in individuals' relationships with their world, relies on learning experiences that are reciprocal and recursive, where the learner (as a whole person) can develop their practical knowledge of common skills, terms, and topics at surface; beneath those a personal understanding of the processes, notions, and orientations that they represent; and beyond those a principled sense of the purposes, experiences, and values that they promote. All those layers—the practical, personal, and principled—connect together in education at its most positive, influential, and lasting.

That is to say, the identity-based, experience-grounded, and critically responsive relationships that are associated with expertise and mindfulness in a field develop through extended purposeful participation, genuine decision-making, and personal investment in learning environments: through that motivated interaction with the environment, individuals develop useful personal foundations of situational knowledge and its bounds; through those decisions, the practical capacity to self-monitor and self-control their manner of dealing with environmental situations; and through that investment, a principled sense of connection and relation with those circumstances.

Educators, then, must necessarily maintain some level of awareness about students' personal sub-surface relationships with a field's core orientations, notions, and processes, if they intend to foster deep and lasting growth in those learners and their way of relating with the world. This accurate awareness, and intentional influence, require mutually responsive dialogs: group interactions wherein teachers' and students' perspectives of the educational exchange can be explicitly shared, utilized, and coordinated in service of the group's learning-centered goals (i.e., the student's analogous personalizations of that same course knowledge through which teachers have already enriched their own lives).

**The Take-Away:**

***Learning is relational growth. Social development is academic development. Mindful expertise is synchronous, intentional self-environment exchange.***

What this chapter has discussed, summarily is the following. First, that transfer of learning is essentially the personalization of knowledge. It is a situated and subjective process based in concrete experience, distilled meaningfully through reflection, and leading ultimately toward a more cohesive ly purposeful perception of one's self within

environments and of similarities across contexts. This developmental trajectory in humans involves personal emotions and identity-based motives at initial uptake of learning, not merely individuals' cognition; furthermore, it involves internal dispositions and situational exigencies at transfer of learning, not just individuals' ability. So learning is relational growth: development of individuals with, through, and ultimately for their environments.

This understanding is grounded in a growing base of scientific research about the nature of human consciousness, homeostatic adaptations, and learning processes, which has lead to more integrated models of learning in educational fields: models which recognize the complex confluence of emotions, motivations, and cognition within the individual; the complex influence of human learners, environments, and knowledge on one another. So social development is academic development: teachers and students act as subjective embodiments of scholastic knowledge within their micro-cultural environments; their educational exchanges—at best—make subjectively tangible, coherent, and salient the more objectively distant, abstract, and general academic content. Together they work to experience as participants the real values, notions, and processes being signified by disciplines' standard beliefs, terms, and techniques.

Finally, this image of learning's experiential foundations—and education's accordingly personal, situated constitution—points to the importance of dialog in educational exchanges. That act of interpersonal coordination nurtures teachers' and students' mindful expertise; their experience-based ability to connect generalized understandings and values, in an aware and principled way, to specific practices in unique situations between self and environment. Thus, working toward synchrony with others is operationally essential, not only to academic courses' discrete aims, but to education's unified core intention: positively advancing the functional relationships of individuals with a shared world.

Scientific research points clearly to the reason that these dialogic means and ends have emerged: because reflecting on, engaging in, and imagining toward self-environment exchanges is the experiential learning path along which mindful expertise develops; synchronous, intentional self-environment exchange is the objective outcome of that mindful expertise; and dialogic interactions are a bare practical test of those intentions and that synchrony.

## Toward a Human, Democratic View of Education

### Communication in Human Learning

Perhaps the clearest place to start explaining education's basic reliance on dialog is here: at the link between human language use and the development of practical intelligence. As Lev Vygotsky explains in *Mind in Society* (1978), The *most* significant moment in a young person's intellectual development is the moment when speech and practical activity converge: the familiar image of a child talking spontaneously and continuously as they attempt to achieve a goal illustrates clearly how human minds come to synchronize speech and action as one same psychological function. People use their language to focus their attention, to coordinate their perceptions and responses, and to plan for the future in their surroundings: thus, the more complex and indirect the practical task, the more important speech becomes in solving that operational challenge. With repeated experience, people learn to plan and guide their actions mentally, without speaking aloud, but still that dialogical unity of our practical intelligence and our sign use remains. Our internal sign system is essential in mediating our responses to the environment. And these internal sign systems develop through social interactions as much as through private experience, which

holds direct consequences for the way we learn as individuals in society. That is, our ideas and habits are shaped though dialog; through the mind-expanding stimulus of engaging socially with those who are different from ourselves:

> "human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process bv which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them." (Vygotsky 1978, p. 88)

**Diversity in society.**

Our diversity is *natural*, *inevitable*, and *useful* for responding to the world—which is likewise naturally various, continuously changing, and practically interconnected. Our diversity is also *organized* by society, which through conventions and norms promotes that certain traits and skills and dispositions as more—or less—valued or valid than others, and encourages (by direct emphasis or indirect neglect) diverse individuals toward those habituated centers. In this way, societies generally encourage their diverse individuals toward more unified and consistent, predictable and efficient function within their environments—but can by the same guiding-hand *discourage* the social processes of questioning, testing, and exploratory seeking that are basic to individuals finding more equitable and informed, appropriate and healthy function among themselves within those environments.

That is to say, as an individual mind developing socially within a pervading culture, it's general hard to look beyond what things seem to be, conventionally, and see what things are doing to one's self and others as a society, more fully. Existing societal structures of power and practice can interfere with or distort peoples' process of self-realization; their prescriptive hierarchies and imposed attitudes can make the conventional seem inevitable

and the artificial seem natural—and so undermine, as Paulo Freire describes it, our "vocation of becoming more fully human" (1970). This is where schooling, specifically its social potential as an environment for true generative dialog, becomes distinctly important within human societies.

**Dialogic Education**

Human societies nurture both genuine meanings and divisive contradictions within individuals; both socially facilitating personal awareness and socially imposing self-repression. Freire describes the high societal purpose of educational exchanges—the dialogic proliferation of these genuine, self-liberating actions and reflections among individuals—in revolutionary terms: of re-birth and freedom from oppression. But he locates this foundation-shifting growth and change in a rather mundane and familiar social interaction: the basic schooling activity of teacher and student dialog. Within this culturally normative interaction, he makes a pedagogical distinction between two models of social education (1970). In the monolithic "banking" model, teachers narrate and students listen, rendering the intended contents of that lesson (whether purported facts or values) "lifeless and petrified" as they are deposited for the students to receive, memorize, and repeat. Socially, this model opens no room for students to inquire, create, or transform these offered societal objects—and so it neither supports the emergence of their knowledge with the world, nor their experience in contributing to it in thought and action. In the dialogic "problem-posing" model, by contrast, teachers recognize students as conscious, intentional humans and accordingly present them with problems that humans encounter in relations with the world. The teacher's educational goal, here, is no longer to deposit knowable objects in students narratively (on claims of authority) but to teach and learn with the students mutually,

mediated by the world of knowable objects (on grounds of caring). This type of academic exchange creates social space for students to learn deeply, in lasting and self-actualizing ways; and the process through which it achieves this high educational is dialog.

Two social requirements are essential to achieving such healthy, intentional, and transformative educational dialogs, according to Freire. The first regards the pragmatic relationship between teacher and student, which is consequential to the way language is used between them. Freire conceives truly dialogic or "authentic" words among people as tantamount to work; authentic words simultaneously influence the world as action and are influenced by the world in reflection. Without action, reflective words cannot denounce or otherwise transform the world and so become disconnected and meaningless (*verbalism* – an unauthentic form of existence) while without reflection, words of action grow insensitive and unreceptive and so make dialog impossible (activism – an unauthentic form of thought). If a teacher narratively projects ownership of classroom knowledge content and control over activities (that thoughtful reflection, that productive action), this renders student's words "unable to transform the world"—i.e., unauthentic—and by the same token renders the teacher's words resistant to influence or growth by dialog—i.e., again, unauthentic. So authentic dialog in educational exchanges begins where teachers present material as an object, from a shared world, for common reflection:

> In this way, the problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections
> in the reflection of the students. The students—no longer docile listeners—
> are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher
> presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-considers
> her earlier considerations as the students express their own. The role of the
> problem-posing educator is to create; together with the students, the

conditions under which knowledge at the level of the *doxa* [common, popular

belief: literally 'opinion, praise; to seem good'] is superseded by true

knowledge, at the level of the *logos* [ground, reason: literally 'gathered words;

a speaking']. (Freire 1970, p.80-1)

The second social requirement for such authentic educational dialog, then, regards the

teacher's motivation for presenting these objects—and for listening and engaging with the

students thoughts and actions. Without a socially connected emotional sense of care, of

purpose and responsibility toward others, teachers would perceive no incentive in ceding

authoritative control of the classroom narrative; in abandoning the security, stability, and

efficiency of society-validated commonplaces, and the sense of social superiority that comes

with disseminating that narrative. Only an explicit sense of commitment to others and their

authentic existence—which Freire defines, in this context, as "love"—makes nurturing an

authentic educational dialog worth the personal humility and mindful effort which that

exchange demands (especially from the educator, who must dissolve their prescribed upper-

hand in discourse to connect with the words of those often more overconfident and

inexperienced learners):

Because dialogue is an encounter among women and men who name the

world, it must not be a situation where some name on behalf of others. It is an

act of creation; … Dialogue cannot exist, however, in the absence of a

profound love for the world and for people. … love is commitment to others

… And this commitment, because it is loving, is dialogical. … It must

generate other acts of freedom; … If I do not love the world—if I do not love

life—if I do not love people—I cannot enter into dialogue. (Freire 1970,

pp.89-90)

88

**Emotional-social foundations of educational dialog.**

What Freire is speaking of here, in the language of affective and social neuroscience, is the fact that humans' highest-level cognitive processes and social motivations are grounded in our basic senses and emotions: a biological impulse to maintain physiological balance, sustain our survival, and extend our well-being (Immordino- Yang & Damasio 2007). So in order to enter into authentic educational dialogs with others (i.e., ones where knowledge is actively created and thoughtfully personalized), then teachers and students must—at an immediate, interpersonal level—connect emotionally with one another and support each others' purposes. That is the social-motivational foundation that drives individuals' efforts in school, and—at a more lasting, self-developmental level—compels the learning that individuals carry with them from that educational experience:

> Why does a high school student solve a mathematics problem, for example?
> … All of [the student's range of possible reasons] have a powerful emotional
> component and relate both to pleasurable sensations and to survival within
> our culture. Although the notion of surviving and flourishing is interpreted in
> a cultural and social framework at this late stage in evolution, our brains still
> bear evidence of their original purpose: to manage our bodies and minds in
> the service of living, and living happily, in the world with other people."
> (Freire 1970, pp.117)

The concrete educational importance of individuals' social-emotional connections with their academic-conceptual learning can be spotlit, for example, in cases where damage to emotional centers of the brain renders individuals still able to perform well on IQ tests (demonstrating no loss in conventional intelligence: knowledge, knowledge access, logical

reasoning) but incapacitated in life (e.g., violating social and ethical conventions, showing no remorse or empathy, making poor long-term decisions, losing money, ignoring risks, and failing to learn from these mistakes). When disconnected from emotional understanding and social motivations, knowledge loses its usefulness within real-life decisions and actions, loses its meaningfulness in bringing sense and purpose to the world for an individual (Immordino- Yang & Damasio 2007). That is, emotional knowledge—scientifically speaking—guides individuals' internal reasoning processes and rational actions; guides their social learning and environmental relationships. So learning experiences that develop knowledge in its full, useful emotional-rational sense (e.g., personal innovation in artistic, scientific, technological thought; social creativity in moral, ethical thought) require authentic dialogs: situated processes of recognizing and responding, where cognition and emotion interface.

In order for educational institutions to help human learners develop their innate ability to recognize and respond to environments—with a sense of complex social awareness, experience-based practical readiness, and mindful creativity—those educational exchanges must, by some means, evoke learners' experience of authentic, active and reflective, dialogic participation. And it is here that the idea of Democracy (the principle of social decision-making by all people) arises as an essential notion for humanly healthy, meaningful, and lasting education.

**Democracy as Education**

Importantly, democracy is not any one pre-defined practice: it is a principle (a value-based notion, that *guides* practice) toward a society whose members continually, dialogically create and re-create images of current knowledge-and-priorities as a foundation for informed

actions. This notion, that all participants *should* be authentically involved in defining goals

and deciding ways, centers on realizing this truth: you (the subjective locus of your

experiences) know better than anyone else what you think, feel, and desire—regardless your

eloquence, training, or social status. From there, democracy asserts a single value: the best

and fairest, most right and equitable, decision-making processes involve everyone, together.

This democratic premise, enacted, creates *educational* encounters. By rejecting the

presumption that anyone can know *what is right, true, or good for a group or individual*

from an outside perspective, and by accepting that those people's and groups' realities *can*

*always be better understood* through direct social exchange, democracy compels community

learning experiences—ones which respect the intrinsic (innately equal) value of each

individual involved, and seek out their unique voices, making room for mutual exchange and

influence of those diverse wants and needs regarding whatever subject-of-focus:

> Democracy is itself an educational principle, an educational measure and
>
> policy. … A woman told me once that she asked a very well known American
>
> statesman what he would do for the people of this country if he were God. He
>
> said, "Well, that is quite a question. I should look people over and decide
>
> what it was that they needed and then try and give it to them." / She said,
>
> "Well, you know, I expected that to be the answer that you would give. There
>
> are people that would ask other people what they wanted before they tried to
>
> give it to them." / That asking other people what they would like, what they
>
> need, what their ideas are, is an essential part of the democratic idea. … the
>
> privilege of giving an answer. That practice is an educational matter because
>
> it puts upon us as individual members of a democracy the responsibility of
>
> considering what it is that we as individuals want, what our needs and

troubles are. … Along with that goes, of course, the other feature which is necessary for the realization of democracy--mutual conference and mutual consultation and arriving ultimately at social control by pooling, by putting together all of these individual expressions of ideas and wants. (Dewey 1938, p.1/294-295)

In this way, democracy—as a dialogic educational principle—represents a social exchange wherein learners can participate and experience, give and receive influence, explore and expand perspectives with others who are different from themselves, and who bring them beyond themselves. Because others see, think, and want differently than we do, so we notice, understand, and imagine with others in ways that we cannot on our own. These relationships demand social sacrifice and trust, they create interpersonal intimacy and awareness, and they provide experiential fuel for learning and self-realization. This idea lies at the heart of schooling; of gathering people together, intentionally, in learning-centered exchanges; affording people the dedicated opportunity to practice momentarily imagining different views and testing different ideas, in environments framed for that purpose.

Of course, these are ideals; perfect visions to refine educational practice toward in a non-ideal and largely unknowable emergent world. But these ideals help to frame both the practical defining of issues that educators face in current schooling environments, and the pragmatic approach that educators take in addressing those issues.

**Society's educational contexts.**

First, the general issue of schooling's context (with an eye toward the United States). A society coheres around common, popular notions of what is 'good': meaning the 'right' values, the 'important' goals, and the 'effective/ethical' methods. These moral, theoretical,

practical norms work together: claims of what is valuable, justify ideas of what is natural and desirable, which explain strategies that are most rationally realistic and appropriate. Using these hierarchies, societies create culturally-validated metrics for assessing quality and progress. Yet, the question "Who is right/wrong, better/worse?" is a cultural invention; it is not natural or inevitable to answer, because there is no ecological or universal scale for good or bad: those valuative notions only exist in relation to subjective desires and motives.

Specifically within educational environments, the question "who is better?" is *inherently* undemocratic: it crushes dialog; upends mutuality in discourse. Of course, predetermined methods and set value-measures are fundamental to gauging academic progress in society (e.g., determining students' or teachers' place on a standardized scale of performance). Yet socially, these personally consequential rankings (by what they include or ignore) can distract from or undermine the classroom exchange of personal experiences, understandings, and motivations: a feedback-loop that is as essential to teachers in shaping their courses as it is to students in maximizing their learning experiences.

As John Dewey points out (in regards to the U.S. educational goal of mitigating social division and racism), measuring a learner's progress merely in terms of performed acts and repeated words is no true measure of social progress. An accurate gauge of human beings' learning and development must reflect the contexts in which that development is intended to be realized: in authentic, dialogic social exchanges.

> Here, in relation to education, we have a problem; what are our schools doing
> to cultivate not merely passive toleration that will put up with people of
> different racial birth or different colored skin, but what are our schools doing
> positively and aggressively and constructively to cultivate understanding and
> goodwill which are essential to democratic society? … is the reciting of a

verbal pledge any educational guarantee of the existence of an indivisible

nation? … What are we doing to cultivate the idea of the supremacy of the

method of intelligence, of understanding, the method of goodwill and of

mutual sympathy over and above force? … I do not believe that we have as

yet done what can be done and what needs to be done in breaking down even

the ordinary snobbishness and prejudices that divide people from each other,

… Through mutual respect, mutual toleration, give and take, the pooling of

experiences, it is ultimately the only method by which human beings can

succeed in carrying on this experiment in which we are all engaged, whether

we want to be or not, the greatest experiment of humanity--that of living

together in ways in which the life of each of us is at once profitable in the

deepest sense of the word, profitable to himself and helpful in the building up

of the individuality of others. (Dewey 1938, p.1/301-303)

Recognizing this educational exigency, then, raises the issue of an educator's pragmatic work within schools' society-circumscribed learning environments. What is educational dialog, in practice? And how do educators manage that dialog, in a reliable and sustainable and intentional manner, without constraining and suffocating the authenticity of that learning experience? The voices of language-focused educators offer valuable insights into these points of theory and of practice.

Below, the views one language philosopher (Mikhail Bakhtin) and a trio of literacy, reading, and writing educators (Mike Rose, Gerald G. Duffy, and Peter Elbow) help to connect *intellectual* concepts of democracy and dialog to the *practical* classroom operations of acting and reflecting.

**Classroom Social Environments: In Theory**

**The challenge of working beyond societal norms toward situated personal growth.**

Perhaps the best place to begin explaining how interpersonal and intellectual growth are connected in classrooms is by clarifying the social nature of identity. While individuals are marked by their *specialness* (by being a unique, whole, one person), individuals' identities are marked by their sameness (by having characteristics like other persons, in the way they relate with their world). Those identities—those samenesses—are both cultivated by individuals within themselves and imposed upon them by others socially. This social identity-formation is a primary and foundational aspect of classroom educational exchanges: momentarily shifting, expanding, or reinforcing individuals' characteristic ways of relating with the world.

> Everything that pertains to me enters my consciousness, beginning with my
>
> name, from the external world through the mouths of others (my mother, and
>
> so forth), with their intonation, in their emotional value assigning tonality. I
>
> realize myself initially through others: from them I perceive words, forms,
>
> and tonalities for the formation of the initial idea of myself . . . Just as the
>
> body is formed initially in the mother's womb (body), a person's
>
> consciousness awakens wrapped in another's consciousness. (Bakhtin, 1986,
>
> p.138: in Matusov 2011)

For better or for worse, schools—and the individuals who gather therein—shape one anothers' identities by the way they describe, interact with, support and discourage, affiliate with and differentiate from each other: celebrating or shaming differences, using or ignoring skills, validating or marginalizing perspectives, learning from or judging by experiences of

success and failure. Within that identity-forming social exchange, where academic skills, perspectives, and experiences are made *personal*—attached to and accessed in individuals—student learning is intrinsically dialogic[1] in Mikhail Bakhtin's sense of the word: i.e., that the *meanings* they internalize about course content are perceptually rooted in their own and others' interactive *embodiments* of that content. Yet, for a teacher's voice to *influence* that learning in an educationally intentional way, it must be perceived by students as *incorporating* their own presence, expressing content in ways which reflect their current understandings and so stimulate movement within those deeply-held individual meanings.

This distinction which Bakhtin makes, between a "persuasive" voice that dialogically receives influence from others and so can deliver influence back to them (versus an "authoritative" one that monologically compels others' superficial alignment) is directly consequential at both the social level of identity-formation and the academic level of dispositional learning transfer together. If students feel alienated, disparate as individuals from the identity-based aims and efforts of their class, then they may conform and perform what is demanded performatively without experiencing internally any of the development intended by the course: expansion in their personal ways of attending to, making sense of, and relating with the world. Thus, educational outcomes rely on educators developing styles of communication that convey both social and intellectual congruence—making their own understandings analogously perceptible for their students:

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1 "The standard short definition of dialogic is that the meaning of an utterance is given by its location within a dialogue. It follows that to understand any utterance we have to look at the past utterances that it is responding to and the future utterances that it anticipates. … Bakhtin points out that we do not take words from a dictionary but from the mouths of other speakers and so they carry with them the voices of those who have used them before (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 294). … the world for us, that is the world of meaning, is essentially dialogic. This implies that meaning cannot be grounded upon any fixed or stable identities but is the product of difference." (Wegerif 2008)

Bakhtin described several ways in which texts or utterances can be located on a dialogic to monologic continuum. For example he wrote that they can be more or less multi-voiced and they can be more or less "open to the other". He distinguishes between the "authoritative" voice that remains outside of my words and the "internally persuasive" voice that enters inside them. Bakhtin's account of the impact of what he called "the persuasive word" is often quoted because it has obvious significance for education: / *"Such a word awakens new and independent words, organises masses of our words from within and does not remain in an isolated and static condition: it is not finite but open; in each of the new contents that dialogise it, this discourse is able to reveal ever new ways to mean."* (Bakhtin, 1981) / Bakhtin's contrast between the "authoritative" and the "persuasive" leads to a theory of learning as appropriating the voices of others, taking them into our own store of voices by giving them our own accent and our own associations and resonances (Bakhtin, 1986). Education in general is only possible if words and voices can cross the boundary of the self so that students can learn to speak in new ways and to be new people. Dialogic theory helps us understand how this can happen. It is not a mechanical process but implies being able to listen to others and see through their eyes. (Wegerif 2006, pp.59-60)

This link between permeability of voice and personalization of learning (especially, respectively, in the teacher and student) implies a qualitatively important aspect of educational practice and expertise. Namely, an educator refining their personal communication style, with active intention and responsive awareness, is an essential part of their professional development. Such dialogic work requires both internal dedication and

interpersonal sacrifice—e.g., compelling the teacher as a *community leader* to accept

constant accountability for how their words influence others' connection to the course yet as

a *personal equal* to abstain from controlling or rejecting the divergent feelings, perceptions,

and motivations that individuals bring into that course connection. So the teacher's social

motivation, again,  must rest on a notion of interpersonal care; one which channels

democracy as an educational principle.

That is to say, the *dialogic* development of one's teacherly voice—one's social

contribution as educational leader—extends from the practice-guiding ideal that all people in

a community should (a) be acknowledged as equivalently valid and valuable sources of

learning, and (b) accordingly pool their subjective experiences in mutually influential

exchanges that work toward greater social understanding,  greater circulation of societal

wisdom, and a more coordinated vision of human purpose (i.e., a course's core orientations,

notions, and processes). In this in this socially situated conception of education, course

content consists not only of disciplinary processes to "master," concepts to "know," or

attitudes to "adopt"; it consists of interpersonal relations to "define," similarities and

variations to "explore," and common purposes to "create"—as best serves the learners'

particular lives and environments.

In navigating this emergent, social side of classroom content, educator and learner

roles—again—conflate. The educator's relationship with the student shifts in concept from

one of expert (the academic conception) to one of fellow learner (the interpersonal

conception), and shifts in operational emphasis away from prescriptive tasks of *evaluating*

(the academic duty) and toward more descriptive tasks of *analysis* (the interpersonal duty) in

dialog (Stewart & Zediker 2000): "What are we *perceiving*; how and how *differently*? Why

are we *choosing* this over that; what are we *sacrificing* with this focus? What are we *doing*

with this; what *else* might we do? Who are we *being*; how *else* might we be? Where are we *heading*; where *else* might we go?" In such a state of exchange and negotiation, teachers and students are conceptually analogous (all living and learning from one another in one same community), the classroom community itself is neither teacher- nor student- but learning-centered, and the coordinating nexus of that socially democratic educational exchange—mediated or direct, anonymously or identity-based—is dialog: where members share and interpret, question and adjust, affirm and expand their own and others' individual experiences to synchronize the values, knowledge, and goals of that community.

**Classroom Social Environments: in Daily Reality**

   **From principled ideals to practical wisdom in dialog.**

So what does that—a democratic, dialogic, synchronous classroom community—look like? As educator Mike Rose has observed in his research, healthy and engaged classroom environments are marked by social connection paired with intellectual encouragement (2010); that is, "learning-friendly" community structures and activity frameworks wherein individuals are "encouraged to be smart"—connected, engaged, deliberative, reflective—in both their quiet independent practices and their public presentation.

   Specifically (Rose 2010), these social environments for education (whether rich or poor, urban or rural) were marked by two classes of characteristics. Firstly, they were marked by attributes of basic social equity: *safety* (physical, emotional, social – supporting students in taking risks and pushing past their comfort zones in thinking and interacting), *respect* (fair treatment, decency, civility, absence of intimidation, and understanding regarding personal histories and cultures and languages), *ongoing support* (providing resources of feedback and assistance to help students realize their potentials and flourish

within these challenges), and *concern for students' welfare* (providing nurturance, recognition, opportunity, and social cohesion, giving students the sense that their classrooms were "salutary places—places that felt good to be in and that honored their best interests"). Secondly, these environments' foundations of interpersonal care supported attributes of dialogic educational exchange: *student responsibility for learning* (where students "contributed to the flow of events, shaped the direction of discussion, and became authorities on their own experience and on the work they were doing"), and *intellectual rigor* (teachers taking students seriously as "intellectual and social beings," and giving them the thinking challenges and tests of effort to prove that attitude). To be clear, these attributes connote a democratic conception of students and their relationship to societal knowledge and practice.

Regarding the educational leadership in these learning-centered environments, Rose notes the importance of teachers' practical expertise—specifically in their dialogic communication and interaction—as they craft situation-frameworks and therein evoke student experiences for learning. In a study of practical intelligence across work environments (2009), Rose points out that nuanced verbal/nonverbal communication is essential to doing even basic-seeming physical work, which still often relies heavily on social interaction and evidences in its language high-level thought processes:

> In some service occupations, language and communication are central: observing and interpreting behavior and expression, inferring mood and motive, taking on the perspective of others, responding appropriately to social cues, and knowing when you're understood. A good hair stylist, for instance, has the ability to convert vague requests (I want something light and summery) into an appropriate cut through questions, pictures, and hand gestures. … workplace language is used in the flow of other activities,

[making it easy for outsiders to] overlook the remarkable coordination of

words, numbers, and drawings required to initiate and direct action. (Rose

2009, p.47)

In regard to teaching (1995), Rose describes numerous classroom accounts of teachers

practically coordinating environmental actions with dialogs to initiate and direct *learning*.

For example, he discusses an elementary school teacher, Stephanie, conducting a string of

learning activities, cohered within by dialog. First, she reads a book about hermit crabs with

her class, then brings into class real hermit crabs that students can compare with those

described in the reading, then asks the students to go home and write about what they

observed of the crabs' behavior, and finally has them verbally report their individual findings

to the class. Within this coordinated progression of experiences and dialogs,  Stephanie

embodies knowledge and resourcefulness, planning incrementally and staying alert to

spontaneous teachable moments, maintaining a belief in her students' abilities during this

difficult assignment, and providing guidance and feedback that made them seem comfortable

in taking up that intellectual challenge.

It is through these group-synchronizing dialogs, Rose asserts (1995), that teachers

develop their social position as educational leaders in classrooms: not prescriptively (by age

or social role), but *persuasively*, by showing knowledge and connection with content, care

and solidarity with students,  and the ability to construct a safe and respectful space for

mutual learning.

As Lad Tobin (2010) points out, this persuasive presentation of one's teacherly self is

simultaneously a highly professional and a highly personal matter. For instance, in moments

of self-disclosure (from issues of personal struggles and discomforts to personal interests and

preferences) in educational exchanges, a teacher must factor in pragmatically how that

information might effect student's feelings, affiliations, and understandings: embodying the values of the discipline or distracting from the lesson, communicating interpersonal reciprocity and openness or suppressing student voices and trust. Ultimately, such decisions have to be made by teachers as individuals, because both the rhetorical intention and pragmatic outcome depend on the teacher's educational goals, personal characteristics, interpersonal manner, and relationship with the  students. This is but one of many elements which contributes to what Gerald Duffy (2002) calls the observably "eclectic" character of excellent teachers. Teachers who are experienced and successful hail from myriad ideologies and utilize diverse classroom practices, but are commonly adaptive and flexible, independent thinkers who have learned how—as themselves—to balance unstable forces, e.g., creativity and order, lifelike authenticity and practical repetition. This balance, Duffy asserts (1998), begins internally, by getting "lined up": coming to know intentionally one's self and one's direction, and finding functional confidence in that. From that personal center of principle and experience, teachers gain their flexibility in education: the ability to evaluate for themselves the methods and directives from authoritative sources, to override these models where they judge that something else might work better, and to revise and invent yet again based on their results with students.

A teacher's practical stability within unstable environments, emerging from their unique individual foundations of self-awareness and situated experience, then serves as an anchor for classroom dialog:   finding educational direction within learners' explorations, questions within their agreements, and points of synthesis among their differences. Peter Elbow (2006) describes the operational components of this educational discourse as "believing" and "doubting": two specific types of language, and associated thinking dispositions, that work in concert to expand individuals' understandings of their own and

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others' perceptions of the world. These two sides of dialogic intellectual development can be practiced concretely in the classroom together—the "believing game," and the "doubting game"—with experienced and mindful social leadership to facilitate their healthy and purposeful progression. The first language in this learning is narrative and imaginative; an exercise in believing what we are disposed to doubt, drawing out and entering into the personal experiences underlying frameworks of meaning, belief, and value. The second language is clear and impersonal; an exercise in relaxing our habitual hold on familiar beliefs and values, laying bare the reasons and underlying logic within those frameworks for tracing and questioning.

This dialog of beliefs and doubts is intentionally unsettling, in the sense that it momentarily loosens peoples' stiff hold on internal monologs and opens their receptors to alternate ways of experiencing and sense-making in their environment. The personal vulnerability, intellectual instability, and moral/ethical uncertainty that this learning process evokes—requires, *seeks*—is why the social and academic sides of a teacher's work are inextricable in practice: teachers, in educational dialogs, are not simple channels for content, but complex human beings who facilitate—stimulate, *champion*—the personalizing process of learning from experience. Their slowly amassed, interactively refined collections of personal stories, tangible examples and comparisons, focusing questions and activities frame the learning environment so that students feel stable and prepared enough to destabilize and expand out from where they have been. So in the practice of framing educational dialogs, teachers must both *persuade* students' wills (their interest, connection, commitment) and *foster* their abilities (their attention, understanding, practice) toward the aims of learning.

Educational dialog, as that social-academic exchange wherein teachers and students seek moments of mutual expansion and interpersonal synchrony, is an essential process in

teaching and learning: it constitutes the living boundary where teachers' value-based principles and intentions are tested at the pragmatic level of reading and responding to students' actual states and struggles with content; where students' developing personal relationships with that content are mediated at the environmental level, experienced either as imitative social performances, or as authentic individual shifts in emotional perception, intellectual disposition, and relational identity.

It is no coincidence that post-secondary writing and literacy educators gravitate toward these interpersonal issues of classroom discourse and teacher-student relationships, even in cultures of higher education that largely emphasize canonical knowledge and technical ability over practical wisdom. The pedagogical craft and art of communicating knowledge is an act of composition and rhetoric: shaping educational learning environments (for a coherent narrative framework), reading students reactions (for an audience-informed genre), and directing emergent dialogs (for a persuasive and intentional drafting shared understandings). Scholarly examinations of "good" teaching that focus on knowledge and technical approaches impoverish the topic by dividing the structures (curriculum and activities) from the individuals experiencing them (teachers and students) (Dewey 1902). Discussions of teaching in literacy and rhetoric, however, tend to point toward that third area—practical wisdom—where content and individual merge: in learning-centered dialogs that are always both social and academic, experience-based and knowledge oriented, personal and professional.

Thus the next chapter, a review of educational literature in post-secondary writing, will extend the four points made in this chapter. First, it will explicitly connect those educational concepts of personal, situated learning transfer to four lessons from writing disciplines about the practical realities of learning transfer as students experience it and as

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teachers can perceive it in educational environments. Next, it will connect these four lessons to four experience-based implications for teachers' situational framing and interpersonal development of educational dialogs.

## Toward a rhetorical view of teaching and learning

So, to draw together the ideas and findings reviewed in this literature: first, *learning* is—as a historically recognized, scientifically verified fact—personal, situated, and purpose-oriented; based in the individual's own sensory experience, realized in relationships between that individual and their environment, and driven by that individual's physical-psychological-social needs and motives and meanings. Second, the image of *education* that this produces—the image of individuals intentionally stimulating and guiding other individuals' learning processes—is accordingly personal, practical, and principled. Educational ideals and approaches are based in educators' own emotional-rational-motivated learning experiences. They use that insight pragmatically to infer, connect with, and influence students' analogous (i.e., unique but commonly human) learning experiences. And they work in those uncertain interactions toward certain ideal outcomes: mapping present reality onto slow-grown archetypal frameworks of what is and should be.

In human minds—psychological research has found—these internal frameworks of practice and purpose are experience-grounded, narrative-cohered, and values-ordered. In educational exchanges— centuries of experts have found—these frameworks are best realized socially, dialogically, and democratically: where the learner's participation is genuine, where the group's meanings for words or actions are mutually developed, and where the environment's purpose and value is defined by the needs and experiences and desires of all unique individuals therein (teacher and student together, alike).

This view of educational reality could be described in any number of ways: holistic, inclusive, pragmatic, humanistic philosophy; transformative, dialogic, democratic, liberation pedagogy. All these terms are culturally loaded: they invoke complex intertextual webs of pre-established theories and broad chains of influence among individuals, communities, societies, and histories (which makes them potentially divisive when discussed broadly in the abstract). The focus of this paper's research will be much more local than that: this study will center on the moment of learning, between individuals, and the way those moments string together in social learning environments toward educational ends. Thus, this paper takes—simply—a *rhetorical* view of teaching and learning, and the educational exchange. This rhetorical view does not disregard the presence nor importance of contextual factors in classroom interactions. Rather, it acknowledges the pragmatic limits of students and teachers to perceive those vast-deep inner ties in one another, in synchronous moments of learning, and so focuses on their explicit use of communication to connect and work together: to address situational exigencies, to resolve disparities of perception, to pursue agreed-upon educational aims.

Educational dialog, then, is the concrete focus of this paper: specifically, the pragmatic arc from teachers' educational intentions and general rhetorical approaches, through their interactions with students' own unique educational motives and dispositions, toward some measure of social connection and academic progress. In regard to this focus, I have found that much educational literature in post-secondary rhetoric-and-writing (by virtue of the discipline's intellectual attention to practical communication and influence between people) directly and intentionally addresses the particular rhetorical issues associated with educational dialogs: their ideal intentions, practical applications, and human issues. In the following chapter, I will explore (first) the writing field's conceptual insights into those four

educational realities described above, and then describe (second) the practical connections that experienced writing educators have drawn between their General rhetorical awareness of educational exchanges and their personal, practical, principled experience of learning-centered dialogs with students.

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# CHAPTER 3

## LITERATURE – WHAT RHETORIC-AND-WRITING HAS TO OFFER:

### A Personal, Principled, Practical image

### of the educational exchange

The notion of teaching as personal and persuasive is not new: it dates back in Western history to the 5th century BCE, where the sophists of ancient Greece used rhetorical / philosophical techniques to teach "excellence" and "virtue." Nor is teaching's experiential and perception-guiding nature a fringe notion: John Dewey, a central voice of American educational theory and practice, emphasizes these aspects centrally in his technical definition of education as "that reconstruction or reorganisation of [a learner's] experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (1916: in Hager & Hodkinson 2009). But it is a notion receiving fresh supportive evidence from contemporary fields of research—mentioned in the previous chapter—which are joining together their integrated (i.e., embodied, situated) understandings of human learning and expert function in historically unprecedented ways. These synthetic agreements currently emerging across fields, about how we learn and use learning, warrant many longstanding experiential and organic notions of rhetorical education—not merely as poetic imagery or rational philosophy for the practitioner, but as concrete human reality.

Intentionally sharing knowledge, so as to lead others toward personal understanding and expert practice, necessarily involves directing a learner's subjective perception of their environment, in a way that imbues their experiences with personally-resonant meaning, through interactions impressive enough that the learner will carry those notions or values or processes with them in a personalized form—and be disposed to embody that learning (as knowledge or character or skill) when opportune moments arise.

This is a *rhetorical* notion of the educational exchange: the personally persuasive and situationally effective use of human communication. Furthermore, where that notion is used to develop a learner's agency (i.e., their awareness, ability, and inclination to intentionally shape their relationship with the environment), it supports a more democratic and humanistic (i.e., mutual and dialogic) approach to creating educational environments between teachers and students. It is *this* version of the educational environment and educational exchange that rhetoric-and-writing, as an academic discipline, has studied and developed practically for centuries—even at the expense of its own academic standing, at times in history when universities turned their focus toward the German model of "objective" scientific knowledge-building over the intersubjective disseminating of knowledge, facilitating of understanding, and realizing of personal ability among learners.

A scientifically-informed understanding of deep learning and knowledge transfer now underscores the importance of human interaction in school environments. Gauging, testing, and shaping an educational path for learners is inescapably subjective, social, dialogic work. Educating others requires fluency not only with academic content and with pedagogical aims and methods, but with the underlying human reality that permeates those knowledge-fields: the complex experience of embodying understanding; the convoluted personal journey that leads to that wisely, or expertly, situated way of being.

The nature of rhetoric-and-writing itself compels such an individualized, adaptive, and situated approach—both as a subject of study and an object of pedagogical communication—because balancing a complex amalgam of rational meaning, human experience, and subjective character is central to the process of rhetoric-and-writing. Every time an author composes an edifying discourse for others, these three elements must be brought into balance: bringing to the fore such issues as individuals' unique biographies, learning histories, and dispositions, as well as the way these factors are influenced educationally by ongoing dialogs, activities, and values-frameworks in the learning environment. Thus, the rhetorical knowledge that this field has to offer is both timely and valuable for the field of education in general: it offers a person-, practice-, and principle-oriented understanding of the educator's role in a student's learning experiences.

Notions of transfer within the field of rhetoric-and-writing focus acutely on the *personal* and *situated* dimensions of that educational aim. Notions of disciplinary understanding emphasize the *practical* and *adaptive* nature of that educational content. And notions of teaching attend centrally to the *principled* and *dialogic* manner of that educational work.

Each of these contributions will now be addressed in turn, followed by a brief discussion of the broader scientific and sociological research supporting these understandings.

### Taking a Rhetorical View of Educational Aims and Practices

Rhetoric is "the study and practice of effective symbolic expression … achieving the purposes of the symbol-user, whether that purpose is persuasion, clarity of expression, beauty of expression, or mutual understanding" (Herrick 1997). Viewing education as a

rhetorical act, rather than a didactic one, places the onus of persuasiveness and clarity, appeal and mutuality in knowledge-sharing on educational institutions and leaders, not just on the learners themselves; where the students' role is not viewed as that of a ready receptacle for right knowledge, but as that of a complex and active audience, whose emotions and motivations are *expected* to influence their thinking and beliefs, then the educators' role of extends to stimulating emotions and identities alongside intellects. In many disciplines, the direct importance of those more "personal" and "social" facets of learning experiences to the "objective" and "intellectual" scholastic aims of the field have received only marginal attention (which, candidly, is understandable in fields whose studies do not involve human relationships and communicative influence). But in rhetorical fields, where moving emotion, conveying reason, and motivating character have been canonized for centuries as an integrated trinity in the process of effective communication, the social and environmental complexity of scholastic aims and practices receives explicit attention.

Accordingly, within rhetoric-and-writing's discipline-specific contributions to pedagogical scholarship, the personal and situated nature of academic learning takes center-stage. In the following sections, these details will be reviewed; both of the educational aims that rhetoric-and-writing scholars emphasize under the banner of "learning transfer" (i.e., knowledge propagation and personal transformation), and of the educational approaches that follow therefrom (e.g., seeking to understand students' intentions and motives as they personalize and integrate their learning). Specifically, this review will focus on where rhetoric-and-writing's educational research has provided evidence and insights around three important educational realities: the personal and educationally consequential nature of students' various overlapping relationships with learning environments; the practical and motivated way that students apply learning within and across those environments; the

principled and intentional way that teachers learn about students' understandings and motives in order to meaningfully influence their relationships with disciplinary knowledge; and thus the social, persuasive, and dialogic nature of educational exchanges—to some extent across all disciplines, but acutely so in writing.

Educational efforts within rhetorical fields like writing directly attend to the *learner-environment* relationship and to the importance of *personalizing* knowledge as an intrinsic step in situating and deepening one's understanding (e.g., student authors progressing from stylistic imitation to synthetic/creative invention in their own writing). Along these lines, post-secondary writing research emphasizes that learning transfer entails personally adjusting understandings in application to suit the self-environment relationship, acknowledges that detecting transfer therefore requires flexibility in observing and assessing students' learning-related activities, and has shown that learners *are* evidently capable of personalizing and applying usefully what they learn, when their rhetorical situations and motivations are factored into their use of academic learning (e.g., de Palma & Ringer 2011; Brent 2012).

Extending from this personal and situated notion of learning, rhetoric-and-writing proffers a more  expansive, cross-contextual view of the knowledge-environment relationship. The content-matter in rhetorical disciplines like writing centers around how individuals convey and evoke understandings intentionally and effectively in others (e.g., through rhetorical strategies, genre knowledge, audience awareness), making these fields *practically* oriented toward discourse in real-world scenarios, and thus particularly *environmentally-responsive* as academic disciplines. This results in an inevitable and immediate link between personal-relational and academic-scholastic aspects of  educational exchanges. Post-secondary writing research, in actively exploring what practical relevance

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its disciplinary knowledge holds in the larger life trajectories of its students, has begun showing how pedagogically important it is to explicitly facilitate those ties between student subjectivities and academic core content. For example, studies here have found that that learners perceiving a subject's potential usefulness in future situations is a crucial determinant of whether they will internalize and draw on that learning (see review: Moore 2012) and that if learning is not interpreted as useful, even demonstrably capable students will not be disposed to transfer that learning. And toward that pedagogical end, others have found that improving educators' awareness of their own fluency with their discipline's threshold concepts is a realization that can help them to make sense of their students' tenacious disfluencies (Adler-Kassner, Majewski & Koshnick 2012).

Finally, extending from these personal and practical understandings of learning and knowledge, rhetoric-and-writing's many first-hand reflections on teaching the discipline explicate an acutely *dialogic* view of teaching-and-learning interactions. Education in rhetorical subjects involves an often intimate and vulnerable exchange between invested authors and critical audiences. This educational dynamic foregrounds students' emotions and experiences, motives and dispositions in the learning process—because a person's identity and purpose, whether as a novice or an expert in a field, are not merely present but essential to their way of composing. Specifically, a person's identity-based motives inform their ways of conceiving, discussing, reflecting on, revising, and presenting a goal-driven work to an intended audience.

This makes teaching writing particularly discourse-intensive work, where educators must attune to learners' perspectives and intentions in order to appropriately support the *knowledge-learner* relationship, co-creating an atmosphere that will nurture the core *principles* of writing: evoking genuine communicative acts wherein compositional methods

and habits become meaningful and valuable to students, facilitating their appreciation of the discipline's attitudes and approaches. So, building on the notion that teaching for transfer of learning is essentially expertise development (Beaufort 1999; Yancey, Robertson, Taczak 2014), scholars in post-secondary writing offer many suggestions regarding the discursive nuances of creating purposeful learning experiences, providing opportunities for reflection, and encouraging organizing frameworks that growing knowledge-base in students.

Importantly, these expert suggestions emphasize educators' reciprocal reflection and awareness within educational exchanges: that intentional and effective teaching relies on examining the curricular frame one creates for student learning experiences, and responding to the complexly individual relationships that form between the discipline-as-conveyed and the student-as-is in a classroom.

**Person-alizing the concept of Transfer in Post-Secondary Composition**

Nurturing students' deep and meaningful understandings of any discipline is a daunting challenge: the transformative aim of persuading and enabling students to propagate specific knowledge and integrate associated practices into their lives is literally a life-changing goal; and the ecological means for achieving that, namely creating genuine environments where students can receive both the supportive direction that novices need in a discipline and the opportunities to re-shape/create that system that experts grow through in a discipline, is a delicate environmental balance to achieve.

Within rhetoric-and-writing, these educational aims and means are acutely challenging, by virtue of the discipline's subject-matter: the 'Expert' archetype in writing, intrinsically, adjusts to the identities and goals of each individual as well as to the unique exigencies of each rhetorical situation in which they write. So creating educational spaces

where student participation is legitimate (i.e., meaningfully connected to discourse communities from where writing tasks gain their rhetorical purpose), and at the same time scaffolded (i.e., structured to support that student's disciplinary growth through writing tasks), requires constant attention to the student-environment interaction.

Learners transferring a discipline's core understandings into situations in academic / work / life situations beyond the classroom ultimately depends on whether they sense applicable value in those skills, knowledge, and orientations. Within writing, sensing that situational legitimacy is not just crucial for distant and lasting transfer of student learning, but is *immediately* consequential to student learning *within* classroom tasks: the audience a student writes toward, and the purpose with which they communicate, determines their sense of rhetorical purpose, genre, and strategy. That is, if student writing, as a rhetorical learning experience, is *not* somewhat genuine as an activity, then not only are the discipline's principled orientations, personalized knowledge, and practical skills unlikely to transfer usefully for that learner—they're unlikely to be experienced in the first place.

This acute challenge, of imbuing writing courses with genuine communicative purpose, has thus led educator/researchers in rhetoric-and-writing to expand their educational notions regarding transfer in discipline-specific ways—spotlighting the rhetorical, holistic, and dialogic aspects of effective teaching and deep learning.

In 2011, around 40 rhetoric and composition scholars, representing a diversity of focuses within the field, gathered at the Elon University Research Seminar to discuss the issue of "critical transitions" for learners transferring their rhetoric-and-composition learning across writing contexts. These lines of post-secondary writing research have taken place centrally in writing classroom contexts, or following teachers and students from those contexts. But nonetheless, these studies are rooted in transfer notions that are shared across

educational fields, and proffer observations arguably as relevant (though perhaps less obviously pressing) to educational efforts across academic fields; anywhere where a teacher's aim is to intentionally impact students' learning in a positive, influential, and lasting way.

## A more *Rhetorical* View of the Learner-Environment Relationship: Personalizing and Applying Subject-Matter

Fundamentally, transfer of learning entails personally adjusting understandings in application to suit the self-environment relationship. So the "success" of academic learning transfer, at an everyday level beyond the school environment, is defined not simply by fidelity to original source material or to the illocutionary intentions of educators, but by a metric located in the learner: how well that learning "works" for them, given their goals and their specific relationship with present society. At the surface, acknowledging a learner's motivated use, 'mis'-use, or intentional dis-use of a field's knowledge as valid when assessing the academic "success" of that knowledge transfer may seem contradictory: how does a scholar simultaneously uphold a discipline's field-based values and practices, *and* an individual's identity-based motives and goals, when assessing educational outcomes? In rhetorically oriented fields, where the subject-matter is intended to be adjusted by the individual to suit their situation, this middle-path that balances academic content and learner subjectivity is perhaps less alien territory to map out than in other fields: accurately observing the transfer of learning begins by recognizing that human knowledge *only* exists within people (sign-systems, artifacts, and activities mean nothing without the *minds* that give them meaning) and this knowledge is propagated to serve human purposes.

This means that creating and disseminating knowledge, from the social-systemic to the personal-experiential level, is a rhetorical act: a study and practice of symbolic

expression to achieve the purposes of the user. Ergo, to fully observe the reality of academic learning transfer (i.e., the useful presence of disciplinary knowledge within learners across contexts) requires attending to the current learner-environment relationship, the learner's ongoing purposes motivating current actions therein, and the learner's internalized perceptions of a discipline relevant to that situation/purpose.

This person-centered (rather than knowledge-centered) approach to studying transfer is in many ways a radical shift from conventional scholastic approaches. Yet this subjectively- and ecologically-situated scope of awareness reflects important advances in the way transfer is currently understood to occur (as discussed in the previous chapter). Research within post-secondary writing, being inclined by virtue of the discipline toward rhetorical modes of thinking, offers examples of how this may be translated into ways of discussing and of investigating the transfer of learning.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Ever more prevalently, post-secondary writing studies address the adaptive and mindful (versus rote and mechanistic) re-purposing and re-mixing of composition knowledge that students demonstrate when crossing boundaries into new writing contexts (e.g., Robertson, Taczak &Yancey 2012). In so doing, these studies are treating transfer as a motivated rhetorical act, ultimately embodied by the knower (with all the subjective complexity that entails) in response to the exigencies of their environment (with all the social/relational complexity that entails). This scholarly turn of attention, factoring in the *rhetorical* aspects of subject-matter learning within transfer research, has led to an according expansion of findings—namely, demonstrating that (1) learners *are* evidently capable of personalizing and applying usefully what they learn, but that (2) detecting this idiosyncratic

and situation-specific transfer as educators requires flexibility in observing and assessing (e.g., Wardle 2007; de Palma & Ringer 2011; Brent 2012).

Writing educator and researcher Elizabeth Wardle (2007) explains that this scholarly shift in approach, this expansion of awareness regarding the ways individuals can intentionally and selectively, creatively and variously use their academic learning, is important because thoughtful *(not* automatic) and aptly-adjusted *(not* rote) use of that learning is the *nature* of successful, high-level transfer (emphasis added):

> When we confine our attention to individuals [as opposed to individuals-within-situations], we may be tempted to assign some "deficiency" to students or their previous training though in fact the students may fulfill the objectives of their next writing activities satisfactorily without using specific previously-learned writing-related skills (such as revision). In addition, … some previously-learned knowledge and skills that are appropriate for and needed in a new context or activity system may be applied differently than in the context or activity system in which they were learned. Therefore, <u>if we look for but do not find direct evidence that students use specific previously-learned skills in new situations, we cannot necessarily assume that students did not learn them, have not used them, or will not use them in the future</u>. … Consequently <u>we should attempt to account for the ways in which knowledge and skills are *transformed* across contexts</u>; otherwise, we risk overlooking <u>manifestations of skills that have been adapted to meet the needs of a new activity system</u>. … focusing on a limited search for "skills" is the reason we do not recognize more evidence of "transfer"; we are looking for apples when those apples are now part of an apple pie. (Wardle 2007, p.69)

Therefore, rhetorical educators and researchers approach transfer through a rhetorical lens: as an *active* process of personalizing and integrating disciplinary knowledge usefully— whether those ways are within or beyond those defined / imagined by experts. This flexibility in viewing and assessing student transfer of disciplinary learning, as a personally motivated and radically situated rhetorical process, then, enables these scholars to validate many creative varieties of student transfer and to explain many instances of partial or non-transfer more complexly and accurately: within the student's situated reality, rather than from the discipline's pre-decided and externally imposed evaluative framework.

**Transfer is: Knowledge → Personalization → Expertise**

As has been discussed, the general notion of transfer began as a somewhat mechanistic notion, along the lines of "How persistently will you repeat what I train you to do, beyond my direct reinforcement?" But even as the notion of has evolved, it has retained elements of that original tension between the natural living process (learning) and the normative categories by which it is assessed within a system (educational intentions). For example, in the earlier work of David N. Perkins (e.g., Perkins & Salomon 1989), distinctions in transfer-of-learning such as "high road" (mindful) versus "low road" (reflexive), and positive (performance improvement) versus negative (performance interference), continue to foreground academic aims and system-situated activities as the normative frame for describing transfer.

As scholars' ideas of intended learning have moved beyond "abilities-centric" conceptions of a student's intelligence to more situated conceptions of their everyday intelligent behavior (Perkins, Tishman, Ritchart, et al. 2000), attending to the importance of a learner's motivations and dispositions, those prior notions appear more and more bounded

in their educational utility. Under Perkins' current "detect-elect-connect" model of intelligent behavior—where learners perceive possible connections with prior (system-valued) learning experiences in an environment, decide to pursue that link, and actively forge that (system-validated) connection—the stimulus-response notions of learning produce relatively localized and limited educational effects. These "learning cultures of demand," as he calls them (Perkins & Salomon 2012), fail to exercise the capacities of seeking and judging and adjusting in relation to that (system-positive) learning, and so nurture a too-passive connection between the learner's understandings and their actions in the world.

The peril intrinsic to this tenacious skill/ability frame of focus, in higher education, is essentially this: the desired outcomes of scholastic activity systems—whose pursuits include developing accurate and unbiased understandings of phenomena, and promoting human well-being in all its complex diversity—fundamentally rely on active challenges to the established claims and conventional boundaries of those existing systems. Mindful and open attention, creative and critical thinking, original and innovative contributions: these receptive states of being and generative dispositions of action extend beyond the realm of simply predictable "skills" that take a pre-determined form; they are dynamic  ways of relating between an ever-changing individual and ever-changing environment. So human knowledge-building relies on unique individual explorations (Hawkins 1965) and on fluent social exchanges of those diversely meaningful first-hand experiences (Dewey 1938) for its fuel.

This face of learning and knowledge propagation is more accurately reflected by developmental and sociocultural conceptions of transfer, e.g. the aforementioned King Beach (1999) or Terttu Tuomi-Gröhn and Yrjö Engeström (2003), perspectives situated *between* system and person, wherein transfer is viewed as an agentive and creative process.

And these notions of learning evoke notions of education more along the lines of a "learning culture of opportunity" (Perkins & Salomon 2012), where learners' habitual dispositions and motivations in *using* knowledge are educationally exercised: through open-ended experiences that call for awareness, judgment, and reflection; that nurture  personal, situated knowledge-bases; that exercise understanding, expressing well that understanding, and relating fluently with one's environment through that understanding.

To be clear, this is a *rhetorically*-rooted vision of learning and educating: the personal and motivated process of meaning-making, of exchanging meanings within a mediating social system, and of contributing with some situated purpose to the ongoing change of that system. This expansion of attention toward the practical, situated use of learning in/for society has lead to an educational interest in moving beyond carefully framed and compelled displays of student ability, and toward observing more realistically how students tend to apply their intelligence "in the wild" of everyday circumstances (e.g., Perkins, Tishman, Ritchhart, Donis & Andrade 2000), and fostering both the knowledge-base (Haskell 2001) and dispositional traits (Tishman, Jay, & Perkins 1993; Ritchart & Perkins 2000) that discourse communities' most respected and valued members—their experts—rely upon in everyday situations.

Fostering experience-based fluency within an environment, or "expertise," has thus become a prominent and unifying image for educational aims, not just in rhetorical fields, but across academic disciplines. Effective learning transfer, across epistemological domains, is essentially a process of developing expertise: a learner's ability to intentionally apply and fluently adjust their experience-based, usefully organized, principle-oriented knowledge in relevant environments. Educators want to share with learners the fundamental values, insights, and practices from which expert relationships with their disciplines evolve.

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Furthermore, because expert relationships with a discipline are discursive, critical and creative (as the individual wrestles with the boundaries and contributes to the perspectives of the field), this educational aim of fostering expertise mandates a more explicitly rhetorical treatment of transfer.

The writing field has keyed in on this need recently, noting that '*reuse*' notions of transferring past knowledge allow educators to dismiss personalized adaptations thereof (potentially seeing anything other than exact use of what was taught as 'not-transfer') and also that looking for such "consistency" in application does not reflect the way that writers *actually* use writing knowledge and as they move among discourse contexts, reshaping and reforming learned notions and procedures to fit new tasks (de Palma & Ringer 2011).

Thus, to understand more accurately how students both "carry forward and reshape writing knowledge and experience learned in prior contexts to fit new ones," writing-oriented scholars have adopted broader, more flexible frameworks for viewing student transfer of disciplinary learning, such as de Palma and Ringer's notion of '*adaptive transfer*' (2011). They describe adaptive transfer (in writing, specifically) as dynamic and idiosyncratic, cross-contextual and multilingual, transformative and—at its heart—rhetorical: occurring "when students understand that the context, audience, and purpose of a piece of writing influence what is appropriate; [and so leaving] room for the possibility that differences in student writing are the result of a 'strategic and creative choice by the author to attain his or her rhetorical objectives.'"

This view can also easily be transposed onto learning in other fields. Where knowledge and skills are not merely repeated but refined to fit the person and the situation, transfer is a  fundamentally rhetorical act: ecologically motivated by an learner's situated sense of purpose, creatively realized as that learner seeks a context-appropriate incarnation

of their experience-based knowledge, and strategically adapted as they test out and refine personally-effective means for using that knowledge purposefully.

This rhetorically-rooted view of transfer implies seeing learners not as mere novices in a receptive role, but as active contributors to the disciplinary pool of experiences, ideas, and products—which can both usefully support and constructively challenge the current state of understandings. In post-secondary writing, this has raised related interest in educational topics such as Jan Meyer and Ray Land's notion of 'threshold concepts' (2006), those core elements of a discipline's world view that can transform how students identify with a discipline, once they are understood—and can likewise present barriers to transfer, when not understood; and David Russell's notion of 'school activity systems' as modified genres which are situation-specific, and so require students entering professional situations to transition their identity, and their scholastic knowledge, to work within that system—by exploring the system and its tools, members, genres directly (in Moore 2012). These notions extend from a fundamental awareness that students form subjective *relationships* with a discipline's perspectives; an awareness which is acute within rhetorical fields, where students are constantly and explicitly reflecting that relationship through acts of genred self-expression.

Accordingly, research into disciplinary learning transfer in post-secondary writing has paid specific attention to the learner-environment relationship, taking into account students' biographical perspectives, situational needs and motives, situated tasks and community values beyond the writing classroom. Studies of students' transitions from first-year composition (FYC) to other course/discipline and community/workplace writing contexts, have asked pointedly relevant rhetorical questions about the personal value of the discipline, as taught and as perceived, for its students (Moore 2012): Anne Beaufort asks what knowledge-domains they actually *need* to draw on, for analyzing *new* writing tasks in

*new* discourse communities; Elizabeth Wardle explores what students actually feel they learned and did in FYC, confronting the difficulty of teaching genres out of context; Chris Anson probes the extent to which the knowledge and skills we value in schools have value in extracurricular environments, and whether students are learning it well enough to make use of it; and Rebecca Nowacek seeks out *how* students make use of prior genre knowledge when encountering new genres. These guiding research questions for studying transfer of rhetorical/writing knowledge are all focused on situated writing activities and the subjective experience of the learner—where descriptive truths and normative definitions of success are defined within unique communities; where student perceptions of learning are viewed as a valid metric of that learning's success (Wardle 2007). That is to say, this educational research in the field of writing taking into account learners' and communities' *internal* measurement-scales (external to the discipline's contexts and metrics) as an important component in assessing academic learning transfer.

Expanding beyond disciplinary frameworks in observing and assessing learning transfer is reflected in the methods used by these studies, which generally focus on exploring deeply, over one or two course-terms, a single educational institution and the multiple perspectives of participants therein, or alternately, over a longer span, a small group of learners carrying their original learning across contexts (Moore 2012). These studies primarily work with student participants, exploring first-hand their sense of educational exchanges and supplementing those learning perspectives with that of involved faculty or disciplinary experts: using surveys, focus groups, interviews, classroom observations, compose-aloud protocols; analyzing course materials such as group discussion logs, course journals, students' class notes and reflections, writing samples and faculty comments on assignments to explore those subjective educational realities.

The theories and insights that have emerged from this research focuses attention on several important aspects of education's rhetorical reality. Foremost, that transfer is a descriptive notion (the what / how / why / when experience of students' wild human learning) and that what educators are actually talking about when they say 'transfer' is the normatively valued part of that learning (students' intentional and successful *integration* of learning—of intelligent, expert-like behaviors—in their social participation across domains and communities) that they as educators are trying to foster in classroom conversations (Nowacek 2011). Secondly, that this academically valued portion of students' overall learning transfer appears limited, in the near-term, not by their ability, but by their perception/acceptance of that learning's real-life value for them (Driscoll 2011). Thirdly, that as students encounter challenging situations where their new knowledge appears critically valuable, some may merely tack on those new ideas to old knowledge frameworks, while others more fully synthesize that knowledge in a way that alters and/or refines that existing integrated framework (Robertson, Taczack, & Yancey 2012). And lastly, that what seems to 'transfer' most usefully for students—at least in writing—is a discipline-informed meta-awareness of their environments; an ability to see rhetorically, for instance, the parts of a new task and its relation to tasks in familiar genres, the expectations placed on them socially and the response needed to achieve their personal goals in that situation (Wardle 2007).

These findings carry important implications for the way educators in all fields might view personal learning, subject-matter knowledge, and educational interactions—and they are produced from lines of inquiry which focus on the rhetorical nature of learning relationships between individuals and their environments; between motivated persons and the pressing needs of their immediate situations, which compel attention and judgment and response.

*** Lesson 1: Transfer is recontextualization; successful transfer is integration.**

Transfer as it naturally arises across contexts in students lives—diversely, complexly, both

within and beyond the bounds of established expectations—seems somewhat at odds with

conventional notions of academic success which seeks performative signs of content mastery

and supportive contributions to established values, beliefs, and practices. To resolve this

seeming tension, between an act of learning (transfer) that creates connections across

situations but does not determine how exactly that evoked learning will manifest, and an act

of communication (integration) that successfully expresses learning within an established

system, Rebecca Nowacek (2011) points out that "transfer" and "recontextualization" are

essentially interchangeable notions—and that recontextualizing (that personal act of carrying

over learning) is essential to genre-creation (that situated act of rhetorical coordination in

society). Essentially, Nowacek's point is that genres within human discourse help individuals

to perceive fundamental *similarities* among situations (e.g., "Good day!" we recognize as a

greeting; "Would you mind..." we recognize as a polite request), and so to interpret others'

acts of communication and generate our own, appropriately and effectively—despite the

intrinsic uniqueness of every situation we encounter (e.g., on a bus, in a palace, during the

zombie apocalypse, "Would you mind..." will still help you interpret what another person's

intention is).

This theory of genre helps to clarify the theory of transfer by turning its object-

oriented narrative (of preserving thoughts or repeating acts across divides of difference

between situations) into a subject-oriented one (of giving individuals a means of seeing and

using similarities among situations). Social-rhetorical genres serve as guides for individuals

exploring unfamiliar environments. These genres are formed among individuals and are

perpetuated because they benefit individuals: their value is determined by their subjective

utility as a "nexus between stability and change" (Nowacek 2011), helping people to coordinate rhetorical understandings and stabilize social actions.

Thus, looking at transfer as recontextualization brings personal notions of learner identity and intention, perceiving "knowledge" and enacting "ways of knowing," to the center of discussions about integrative learning in academic environments. Knowledge is a human tool, a complex of observations and propositions that are continuously, actively (re)formed and (re)directed—as are genres—to serve human motivations and human goals: a group's ways of knowing, of gathering and interpreting evidence, of conveying propositions within communities of discourse, all reflect these motivated intentions. And individuals within these social contexts develop goal-oriented identities, an understanding of their "role, capacities, affiliations, and worth" in that environment (Nowacek 2011)—their sense of purpose and duty and meaning as part of a larger ongoing human existence. So transferring learning is an individual experience, situated within "a larger trajectory of intellectual and emotional development" for that person (2011); and that *personal* act of embodying disciplinary knowledge, processes, and/or orientations is not simply a "positive" or "negative" reproduction of the field's genres, but a reconstruction of that rhetorical activity, being offered back to the system consequentially as part of an ongoing exchange (Beach 1999).

At this crux of transfer, where an individual actively decides whether-and-how they will embody their learning as they participate in an environment, Nowaceck's (2011) notion of integration enters in. *Integration*—the intentional, successful connection of one's learning across domains and communities—is educationally valuable, amidst other incarnations of transfer (impulsive, unaware, disruptive carry-overs of life-experience learning), because it represent an understanding and control of content learning that is *useful* for the learner; that

helps them to relate genuinely, fluently, purposefully with their environment. Where participation by the learner in an educational (or other community) exchange feels divided, distinct, irrelevant from the rest of their experiences, they are experiencing no transfer of learning—not of any sort. Where that participation feels connected, familiar, associated with prior experiences in some vague or tacit or non-explicit way, they are experiencing a basic "low-road" form of transfer. And where that participation is seen as meaningful, purposeful, personal by the learner in a way that is conceptually clear and meta-aware and actively discursive, they are experiencing that specifically "intentional and successful" form of transfer that Perkins and Salomon call "high-road," that Bakhtin calls "fully diologized consciousness," and that Nowacek refers to as "integration."

Viewed in this way, learning transfer at its most educationally valuable is a rhetorical act: when students connect learning among domains, integrating their educational experiences, they are relating with their environment through motivated acts of cognition, influenced by and tailored to their specific social contexts. As an *agent of integration*, the learner works actively both to *"perceive* as well as to *convey effectively to others* connections between previously distinct contexts."* That is, integration involves not only seeing for one's self (consciously, with meta-awareness), but also "selling" that vision to others (successfully, with situational nuance): reading an audience, understanding their expectations, and deciding how to "either meet or recalibrate that audience's expectations" (Nowacek 2011). By examining student case studies in this way, Nowacek illustrates in her research how aspects of learning transfer play centrally into both the success and visibility of their learning integration: students' displays of understanding and rhetorical options therein, their self-constructed identities and classroom-forged power relationships, all influence to what extent and how those learners choose to apply their academic learning of writing.

Research such as this, which takes into account the personal agency and situated motivation of learners, also sheds light on the the simultaneously academic and personal quality of educational encounters—which leads to the next important reality raised by post-secondary writing studies of transfer.

> *\* Lesson 2: A learner's disposition to use (i.e., transfer) learning, beyond educational environments, depends on the learner having perceived the usefulness of that learning for other situations.*

Paying attention to the motivation and agency of learners has led transfer researchers in rhetoric-and-writing not only to look more flexibly at how students choose to embody the discipline's orientations, notions, and processes, but also to examine carefully the reasons why capable students often elect not to apply—or even look for opportunities to apply—their learning experiences from the discipline, beyond where the classroom directly compels it.

By focusing on this rhetorical educational dynamic, i.e., on the mutual persuading and negotiating that teachers and students do as they coordinate their academic understandings and aims within disciplines, writing researchers have honed in on a crucial educational issue, potentially relevant wherever learning seems bound to its original context: transfer of writing knowledge and processes appear limited, in the near-term, not by student ability, but by perception/acceptance of that knowledge's real-life value. For example (see overview: Moore 2012), Driscoll (2011) found that students in general first-year-writing (FYC) became less optimistic of the transferability of that material as the course progressed, while Bergmann and Zepernick (2007) found that students were more likely to accept writing conventions and strategies as valuable and generalizable to other contexts when they learn that subject-matter in more specifically situated writing-in-the-disciplines (WID) courses.

Both research groups explain that where students are not explicitly drawing connections and applying learned content, those students' comments reveal that this is often not for lack of understanding the material, but for not having been persuaded of that material's relevance and utility in contexts beyond the classroom; they anticipate no broader usefulness for that learning, and so they are motivated neither to look for nor recognize opportunities to apply, re-purpose, and personalize that learning beyond where the class compels them. By talking with FYC students about the connection they foresee between their current writing courses and their future writing, Driscoll (2011) identifies four categories in students' perceptions of their writing course's transferability: explicitly connected (articulating specific relevance of current learning to forthcoming writing situations), implicitly connected (expressing only the learning's general value), uncertain (not sure of the course's use or transferability), and disconnected (devaluing the course, seeing little or no writing in their future that would be connected to FYC learning experiences).

Noting these student attitudes toward academic content is educationally crucial: in writing disciplines, it draws educator attention to the need for explicitly showing students how rhetorical concepts and composition processes apply to a variety of writing contexts in their lives: in other academic disciplines, as well as in work and life situations. But this reality holds, analogously, for learning across disciplines: if an individual does not see learning as useful, what motivation do they have for remembering that information beyond the course, let alone actively recalling it and applying it as part of their framework for thinking and acting in future situations? Recognizing the rhetorical nature of learning and transfer means recognizing the persuasive nature of educating. Students cannot be compelled to value a subject nor to be influenced personally by its beliefs and practices: they may be compelled, by grades or social pressure, to memorize information or to perform acts of

understanding and ability within a scholastic environment, but such situation-specific

exigencies compel likewise situation-specific efforts.

For learners to alter, adjust, or refine their perspectives and behaviors in a lasting

way, beyond the original context of learning, requires their continuous motivated effort to

perceive, reflect, and act with that learning in heart. Such a personal investment from the

student requires a likewise personal  effort by the educator to persuade: not just for the

general validity or accuracy of a discipline's approaches, but explicitly for the personal

importance and specific situational usefulness of those approaches in the lives of those

learners.

This is a tall order, pedagogically. But as the next insight from rhetoric-and-writing

research makes plain, asking students to challenge and alter the boundaries of their existing

paradigms can be a tall academic request.

*** Lesson 3: Academic environments challenge students' existing knowledge
frameworks;  the social realities of those environments create situation-specific
exigencies which influence how students incorporate new knowledge.***

Composition studies has tackled the "transfer question," how to teach writing in ways that

support students developing their expertise continuously (in writing situations beyond and

after that direct education ends) from several directions: emphasizing as a core focus the

*practice* of writing, via *contextual / genre awareness* – i.e., supporting students in amassing

knowledge of the situation in which their writing occurs, and seeing relevant relations

among situations, as a way to develop toward expertise (e.g., Sommers & Saltz 2004); or

alternately focusing on the *knowledge* about writing that informs that practice, via *writerly*

*metacognition / goal understanding* – i.e., supporting students in perceiving the writing

concepts that are present within new environments, and being motivated by clear goals in

those situations, which together support the useful transfer of composition knowledge (e.g., Downs & Wardle 2007); or more phenomenologically focusing around the *personal orienting frameworks* by which learners make sense and use of writing knowledge and practices, via *adaptive / creative use of prior writing experience* – i.e., supporting students in actively drawing on, reworking, or creating new writing knowledge and practices from previous experiences, synthesizing a personal framework to handle new situations' communication challenges (e.g., Reiff & Bawarshi 2011). Each of these focuses brings with it the challenge, for writing educators, of creating for their students academic situations that actually support the transfer of these core focuses – i.e., that explicitly foreground the broader value as well as the immediate practical relevance of these core disciplinary elements.

In Sommers and Saltz's piece (2004), focusing on learners' experiences of writing and developing that writing in academic contexts, they discovered by interviewing students and analyzing their writing that one issue getting in the way of students' writing development was a premature pressure on them, within school discourse genres, to write as experts: presenting big-picture distillations of field knowledge and synthesizing original arguments before they had gained a familiarity with field knowledge and practices that was deep enough to warrant that contribution. To address this, the authors point out the importance of creating educational environments where the students are comfortable taking the role of a novice (writing "into" expertise, by repeating the ideas of experts as a way to familiarize, and to work toward questioning them and gradually forging their own), and where they are persuaded to feel that their contributions to the field's discourse are genuine and valuable in that context. As one student in the study remarked, struck by the notion that writing in moral philosophy is not merely an 'academic' exercise, but entry into a living debate with multiple

valid views: "To think that I, a freshman, could be asked to find a flaw in Aristotle's reasoning, that it was just me and Aristotle on the page—what a sense of power."

For Downs and Wardle (2007), focusing on building students' understanding of rhetoric and writing as a field of scholarly inquiry (i.e., the knowledge discipline of writing, rather than merely the procedural practice thereof), they conducted two case studies of students reading and conducting writing-related research in their writing-about-writing course. What they found through these interviews with students was, for students, the importance of seeing the place and purpose of their work within a discourse community. For example, student Stephanie recognizing that a literature review not only helps to focus one's own ideas, but lends weight and validity to those ideas in the eyes of one's audience.

Additionally, educators (as supporters of that student learning) noted the importance of prioritizing what is important for students to accomplish: for example, valuing the "moves" students make, (e.g., taking the proper steps to conduct solid research-based inquiry), even above the immediate quality of their work as they exercise those moves, because small details of performance and skill (APA formatting conventions, spelling, etc.) are subsumed under more essential educational goals in composition. Their student Jack for instance, who struggled with the original research assignment, nonetheless expressed clearly in his final reflection a developing sense of meta-awareness; a situated and informed sense of writer identity and ability: "in this course [I] really started to think for myself. … I do know that a lot of people struggle with their writing and that makes it a little easier for me to write without fear of what people will think. [This course did open] my mind and make me think that it all depends on who is reading my writing and that it isn't all me that stinks."

In Reiff and Bawarshi's study (2011), focusing on how students use their existing discursive resources (e.g., genre knowledge and related writing strategies) when

encountering new writing tasks in FYC courses, the researchers conducted surveys about students' prior knowledge and discourse-based interviews about their current cognitive processes in writing (specifically "what prior genres they were *reminded of* and *drew on*"), alongside analysis of course texts (both the prompts from instructors and compositions from students). From these texts and metacognitive reflections, the researchers found that students may draw on familiar genres and strategies from their past in various ways within new task situations: specifically, acting either as "boundary guarders," who tend to apply their existing understandings of genres regardless of current task realities and perhaps add new strategies to those old frames but resist reshaping them, or alternately acting as "boundary-crossers," who are more likely to question and deconstruct their existing genre knowledge into useful principles and strategies that they can fit to the rhetorical specifics of new writing situations.

Reiff and Bawarshi note that these dispositions toward "lower-" or "higher-road" transfer were associated with certain indicators in the students. One such indicator was their confidence: familiar- and easy-seeming assignments spurred student confidence and more cut-and-paste uses of prior knowledge, whereas more complexly challenging and deeply community-situated assignments lowered students' immediate confidence in defining the tasks before them, stimulating more mindful reflection and imaginative reshaping of strategies. Another was their connection of whole genres with constellations of specific strategies: boundary-guarders tended to draw on whole genres but only limited associated strategies, whereas for boundary-crossers, referencing a genre or two seemed a way of accessing clusters of related concrete approaches. And another was the presence of uncertainty and "not" talk—that is, instances where students recognize tasks as moving beyond the familiar and must search for more fitting ways to understand and express what they are doing (e.g., "I wrote it [in] a new format *so not particularly essay*, but I put in [a]

kind of review aspect [like], this author wrote these books before, [to give] a background of the author, but more than I would in an essay").

For educators, the desirability of socially fostering such boundary-crossing behaviors in students—particularly within rhetorical fields—is emphasized in Robertson, Taczack, and Yancey's (2012) typology for the ways learners build on prior knowledge. *Assemblage*, where students seem to take up disciplinary learning by "by grafting isolated bits of new knowledge onto a continuing schema of old knowledge," is a personal disposition that, if reinforced by educational environments (e.g., classrooms where rote memorization and quick completion of disconnected activities lead to social praise and competitive advantage) can lead to all sorts of academic difficulties in the long-run. Here, they give the example of a first-year college student, Eugene, whose assemblage-style approach to building on prior knowledge in writing leads to a pattern of confusing and conflating ideas and practices from high school with those in college, of persisting in the belief that there was not much more for him to learn in the subject, and of relying primarily on prior knowledge in an unconscious and unreflective way to deal with new and specific situational demands. This learning disposition supports neither the refinement of prior knowledge (through reflecting and attuning), nor the continuity of new knowledge (through questioning and seeking). *Remixing*, on the other hand, is where students revise prior knowledge, synthetically incorporating new concepts and processes into that existing model.

This latter personal learning disposition supports not only the expansion of individual knowledge, but also contributes to the potential growth of the discipline's communal knowledge field. In rhetoric-and-writing, remixing supports the learner's ability to creatively repurpose familiar composing practices: blending sources, stories, and ideas into novel works—as well as new strategies, principles, ideas. In short, it is a form of invention.

For this, they give the example of college student Alice, who builds out her own model of writing from notions and strategies she learned in high school English, combined with the college-learned notion of rhetorical situation and the practice of reflection.

Robertson, Taczack, and Yancey note that personal setbacks in new situations often seem to motivate such inner reworkings of knowledge and strategy, and the conceptual and practical breakthroughs that follow—a pattern they have observed in their experience with students in writing, and found in reports of learners across fields, from surgery to teaching. They call these situational setbacks "critical incidents" (2012); person-environment interactions where efforts do not succeed at all or go markedly more poorly than expected. Educationally, these emotionally immediate experiences are opportunities for learning and growth; for improving practical outcomes and creating personal knowledge. To illustrate this person-situation educational dynamic, they offer the example of a college writer with a passion for science, Rick: Rick struggles with conveying the significance of data subjectively to his audience during first-year composition, and eventually is motivated to confront this rhetorical difficulty when he receives a poor grade on a chemistry lab report for not connecting his conclusion to "everyday life"—this incident spurs him to adapt his style of science writing for the course, maintaining his concise and factual style while reflectively showing the implications of that information in daily life, and more generally beginning to see the flexibility of genres and the synthetic nature of writing.

Such close inquiries and conversations with students, as these above, help to uncover fundamental realities about the influence that educational environments have on learning experiences, at the post-secondary level: that the way educators are communicating a student's social role and purpose can impact those students' personal motivations and approaches to academic work (Sommers & Saltz 2004); that the way educators are

explicating core aims for classroom communities, and are instructively applying that frame to students' acts of community participation, pragmatically impacts a student's socially-mediated sense of academic progress and self-efficacy (Downs & Wardle 2007); that the way educators construct learning activities, and embed that work within evolving community contexts, can influence the critical depth and creative flexibility with which students use prior learning to make new academic learning personally meaningful and useful (Reiff & Bawarshi 2011; Robertson, Taczack, & Yancey 2012).

In short, exploring students' experiences of academic learning—in personally nuanced, situation-tailored ways—illuminates how multifariously an academic environment's social reality influences the value, meaning, and use that students find in the educational content they encounter there: the quality of students' academic learning experiences relies on the quality of the interpersonal educational exchanges through which that learning is (rhetorically, pragmatically) proffered and perceived in a community.

In other disciplines, the pedagogical path to educational ends may look different, but that educational aim of fostering deep and personally resonant understandings still holds, as does the necessity of noticing what kind of relationship students are forming personally with that academic subject matter—even, or especially, at the post-secondary level, where students are institutionally transitioning from general education objectives to specific disciplinary identities and interactions. This raises the importance, for post-secondary educators, of noticing the exigencies that their educational approaches evoke environmentally for students. The narratives of knowledge and values, the activity frames around practices and principles, the guiding dialogs alongside learner participation and effort: each part of that social reality is intended to persuade students to internalize, apply, and personalize their learning in the discipline—genuinely, effectively, and creatively—and

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to facilitate that nascent, growing expertise. But whether those educational *intentions* match the rhetorical, pragmatic *reality* of a discipline's educational environments, or alternately fall short in their social propagation of community wisdom, requires the explicit input of students and teachers to be determined.

In the discipline of rhetoric-and-writing, the daily work of classrooms often revolves directly, immediately, and continuously around this synchrony of dialog: the exchange of prompts and written compositions; the coordination of rhetorical purposes and educational objectives; the dialog of authorial intentions and audience interpretations as writing is read, commented on, discussed, and revised—as a community effort. And that distinct pedagogical exigency continues to lead researchers and educators in this discipline toward understanding the subtle details and difficulties of that rhetorical crux in education (the interpersonal, learning-centered dialog) in personal, situated ways that make visible the full emotional, rational, character-based reality of an educator's message and a student's educational take-away.

What other disciplines may be tempted to view, from scientific truth-oriented vantages in academia, as student failure-to-learn or misunderstanding or failure-to-transfer, looks more complex (and less inevitable) from a rhetorical communication-oriented vantage in academia. Through this lens, the onus is not simply on the teacher to demonstrate and the student to understand the subject-matter content, but rather on the teacher and student to understand one another—and from that foundation, to build a mutual understanding of the academic content: one that both see as valuable-in-society, true-to-experience, and useful-in-life. This lens on education compels a more challenging, personally demanding notion of pedagogical practice for teachers—but by the same token, a more rewarding, persuasive, and lasting educational exchange for teachers and students alike.

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The next two sections will go into greater detail on the implications that this rhetorical approach to education has for the treatment of subject matter and the approach to learning-centered interactions. As a transition to that, there is one final, brief lesson that can be taken from research on learning transfer within post-secondary rhetoric-and-writing: that beyond writing classes, even if students do not explicitly show signs of transferring disciplinary knowledge and practices, they may still carry over a sense of rhetorical meta-awareness, a discipline-informed orientation in the way they think about environments beyond the writing classroom. Whether or not students apply what they have learned in any field's courses depends greatly on whether their next environments evoke the need to do so. But if those students have *participated* repeatedly in explicit discussions of disciplinary topics, and if they have been *persuaded* consistently in those discussions to consider disciplinary ideas—in a personally resonant, situation connected, actively reflective manner—then they may well continue to do so, *autonomously* and *transformatively*, beyond the direct stimulus of their teacher and their classroom.

> *\* Lesson 4: Transfer of disciplinary knowledge and practices may not always be evident immediately or explicitly as learners move into new environments, though their meta-awareness in that self-environment relationship may have expanded.*

Finding evidence of deep learning transfer has proven a difficult and even disheartening challenge for educational researchers, leading some to question whether such transfer is taking place at all. But when considering what is known about deep, personal learning and situated expertise development, the lack of immediate, explicit evidence of students carrying over new disciplinary learning is not at all surprising. Deep learning takes time and

reflection, repeated and varied exposure; this process perhaps begins for students in classrooms, with moments of new awareness and subsequent practice—but those moments over 10 or 15 weeks represent only the fledgling first steps of that deeper internalization process. As learners build up stores of situated experiences and insights around that learning, toward expertise, their fundamental understandings and abilities often begin tacitly, with recognizing patterns in situations and responding readily, before these are distilled into succinct principles and explicit strategies.

Several post-secondary writing researchers have keyed in on this reality, in examining the often-elusive signs of transfer from FYC courses (see Moore 2012). Chris Anson and Lee Forsberg, for example, suggest that students develop toward professional writing in stages—experiencing expectations, and subsequent disorientations and struggles across new contexts, before fully transitioning into those environments and fortifying their professional writing approaches. Gerald Nelms and Ronda Dively add that, while differences in terminology and definitions across fields can complicate or confuse students' learning transfer, the reflection that students do in one area of study may also aid their subsequent learning and transfer in other areas and contexts. And treating transfer thus as an ongoing and evolving process for individuals across environments (rather than as discrete echoes of past educational stimuli) compliments Nowacek's aforementioned notion of transfer as recontextualization, where individuals draw connections among contexts actively and motivatedly; based on personal feelings and needs, and oriented toward personal goals and identities, within those situations.

Furthermore, as Elizabeth Wardle points out (see the block-quote in this section's introduction), expanding our academic attention beyond individual's tasks, to look at the situation-specific activities for which they are adapting and transforming their prior learning,

is crucial to seeing transfer—as it *is*, as part of an ongoing self-environment relationship. Wardle acknowledges that this makes for a much a much more difficult study, but ultimately one which fits the complex subject at-hand. The learning exchange between complexly motivated individuals and multifariously dynamic environments is not mechanistically normative in a way that supports a narrowly pre-defined, performance-oriented lens. Transfer within a self-environment relationship is experientially unique and motivationally distinct. So observing transfer requires a more adaptive and pragmatic (rhetorical) lens: where transfer's presence, accuracy, and positivity are defined internally and dynamically within that relationship.

In Wardle's (2007) pilot study of transfer, she follows 7 students from her own composition classroom, probing their understandings of tasks and activity systems. What she learned from her students' accounts was that, long after her course, they were able to engage in meta-discourse about writing, and did so consistently (for example, discussing differences in disciplinary writing in general at the university, and for themselves personally)—in ways they had not been able to articulate before the course. Still, despite expressing that they had learned many valuable notions and practices in writing (e.g., textual organization and analytical reading, conducting academic research and project planning), these students did not often generalize their previous writing experiences, knowledge, and abilities in other contexts.

The reasons for these "failures to transfer," students explained, were not connected to the subject matter itself (which they found valuable) nor to their own ability (which they felt was more than sufficient). Rather, students explained that they saw no *need*, in these other contexts, to apply their prior learning: they were motivated by grades within the university, and since teacher expectations in other classes were low, they could write quickly, with little

engagement or revision, and still receive "grades that satisfied them." In fact, one student dropped a class he actively enjoyed because he was *not willing* to expend great effort on that final research-paper for a B-grade: Wardle explains that this student, Matt, had "masterfully" completed a similar assignment in his writing course, and was confident in his ability to generalize that FYC learning in this class, but that he strategically decided to drop out because he knew that other teachers would more lenient graders (more lenient than they should be, he admitted—but still, his priority was best grade and least effort). And in another class, Matt expressed *wanting* to apply his FYC practices (e.g., careful planning and research, deep revision and peer review), but not having necessary time, because that teacher only provided one week for students to write.

Two points in this pilot study on transfer bear emphasis. Firstly, classroom conversations and activities can evidently nurture students' expanded awareness, appreciation, and familiarity regarding a discipline—and its potential to generalize into other areas of their lives. But a student's disposition to utilize that awareness and ability, to *actually* generalize that learning in a given situation, depends on their relationship with that environment: the opportunities and motives that define what is possible and worthwhile for that individual. In this study, even where students perceived their efforts as minimal, their works as personally devalued, their decisions as against the grain of what "should" be—and perceived opportunities to use their FYC learning for their own benefit—nothing in their academic environment persuaded them to do so.

This leads, then, to the second point: educational exchanges are rhetorical situations. The educational environment actively invokes and hierarchically emphasizes certain needs and aims for its participants (both explicitly and tacitly) though what it demands, provides, and rewards. Learners' rhetorical motivations and purposes are direct responses to those

situational exigencies, as the examples above illustrate. Those personal, situated motivations then guide learners' interests, attentions, and efforts in ways that *define* their learning experiences:

> The activities of schooling … did not routinely encourage or require students to generalize the writing skills and knowledge gained in FYC. … The only ability students seemed to consistently generalize from one writing task to another within the various activities of schooling was meta-awareness about writing: the ability to analyze assignments, see similarities and differences across assignments, discern what was being required of them, and determine exactly what they needed to do in response to earn they grade they wanted.
>
> (Wardle 2007, pp.76-77)

The transfer gap illustrated here, that distances school situations (and academic learning) from professional/life situations (and academic learning transfer), is not one of content, but one of motive. Students from this writing class reported instances of carrying over their meta-awareness of writing (rhetorical situations and genre conventions, assignment analysis and content organization) into other courses, evidencing the staying power of those classroom conversations and practices. These students, in reflection, report perceiving the *real* value of what they  learn, but are *unrealistically* motivated within school environments by the artifice of grades: motivated not toward quality work or toward community service, but first and foremost toward securing a high grade point average—which within that school environment is tied to their core identity and their comparative value as students.

These students *are* rhetorically meta-aware, and that prior learning *is* serving them in their life; the educational  problem here, for transfer-oriented educators like Wardle, is that these students' school learning environments are actively persuading them away from deeper

learning practices—fostering dispositions (Perkins & Salomon 2012) to *detect* point-earning over self-development opportunities, to *elect* ease over quality of approach, and to *connect* their academic learning directly to these socially eccentric situations (Russell 1997); self-environment relationships that are habitually rushed and performative, self-preserving and system-recycling, high-stakes and purpose-poor. Through this lens, failures to transfer writing (or any other disciplinary) knowledge do not simply emerge from students' shortcomings of aptitude or will, nor from curricula's shortcomings of content or clarity. Rather, practical failures of *transfer*—the seeking, seeing, and creating of connections among situations and experiences—arise complexly from relationships forged between the student and the curriculum, where ideal ends diverge from pragmatic means. David Russell (1997) explains, through the lens of activity/genre theory, how school activity systems can hamper student growth in disciplines by predetermining the pragmatic limits of their contributions to those systems—for example, conceptually/spatially/socially distancing a researcher's from a student's role and agency:

> [Students] are not (yet) in a position to pull strings even if they know where
>
> they are and which ones would be likely to effect the changes they desire. …
>
> most students are not in a position to challenge the genres (and, therefore,
>
> forms of life) of powerful disciplinary systems. I would add the obvious: they
>
> will never be if they do not develop a history of interactions with the
>
> discipline, by appropriating (and in doing so potentially transforming) the
>
> genres through which it interacts with other activity systems (including
>
> schools, governments, advocacy groups, etc.). (Russel 1997, p.538)

Students are aware of their agency, and the situational bounds thereof, and direct their motivated efforts accordingly: to engender the most pragmatically beneficial outcomes they

can with their system  knowledge (e.g., a great disciplinary advancement or, lacking that

agency, a positive community contribution or, not presented with those channels, some

nominal self-advancement). This dialectic treatment of the educational exchange echoes

John Dewey's (1902) critique of dichotomies that educational leaders propagate between

students and disciplines: treating the students as highly contextualized, messy mounds of

undifferentiated experience set in contrast against the disciplines' highly generalized

architectures of scientific principle, rather than treating both as part of one coherent system

of human transforming within contexts of intentional educational stimulation. That is, the

learning environment purposefully persuades students to develop in certain directions, both

by the values and social roles that it presents as ideal, and by the fuel of experience that it

proffers for students to develop themselves through (emphasis added):

> Nothing can be developed from nothing; nothing but the crude can be
>
> developed out of the crude …   Development does not mean just getting
>
> something out of the mind. It is a development of experience and into
>
> experience that is really wanted. And this is impossible save as just that
>
> educative medium is provided which will enable the powers and interests that
>
> have been selected as valuable to function. They must operate, and how they
>
> operate will depend almost entirely upon the stimuli which surround them
>
> and the material upon which they exercise themselves. The problem of
>
> direction is thus the problem of selecting appropriate stimuli for instincts and
>
> impulses which it is desired to employ in the gaining of new experience.
>
> What new experiences are desirable, and thus what stimuli are needed, it is
>
> impossible to tell except as there is some comprehension of the development

which is aimed at; except, in a word, as the adult knowledge is drawn upon as

revealing the possible career open to the child. (Dewey 1902, pp.18-19)

Thus, it bears repeating: educational exchanges are rhetorical situations, and this makes

student's personal, situated rhetorical aims in the classroom an *educational* problem—not a

personal one, nor a curricular one, but a pragmatic relational one: how to shape learning

environments so that students perceive a need for, an interest in, a drive toward deep

learning experiences. This is a rhetorical puzzle for educators in any field, but acutely so in

writing, where learning experiences revolve directly around students' motivated

contributions to classroom discourse: Is the student writing impersonally to echo the

teacher's beliefs, and aimlessly to meet a checklist of textual features that will receive an A-

grade (a learning experience of bounded utility) or is the student writing to inform, persuade,

convey some genuinely valued perception to others for a purpose that compels their

communicative attention and effort (a learning experience of broad utility)? In fields where

communication is a tool for knowledge exchange, this question may seem ancillary at times;

in writing, where communication is the field, this question is always central to pedagogy.

For this reason, it is valuable to look closely at how educators with deep experience

in writing classrooms intentionally shape their learning environments with students to foster

healthy educational exchanges. Even within the overarching problems of modern American

academic environments, many post-secondary writing classrooms, such as Wardle's, are able

to structure and sustain educational situations wherein students do engage in careful

planning, careful researching, deep revision, and peer review—reporting learning

experiences that are positive, influential, and lasting. How do writing educators construct

rhetorically effective educational environments for transfer? And what principles have they

distilled from these practical experiences, regarding the facilitation of student learning transfer?

The pedagogical guidelines that post-secondary writing scholars provide, for creating educationally effective learning environments, extend from a *rhetorical* understanding of learning: students are motivated agents, and learning is a situated activity, so student learning can be educationally directed through persuasive, explicit, active exchanges in supportive environments. The approaches to writing instruction that have developed from this understanding (though they are diversely personalized as practices and principles to suit specific situations) are commonly *dialogic* approaches. That is, they recognize that teachers' planned educational spaces are intended to be filled with student's unplannable learning contributions; their experiences, interpretations, and creative insights evoked by the discipline-as-presented. Disciplinary understandings, practices, and values are perceived, synchronized, and propagated within those learning-centered rhetorical exchanges—those evolving classroom dialogs.

## A more *Dialogic* View of the Knowledge-Learner Relationship: Teaching and Learning as Principled Mutual Discourse

### The Genred Nature of Social Knowledge

Disciplinary values, beliefs, and practices that circulate among an academic community naturally evoke conversational and behavioral conventions that suite those normative orientations, agreed-upon premises, and habituated activities. So, to learn an academic discipline, students must rhetorically navigate as novice participants in the genred activity systems of that knowledge-field (Nowacek 2011, see previous sections). Given this

educational reality, applying rhetorical genre theory to current notions of activity theory and situated learning theory (Brent 2011, 2012) helps elucidate *how*, pragmatically, individuals and knowledge form their mutually constitutive relationships—and so how, pedagogically, educators factor into that developing relation.

Within a discourse community (e.g., an academic field of research, a popular interest support-forum, a professional development collaboration, or some other purpose-oriented activity system), rhetorical *genres*—i.e., patterns or forms discourse—arise dynamically as a response to particular communicative needs which evoke particular styles of communication among participants, which "only have utility—indeed, only exist—if they are shared" (Brent 2011). Thus, reader expectations and writer constraints within a genre are directly and deeply tied to the communicative situation: that discursive *activity system* informs the motives behind a participant's every routine action.

In this way, learning in a discourse community is highly context-dependent; especially its rhetorical aspects, which center around the purposes that a learner perceives for an activity, based on the primary needs they perceive within that environment. For example, choosing a topic of focus, outlining a paper, composing a sentence, selecting a word, discussing a draft: each of these actions becomes a very different activity when the motivation is to inform a professional audience (rhetorical goal: communicating content in a clear, useful manner), versus to perform a skill for a teacher (rhetorical goal: demonstrating mastery in a pleasing, point-earning manner). Because genre formation in communities is socially circumscribed and goal-driven, community leaders/educators have to *coordinate* not only content knowledge, but also guiding values of a discipline; not only task procedures, but also communal goals that drive situated activities.

This link between orientations, understandings, and practices holds across academic (as well as non-academic) fields: as a learner attunes to a discipline's guiding values, this sets a personal foundation for recognizing that discipline's content-knowledge as relevant meaningful beyond the immediate learning environment, and consequently for applying the discipline's associated heuristics and strategies productively in other life situations. Therefore, in general, synchronizing a classroom's orienting values and motives in activities, and connecting those practical knowledge-building activities to realistic situations (i.e., dispositional enculturation, through valid participation) is crucial for extending learning transfer beyond immediate/academic contexts. Additionally, where transfer (the personalization and and practical integration of local learning across contexts) is an aim of the discourse community, nurturing that complex coordination of motives, intentions, and actions among individuals in an environment is paramount to the success of that social education.

Particularly within rhetorical education communities, the quality of this pragmatic coordination can directly and profoundly effect core academic aims. The nature of a rhetorical discipline is to value, understand, and facilitate the effective adaptation of practical discourse (by unique individuals, for unique situations). Consequently, the field's academic aims center on helping learners develop a base of knowledge and skill that is fundamentally *flexible* and *useful* beyond specific course-located tasks: a competent awareness of rhetorical heuristics and strategies, and the ability to manifest that knowledge in rhetorical practices (Brent 2012). This requires, on the part of the educator, a close and constant attention to the dialog within an educational environment—as this exchange lies at the practical center of rhetorical teaching and learning.

Developing a meaningful understanding of rhetorical knowledge requires a learner's motivated participation in legitimate communicative situations. Therefore the dialog between teachers and students takes on a dual educational role: at once academic and social. First, teachers and students in dialog do the educational work of explicitly propagating rhetorical knowledge, by talking directly about core concepts and practices and their overarching framework of disciplinary values. Secondly, teachers and students in dialog fulfill the need of tacitly co-developing a genuine communicative context, by learning each others' interests and identities as a foundation for coordinating rhetorical aims and strategies. Both of these aspects, together, are crucial in forming intentionally effective learning environments: the manner of daily teacher-student interactions, within activity frameworks, determines whether a classroom becomes a didactic testing-ground or dialogic educational exchange.

In the discipline of writing, it is this genuine discursive environment—at once academically purposeful and socially motivated—that best reflects the rhetorical exigencies of actual communicative situations beyond the school walls. Two corresponding topics have risen prominently in post-secondary writing research, which address these academic and social sides of teaching and learning: the notion of threshold concepts, and the issue of student dispositions. While the notion of threshold concepts attends more to the academic work of helping students to perceive and interpret as experts in a discipline do, and while the issue of dispositions focuses more on the social work of fostering personal character growth that aligns with those disciplinary motives, both emphasize that learning a discipline entails *being* part of a discipline: relating with its values, understanding its beliefs and reasons, experiencing its ways of thinking and doing.

This approach to the learner-knowledge relationship is neither monologically "teacher-centered" (the discipline-perspective dispensing of superior wisdom onto needy novices) nor "student-centered" (the discipline-perspective evoking of valued behaviors and insights from novices), but rather more dialogically *learning*-centered: it focuses on the growth of teachers and students together, coordinating their perspectives on a shared disciplinary path.

The writing scholar Peter Elbow (2006) explains quite eloquently the nature of this learner-knowledge relationship, the dual academic-social work that learners must engage in to fully come into and *be* with another perspective, as he explains the two languages—one of reason and one of experience—that together support an individual's educational expansion (emphasis added):

> As teachers and students we are in a good position to learn the ability to see
> things differently from how we usually see them, and the willingness to risk
> doing it. If we want to learn those skills, it helps to notice the inner stances—
> the cognitive and psychological dispositions—we need for doubting and
> believing: / • If we want to doubt or find flaws in ideas that we are tempted to
> accept or believe (perhaps they are ideas that "everyone knows are true"), we
> need to work at extricating or distancing ourselves from those ideas. There's
> a kind of language that helps here: clear, impersonal sentences that lay bare
> the logic or lack of logic in them. / • If, on the other hand, we want to believe
> ideas that we are tempted to reject ("Anyone can see that's a crazy idea")—if
> we are trying to enter in or experience or dwell in those ideas—we benefit
> from the language of imagination, narrative, and the personal experience.
> (Elbow 2006, p.21)

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In this context, Elbow is describing the "game" of believing-and-doubting as a means of engaging fruitfully with conflicting opinions in learning environments: analyzing the reasons behind ideas that we feel are sensible, and exploring the experiences behind ideas that we have not found sense in, from our individual perspective. More generally, he is illuminating the work at the heart of teaching and learning: creating social situations where individuals are academically willing to "risk" simultaneously experiencing alternate perspectives and questioning their own, expansively (for both the individual and the discipline).

In any field, teachers who embody disciplinary perspectives and students who embody a range of alternate perspectives must coordinate a shared, learning-centered educational dialog. That *mutual* exchange provides the social-academic foundation for fostering learner expertise—i.e., *genuine* engagement with a discipline, where students actively expand their understandings and  dispositions through disciplinary learning experiences, and actively transfer / propagate / integrate that learning into their ongoing self-environment relationships.

Within a rhetorical, genred understanding of social knowledge, movements away from mutual exchanges are movements away from genuine participation and transformative learning: to expect that students should absorb a discipline without contributing to it, or display personal understanding without being personally understood, is to create an inauthentic learning experience, and to invite an impersonal learner-knowledge relationship—for if classroom educational exchanges neither persuade a student to make personal use of academic learning experiences nor entice them to form a personal connection with disciplinary values, then what disposes that student, socially, to integrate that educational content?  Academic pressures can evoke peak student performance, but isolated and monologic force in a classroom is unlikely to compel long-term, internal affiliation.

Conversely, if a classroom is rhetorically intended to create a *mutual* perspective-exchange between learners and  knowledge-fields, then maintaining a genuine discursive environment is educationally fundamental, across the disciplines.

In post-secondary writing, this rhetorical perspective centrally informs current approaches to teaching and learning, in ways that valuably raise awareness of the social-academic unity of educational dialogs:  that fostering genuine student connections with academic content requires from educators a clear sense of purpose and principle in framing classroom actions, a persuasive social means of nurturing student investment in that learning-centered exchange, and a subjective awareness of students' experiences as they interpret and interact with that academic content.

### *\* Implications for the learning environment #1 (intentions):*

### *Fostering personal, situated, mindful connections with disciplinary approaches.*
What rhetoric-and-writing recognizes about academic learning transfer in its field boils down to the following.  First, transfer *does* occur—and in rhetorical disciplines, not only does transfer occur, but it is "necessary for successful writing" and communicating writ large (ELON 2013). And second, academically desirable transfer in writing (that expansive propagation of knowledge by the learner, integrated intentionally and effectively into their environmental relationships) is personal, situated, and mindful.

Transfer is *personal*, in that prior learning is brought into new situations in personally unique ways—both through routinized and reflective / creative / transformative processes (this learning includes a person's knowledge, skills, strategies, and dispositions *together*). Transfer is *situated*, in that social affordances and constraints influence a person's attention, motivations, and opportunities within environmental relationships—and so influences what portions of their total prior learning they see as relevant and worth applying.

Transfer is also *mindful,* in that "successful" transfer (notably so in rhetoric-and-writing) entails some transformation or repurposing of knowledge and strategies by the learner who embodies them in that situation: a learner must adjust the state of their understanding to fit it rightly with each unique situation, when invoking personal awareness and experience, to manage a new and difficult task (e.g., applying rhetorical, genre, and composing know-how to deal with the specific exigencies of a writing assignment, bearing particular community expectations, within a unique school/workplace discourse environment).

This expansive conception of learning translates directly to certain important considerations in teaching (ELON 2013). Writing educators recognize that students' prior knowledge, experience, dispositions, and identities can both compliment and interfere with educational goals for academic learning transfer. Yet either way, these personal aspects play an actively central role in the individual's learning transfer, and so must be understood and explored to facilitate that transfer. They further recognize that the situational factors impacting how an individual student succeeds or struggles with transfer challenges (i.e., the social affordances and constraints they encounter within their classroom, university, community) are unique—and can only be understood from *within* those social-cultural spaces, through direct communication.

Furthermore, they recognize that for students in these situations, effective transfer of disciplinary learning requires some degree of meta-awareness and meta-cognition (e.g., of one's immediate situation, and one's internal responses thereto; about one's community audience, and one's available identities and actions within that system): a self-understanding which students need time and opportunity to develop, through attention-priming and reflection-practicing activities (e.g., explicit discussions and dedicated times for journaling). That is, writing educators recognize the social work and the academic aims of teaching as

unified: their classrooms are complex rhetorical situations, where learning-centered tasks

and interactions socially support and coordinate students propagating personal, practical,

mindful communication.

Achieving this aim, then, of fostering intentional and successful (i.e., integrative)

student learning, requires in the educator a twin awareness: first, of what learner dispositions

are being nurtured by the educational frameworks / environments / situations that they as

educators create socially (i.e., which learning experiences are being explicitly rewarded,

supported, and valued in classroom interactions); and second, of how academic threshold

concepts are being experienced by the students, as they engage with the discipline-specific

prompts / conventions / dialogs of that classroom.

A rhetorical approach to education, then, invites a discursive formulation of the

learning environment: in moving from educational aims to classroom practices, teachers

must take into account the unique rhetorical situation that a particular institution, a particular

instructor, and a particular group of students together create, if they are to maintain a

principled coherence among those elements—a robust and intentional connection between

what is educationally valued and what is environmentally supported in daily interactions. In

post-secondary education, where explicit focus on academic aims can leave the social

channels through which those aims are achieved as tacit, ossified conventions, this reminder

from the rhetorical disciplines is an important one: educational values and purposes need to

be explicitly discussed among educators and with learners, so that educational principles

remain clear and stable, when dealing with the complex and and dynamic rhetorical reality

of everyday educational exchanges.

This leads, then, into writing's insights regarding that educational exchange:

specifically, the social foundations of a classroom environment, and the pragmatic support

that environment provides for teachers and students coordinating and developing their academic understandings of a discipline.

> *\* Implications for the learning environment #2 (social foundations): Supporting & encouraging curious, thoughtful, creative learner dispositions—persuasively.*

An educational exchange among educators and students is not simply comprised of the knowledge and experience that is available for learning; that exchange also depends upon what a learner is drawn to notice and attend to, how they decide to interpret that select grist of words-actions-artifacts, and how far they are willing to let that new learning carry into their existing views-behaviors-understandings. Thus education (that intentional influencing and facilitating of others' learning experiences) relies both in its immediate exchange and its long-term outcomes on learner *dispositions*: the individual's inclination toward or away from certain values-orientations, ways of thinking, and manners of behaving in the environments that they encounter.

Individuals are complicated and adaptive; their dispositions are multifarious and situation dependent. This means that social environments, such as classrooms, have the capacity to stimulate and encourage specific dispositions through the opportunities, supports, and motivations provided in those circumstances. Within rhetorical traditions, educating for learner dispositions is a well-established notion, harkening back to the teachings of Aristotle, where it was discussed in terms of educating "character": those habits of mind and standards of behavior that marked an individual's moral goodness (Rhetoric: in Bizzell & Herzberg 2001, p.197) or at least delineated the individual's "ruling passion" in daily life situations (Rhetorica ad Herennium: in Bizzell & Herzberg 2001, p.278). Thus, the current educational interest in learner dispositions has struck a ready chord in rhetorical disciplines such as post-

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secondary writing, whose work has long attended to the role of an environment in persuading learners to exercise specific, valued aspects of their character.

While the social environment in an educational exchange may seem ancillary to the delivery of academic content, it is directly involved in stimulating and supporting learner dispositions within that educational exchange (as described below)—which in turn influences what the learner does with that content, and so what it will do for them, educationally in the long-term.

If the aim of education is for students to *integrate* their academic learning, personalizing and creatively re-purposing it to meet the needs of oncoming environments, this begs the question: how are disciplinary discourse spaces in schools facilitating this educational disposition within students? This rhetorical issue demands practical attention from all educators, as they shape learning environments with students socially, because organized institutions of knowledge and power naturally tend to encourage habits and values that facilitate system coherence and homogeneity—which can actively oppose the diversely personal and actively re-constructive dispositions that transformative, integrative educational exchanges aim to foster. Thus, shaping classroom social environments is an *active* and crucial part of an educator's rhetorical work: not merely perpetuating the dispositions that students bring in, but persuasively enriching, investigating, or even subverting those social conventions through discourse.

These social foundations for educational work demand particular attention in the academic discipline of rhetoric-and-writing, where developing a meaningful understanding of the field's knowledge, as a learner, requires motivated participation in legitimate communicative situations. Thus the dialog between teachers and students in writing takes on a dual role: first, *directly* and *explicitly* propagating rhetorical and compositional knowledge,

by talking directly about the discipline's core concepts and practices within the overarching framework of its values; second, *sensitively* and *tacitly* co-developing a genuine communicative context, by learning each others' interests and identities as a foundation for coordinating communicative aims and strategies. Thus, the manner of daily teacher-student interactions, within activity frameworks, determines whether a classroom becomes a didactic testing-ground or dialogic educational exchange. In university education (not just in the discipline of rhetoric-and-writing), it is the latter environment that best reflects the rhetorical exigencies of actual communicative situations beyond the school walls—where academic learning is intended to be carried and to achieve lasting benefits for learners in society.

Writing educator and researcher Elizabeth Wardle (2012) elaborates on this educational issue by drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's notion of "doxa," or the sum total of unstated value claims and commonsense reality assumptions that underlie all of an institution's inquiry and discourse, demarcating that which should be explored and challenged from that which is clearly "natural" and beyond questioning. That is to say, social institutions carry their own collective dispositions, which in turn influence the individual dispositions of its participants. Recognizing that institutions (whether familial, governmental, or educational, etc.) contain and perpetuate dispositions (generating norms of practice, perception, and attitude through daily routines and standards of discourse) thus underscores the importance of viewing educational environments as rhetorical and dialogic social spaces. Large cultures and institutions, as well as smaller discourse communities, all encourage certain dispositions through their social interactions: a truth which has educational consequences for the individual learning experiences that occur within classrooms.

Specifically, Wardle points to the distinction between answer-finding and problem-exploring dispositions—either of which an educational environment may foster through its discourse, but which lead to opposing educational outcomes for the learner-environment relationship. Essentially, *answer-finding* values how efficiently and culture-coherently an individual recognizes the official/orthodox resolution to an established question, while *problem-exploring* values deep presence-of-mind and broad awareness over speed and agreement with "doxa": this latter disposition is fundamental to genuinely critical and creative discourse, as it facilitates unbounded questioning and attention, in ways that can expand beyond established notions of what is "natural" and "inevitable" (2012).

This makes problem-exploring dispositions a necessary part of the social environment in higher education, where continuously expanding and transforming disciplinary understandings is a guiding aim for the institution collectively and for its participants as individual learners. From her research, Wardle provides an example of problem-exploring dispositions evident at both the individual and institutional levels (a history student who recognizes the inefficacy of her existing base of composition strategies for a current rhetorical challenge, and seeks beyond what she knows; a computer science program that explicitly teaches principles and practices that can be applied across coding languages and situations). However, she emphasizes that such examples are exceptions in the U.S.: educational institutions here presently tend toward rules and practices that reflect answer-finding dispositions (e.g., enforcing month-long preparations for formulaic tests in high schools, or capping student time and course-loads at university). This forces teachers and students into educational exchanges that validate speed and focus; that penalize deep learning and broad curiosity.

The point that Wardle is pressing upon here, and that rhetoric-and-writing scholars in general bring to the forefront in discussing scholastic aims of "transfer," is that academic educational work and personal learning interactions, at their highest levels, are intentional rhetorical acts: teachers (who represent established disciplines) purposefully facilitate learning experiences, and students (who represent emergent society) purposefully integrate those learning experiences, each synchronizing their understandings and their purposes generatively in a shared educational exchange. And developing rhetorical awareness of these social dynamics, along with their consequent academic influence, in higher education is subtle but critical work for educators invested in long-term, transformative outcomes for participating learners. For example, even using the term "transfer" as a guiding image for this learning-centered discourse, as discussed previously, itself reinforces an answer-finding disposition toward the problem-exploring educational aims within classrooms: of generalizing and propagating knowledge, re-purposing and integrating practices, in emergent and agentive ways. And recognizing such details, in social thoughts and intentions and interactions, allows educators to refine their discourse: the social base from which they work toward those academic aims.

That discourse is foundational to the work of higher education, and that the social dynamics circumscribing academic discourse make interpersonal relations among instructors and learners consequential to educational outcomes (e.g., learner dispositions), bears emphasis: disciplinary knowledge and practices and values are carried within individuals, are developed among individuals, and exist nowhere beyond individuals in their environments. While the physical artifacts and official rules in academic institutions provide tacit and explicit guides for scholastic learning experiences, the center of that educational

activity system—where knowledge is embodied and perceived, shared and developed—is a personal and interpersonal, socially circumscribed and learning-centered dialog.

<center>*</center>

Post-secondary writing educators have taken into account these social foundations, working to support learner-knowledge relationships pedagogically in two general ways (Brent 2011). First, **environmentally**: writing educators afford rhetorical communicative acts genuine situated purpose by connecting classroom writing activities to students' existing discourse communities across academic disciplines, for example by constructing immersive simulations or case studies of professional environments, or by mentoring actual internships outside the mediating walls of the university. And second, **dispositionally**: writing educators cue learners' mindful abstraction of genre principles and metacognition about rhetorical strategies by explicitly discussing general practices within specific discursive situations, by structured reflection activities, and most fundamentally by repeated and consistent exposure to discursive situations—where students can gradually amass a knowledge-base of personal experience, adapting disciplinary learning to specific contexts.

Through such means, educators work socially to persuade learners that the academic knowledge they proffer is both environmentally relevant and personally worthwhile. By shaping students' *external* classroom learning experiences responsively, in ways that connect with students' larger life circumstances, and by then explicitly directing students' *internal* awareness during those experiences toward core ideas and skills and values that are connected to the discipline, educators nurture together a learner's personal sense of where in life a discipline's knowledge is useful, and a learner's practical sense of how to use that knowledge effectively.

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That is, many writing educators explicitly pursue awareness (rhetorically) of their students' environments and dispositions, and use that knowledge (socially) to build educational exchanges wherein students can see a *reason* for making epistemological/technical connections between disciplinary learning and familiar situations, and can *practice* creating phronetic/expert-like connections between their generalized disciplinary understandings and a range of forthcoming life situations.

Creating social environments that support educationally valued dispositions across school-and-life contexts may seem a straightforward translation of learning/transfer research into a set of best-practices, when described generally (as above). The social reality of educational work, however, is much more rhetorically challenging: figuring out "what works" for unique students in a specific environment, with regard to reaching the intended learner-knowledge relationship (presumably a positive, influential, and lasting one), requires from the educator careful attention to those students' evident learning experiences, and responsive adjustment to the message and methods in that environment, to facilitate and maintain that relationship socially.

The interpersonal process of building up that educational dialog will be discussed more specifically in this chapter's third section, but what should be noted here is that the insights post-secondary writing educators offer about shaping scholastic social environments come from their ongoing revisions of personal practice as they refine their situated rhetorical approaches to educating students—a dialogic process which requires direct, subjective feedback from those students.

Anne Beaufort, for example, published a professionally well-received curricular framework for university writing (2007), based on research in learning transfer and informed by her own ethnographic research with students. In it she offers many of the familiar

suggestions for fostering learning transfer in the classroom: creating activities that allow students to exercise their awareness of disciplinary notions (e.g., genre and discourse community), making space for students to practice abstracting principles from specific situations and applying such concepts in different social contexts, and teaching techniques of mindfulness and metacognition in relation to this disciplinary learning. She states clearly the rhetorical intentions of her approach: the learning dispositions, informed understandings, and practical bases-of-experience that she is pursuing with students socially through the specific ways she words definitions, connects them to examples, constructs activities, elicits student contributions, fields questions, and facilitates reflective discussions around core academic concepts. By doing so, she also tacitly makes clear that educators must integrate their pedagogical strategies effectively into classroom social interactions to achieve their academic aims. Regarding this point, she emphasizes that educational effectiveness relies on *students'* perceptions, and so pragmatic teaching decisions can be valuably informed by educators' knowledge of students' contexts and subjective experiences:

> writers will not automatically bridge, or bring forward, appropriate writing strategies and knowledge to new writing situations unless they have an understanding of both the need to do so and a method for doing so. In other words, writers, if they want to gain expertise in multiple genres and discourse communities, have to learn to become lifelong learners. The developmental process for writers never ends. … Keeping in touch with one or several students over the course of the students' education and entry into the work world to see what writing situations and difficulties they encounter and how they handle them can also enrich one's perspective on teaching writing.
>
> (Beaufort 2007, p.177)

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This statement represents an important attitude within the discipline of post-secondary writing: it frames the curricular structures and pedagogical strategies that follow as a social-rhetorical means for connecting students **personally** and **practically** with academic learning—and in service of that, explicitly foregrounds the importance of educators developing informed understandings of those students' lives, motivations, and perspectives. Following her own advice in this regard, Beaufort returns to this work five years later (2012), drawing on case studies after observing her writing students' difficulties and reflecting on them in light of ongoing research, to revise her pedagogical suggestions. Essentially, her revision centers on the issue of clarifying and adhering to **principles**: those explicit connection-points where underlying educational values and assumptions (cultural, institutional, personal notions of good and true), tacit within a writing course's curricular focus and goals (ideal, strategic, practical images of right and possible), are translated by the educator into purposeful priorities within learning-centered interactions (actual, responsive, principled moments of shared experience).

As Beaufort's pedagogical revision points out, recognizing and holding true to principles of educational purpose in classroom social interactions begins with a **personal** move: explicitly acknowledging the values and assumptions underlying the course's academic goals (which, in post-secondary writing, vary among institutions and teachers: alternately facilitating self-expression or cultural critique, informed civic participation or successful writing in school/work contexts, appreciation of writing craft or fluency in managing writing tasks, etc.). This personalized awareness of professional orientations includes noting the "personal beliefs, institutional goals, and societal norms" from which those orientations extend (2012). Here, Beaufort notes the practical importance of distinguishing (curricular, immediate) goals of developing academic skills from

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(transformative, life-enriching) goals of transfer of learning, and of focusing amply on those that have tangible utility for students. The next move, then, is **situational**: to create a course framework where the theme is focused enough for students to develop some depth of of understanding in that topic, but broad enough to enable a range of related intellectual inquiries in the subject, that students can connect relevantly to their life experiences and interests. And the final move, then, in that learning centered social environment, is **principled**:  maintaining a steady focus on the central goal of the course—in Beaufort's case, developing students' writing expertise, and giving them a strong skill base in academic writing that fosters positive learning transfer to other writing contexts.

For Beaufort, this translates in classroom discourse to "explicitly teach[ing] the framing concepts of writing expertise in any context for writing, regardless of the writing tasks" (2012), so that students become aware of their actions and their reasons, in ways that they can apply flexibly in new situations. It also translates, by extension, to tacitly supporting that intended student learning through the structure of activities and experiences surrounding that discourse: e.g., giving students writing assignments in genres that they use commonly, focusing on creating genuine purpose rather than pursuing extreme breadth, and providing enough time and repeated practice for students to develop those skills they will use frequently in other writing situations (since that time and practice are essential to both initial learning and its transfer).

All of these specific educational practices extend from Beaufort's general pedagogical principles: of (1) helping learners to distill specific tasks into more abstract principles that they can apply elsewhere; of then (2) giving learners opportunities to apply core concepts to different problems and situations; and of consistently, through those learning experiences, (3) teaching practices of mindfulness—or metacognition—to facilitate

students' awareness of their learning, and of the transferability of said knowledge, skills, and orientations. And all those pedagogical principles have been personally, practically refined through an emergent process of social-rhetorical practice and inquiry—wherein students' insights actively contribute to the shaping of pedagogical research and practice.

As these above examples show, the social foundations of academic educational work (specifically its personalized, situated complexity and its dialogic nature) are notably foregrounded within the field of post-secondary writing—and the reasons behind these points of pedagogical emphasis are pragmatic.

The first reason is institutional: writing's educational goals for individual learners (from self-expression to craft appreciation to effective task management), are practically entwined with the various discourse communities and rhetorical purposes that those learners encounter. This makes the field of writing distinctly pedagogically reliant on the practices of other academic disciplines. As Brent (2012) points out, a student's rhetorical education extends into and draws from all the institutionalized practices that help them to develop rhetorical knowledge (i.e., competent awareness of heuristics and strategies) and skill (i.e., able performance manifesting that knowledge in rhetorical works), "whether or not those practices are located in specific 'writing' courses." And therefore, as Wardle (2007) explains, students need to continue receiving genuine and purposeful communicative tasks beyond their writing classrooms, across courses in academia, if they are to truly internalize and develop those rhetorical thinking and writing skills—which all disciplines rely on variously to reach their classroom learning goals.

This leads to the second reason, which is interpersonal: while all fields rely fundamentally on a discursive exchange among participants to propagate disciplinary knowledge, only in fields such as writing is that exchange itself a direct educational focus,

that both the teacher and student are actively working on refining in-concept and in-practice. The overt exchange of prompts and drafts, feedback and revisions, between teachers and students in writing classrooms creates a distinctly discourse-focused classroom exchange where everyone consistently presents and interprets authorial perspectives, forcing into the visible foreground that social exchanges actively influence learning experiences. As Wardle (2007) learned from focus groups with her students, learners do not feel compelled to generalize their writing-related knowledge and abilities within discourse environments where the tasks are not seen as actively interesting and challenging, clearly meaningful and relevant, authentically purposeful and owned by them. As a result, writing educators (more directly than most) are consistently confronted with the connection between socially genuine discourse and academically effective education—that is, the link between creating social spaces where students see their efforts to communicate or participate as *perceivably*, *convincingly* worthwhile (on an emotional, rational, and motivational level) and achieving *internalized*, *lasting* educational impacts on students' understandings and dispositions.

Thus, educators within rhetorical / writing disciplines are particularly well-positioned to recognize classroom-shaping and teaching work as a discursive, persuasive, and principled rhetorical enterprise: of social leadership, based on mutual understanding, directed toward coordinated learning goals. And approaching academic aims from this social-rhetorical perspective disposes these educators to attend closely not only to the clarity of their message and the usefulness of their activities, as they *intend* them in their teaching, but also to students' interpretations of those messages and investment in those activities, as they *experience* them in their learning.

While didactic approaches to education can elicit peak student performances of academic learning, they may not take into account the emotional, biographical, and

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motivational aspects of that learning process: in delivering knowledge from a system-internal perspective, such monologic instruction leaves the onus of academic interest, personalization, and motivation on students, and so do not guarantee that they will seek or value or utilize that learning in environments that lack direct institutional pressure to do so. A responsive dialog between educators and students, on the other hand, potentially supports academic learning that is more valued, deep, and lasting: in the social exchange of perspectives, teachers who inquire into students' experiences can rhetorically tailor educational exchanges (the words explaining, examples showing, and activities stimulating learner-knowledge relationships) in ways that actively, intentionally stimulate those persons' situated feelings, reference-frameworks, and life-goals. These personal realities are external to academic disciplines' content-matter, but undeniably fundamental to joining those disciplinary environments, as a person.

This is the foundational reality on which post-secondary writing educators build their personal, situated teaching approaches: that the students' novice relationships with the subject will be *as* emotionally resonant, experience-based, and values-driven as any expert's. This social reality compels an educational exchange where all learners' personal subjectivities—teacher and student alike—are recognized as relevantly involved in the academic learning process; that is, a dialogic exchange. In Beaufort's (2012) closing recommendations for writing educators, she suggests keeping a teaching journal of what worked and didn't (for the teacher's own reflection and transfer of pedagogical learning), and revising ALL of her suggestions as needed: experience by experience, class by class. This open-ended validation, by Beaufort, of fellow professionals liberally adapting her research-based practices to fit their personal, situational exigencies reflects a rhetorical attitude toward academic education: one that, in its philosophy, is as pragmatic as it is scientific; that

accordingly recognizes, in its theory, the social-interpersonal dynamics permeating "higher-level" scholastic learning aims; and that, in its practice, fundamentally depends on mutual dialogs between educators and students—wherein the teacher's manner of delivery adjusts to address students' particular affiliations with, interpretations of, and uses for that disciplinary learning.

> *\* Implications for the learning environment #3 (academic exchanges):*
> *Coordinating students' and educators' understandings of core concepts,*
> *experiences of thresholds and troubles—subjectively.*

To summarize the previous section, applying teaching strategies in rhetorically effective ways (i.e., ways which connect with the unique exigencies of individuals, and so facilitate positive, intentional, lasting transformations in learner-knowledge relationships) is fundamentally social work. Persuading students to appreciate, attend to, and invest in a discipline's core concepts—not merely remember and perform them—transcends the technical work of rationally presenting and clearly delivering academic content. Fundamentally, it involves the interpersonal work of fostering a dialog between the discipline's and the student's perspective. Accomplishing this, pragmatically, requires that an educator maintain their sense of learners' personal and situated understandings (their experience-based perspectives, identity-based motives, and habituated patterns of response toward academic notions, values, and practices) as the course dialog develops.

Yet ultimately, the defining quality of such educational exchanges is that they are learning-centered: oriented around sharing and developing academic content. This pedagogical purpose culturally frames and orients the social dynamics among individual learners. Everyone within a classroom environment, teacher and student alike, is joined by a

tacit if not explicit agreement to pursue specific learning goals related to an academic field—its philosophies, topics, and/or methods.

In post-secondary education, where students have ostensibly completed the most dramatic stages of their human development (or at least those parts for which the educator is considered professionally accountable) this content-matter often becomes the overriding focus: even to the exclusion or devaluation of students' health and well-being[2], but much more subtly and pervasively to the exclusion or devaluation of students' perspectives relative to that discipline. Students are, by-and-large, cultural outsiders and disciplinary novices within a field's academic discourse: both its manner and its content. For educators who are well-versed in a discipline's conventional norms and foundational beliefs, students' awkward discomforts and tenacious confusions with those specialized institutional practices and concepts can be experienced as personally offensive ("What an ignorant attitude!"), intellectually puzzling ("How is this idea not intuitive to you?"), or practically frustrating ("What more can I possibly do to make this work interesting and easy-to-complete?") if they do not actively seek an affiliative rhetorical understanding of their audience's feelings, knowledge-bases, and motives during those academic learning experiences.

Thus, teaching a discipline's "core" concepts (those theories and supportive beliefs that are essential to understanding a field's values, ways of thinking, and approaches to practice) evokes the practical educational question of *which* such concepts, for students, will be experienced as "threshold" concepts (Meyer & Land 2006): those notions that require learners to undergo some emotionally difficult, rationally counter-intuitive, or practically unnatural shift in their ways of relating with their environments (both within the discipline,

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2    (this author states definitively as a graduate student—and so a witness to the excess of tears, paucity of sleep, and conventional acceptance of such destabilizing excesses as expected within graduate schools)

and beyond it). Here, again, a rhetorical approach to education has led to helpful insights from the field of post-secondary writing, regarding the coordination of students' and educators' academic perspectives in classroom dialogs.

Recognizing threshold concepts in education requires moving beyond a discipline-internal perspective of content and communication, to recognize those beliefs and conventions as situated in a community of practice, and from there gaining a sense of learners' experiences as they encounter and explore these disciplinary approaches to the world—from their own perspectives. Thus, studying how teachers communicate core concepts to students and respond pedagogically to students' threshold experiences relies on a *rhetorical awareness of the educational exchange*: first, a sense of both teachers' and students' situated perspectives, and then (within that social dynamic) a sense of teachers' educational intentions, rhetorical methods, and perlocutionary effects on their students' academic understandings.

One excellent example of how rhetorical awareness can help in explaining gaps between teachers' ideal intentions and their actual influence in educational exchanges comes from writing scholars Linda Adler-Kassner, John Majewski, and Damian Koshnick (2012). In a study of students concurrently enrolled in two general education courses (writing and history), these researchers explored how teachers enacted disciplinary threshold concepts for students within these courses, and how students then came to see these disciplines' core concepts through those interactions. By focusing directly on teachers' and students' subjective perspectives in that educational exchange, these researchers could trace that exchange's pragmatic arc: comparing educational intentions (those core concepts of the field that teachers intend to propagate) to rhetorical methods (that interpersonal communication style that teachers use with students to propagate that knowledge), and to students' evident

changes in understanding (that learner process of gradually taking in new ways of thinking about content, of personalizing that self-knowledge relationship) in and around those interpersonal classroom experiences.

By exploring these pragmatic links, this research reveals how failing to explicitly acknowledge a core rhetorical concept in academia (i.e., the rhetorical situation and purpose directing fields' disciplinary dialogs) where teachers and students enact that disciplinary exchange (i.e., within a classroom's interpersonal conversations and writing exchanges about subject-matter) can lead to missed opportunities for educators to pursue their academic aims with students (i.e., connecting subject-matter content to important threshold concepts in the discipline). In this way, the study exemplifies how (1) rhetorical lenses on academic classroom exchanges can spotlight areas of cohesion and of incongruity between teachers' intents and methods, and (2) how the interpersonal focus in such inquiries can surface a more complex and dynamic image of learners' emergent understandings in educational exchanges with teachers.

In a way, all academic fields are founded on core concepts which are rhetorical: descriptive and normative claims about what counts as valid truth and good practice, which unite a discipline's culture and shape its discourse based on appeals to emotion (what knowledge is valuable and needed for humankind to flourish), reason (what theoretical frameworks and practical methods best serve to organize and develop that knowledge field), and identity (what manner of thought, inquiry, and argument marks a person as a legitimate contributing member in this knowledge field's community). But each field's unique exigencies in pursuing and coordinating their knowledge leads to diverse iterations of academic core values, concepts and information, and ways of thinking and doing.

This means that examining another academic field's educational exchanges, among their teachers and students, must begin by finding common threshold concepts; elements fundamental to each discipline's perspective, that both field's teachers understand, and intend to convey to their students in a way that nurtures their understanding.

In this particular study (Adler-Kassner, Majewski, & Koshnick 2012), the writing researchers began by interviewing teachers from the history course, uncovering a few core (rhetorical) concepts common to both disciplines regarding the role of audience, purpose, and context in creating written texts. In history, these threshold concepts centered around persuading students to imagine the full reality of historical context within which texts in the past were created: the situated motives of the writer, the cultural perspectives of the audience, and so forth.

> To fully understand a primary source document, [students of history] must understand the relationships between a discourse community, the genre(s) it values, and the conventions of those genres. … (1) A key point is that there is no single "right" narrative, in which all other reconstructions of the past are necessarily wrong. (2) History consists of multiple competing narratives, which come about because historians are producing narratives for different discursive communities or because historians differ in their evaluation of evidence and arguments. (Adler-Kassner, Majewski, & Koshnick 2012, section 3)

These key ideas, which students might not intuitively consider and might need time and support to internalize, aligned clearly with a pair of threshold concepts in writing, centered around persuading students to see their own situated motives and use of conventions in the texts they are creating—i.e., that (1) all writing is situated within "genres," or communities'

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conventional forms of writing, and that (2) genres are a form of social action, which both

reflect a communities' values and perpetually shape those values through creative use:

> In order to participate in these genres, writers must understand … [that]
>
> writing is how individuals gain entry and membership in communities of
>
> discourse … [If] learners (1) adopt the position that the study of writing
>
> involves consistent analysis of relationships between contexts, purposes,
>
> audiences, genres, and conventions and (2) learn to conduct that analysis, they
>
> are both participating in the epistemological practices of the [writing]
>
> discipline and likely (so the theory goes) to be more adaptable writers.
>
> (Adler-Kassner, Majewski, & Koshnick 2012, section 3)

In both courses, it was expected that these core concepts might require significant shifts in

students' thinking, from the ways they conventionally view texts and communication, as they

developed personal understandings of these disciplines: that is, they would be threshold

concepts for many students, and so would require explicit attention and explanation and

practice. Thus, for teachers in both courses, these rhetorical threshold concepts (i.e., these

fundamental notions that inform the ways history / writing scholars think about, discuss, and

create texts within their disciplines) carried with them specific educational aims.

Furthermore, the writing instructors explicitly tied these aims to particular pedagogical

approaches; specifically, to topics for infusing into classroom discourse, such as "genre,

purpose, audience, and situated practice," which are consistently mentioned in literature on

teaching writing.

However, the writing researcher's found, in listening to history instructors describe

how they variously enacted these threshold concepts in classroom discourse, that history

educators' focus on thematic content led to their *inconsistent* attention to those core

rhetorical notions, when practically defining and applying them in classes: falling back on less contextually aware notions about students' classroom text creation, even though they explicitly recognized that contextual awareness as an important notion in history as a discipline. For example, in discussing students' "good writing," some history teachers would use universal terms, rather than acknowledging the specific disciplinary conventions and situated activities within which students were thinking and communicating:

> Sometimes, instructors described how they situated writing, reading, and analytic skills in the course explicitly within history as a discipline, indicating moments where they consciously enacted—and helped students to enact—an awareness of the distinct qualities associated with *this* context for learning... Such enactment indicates the kind of meta-awareness that is embedded in threshold concepts in composition and history, since it is associated with situating text-making (and its attendant values) within a particular context. … At other times, though, instructors seemed to imply that they were teaching writing, reading, and analysis skills that were "universal," reflecting the presumption that these skills were stable across all learning contexts. … Finally, at still other times, their comments indicated that their teaching was focused on specific course themes (how should we analyze U.S. history between 1820 and 1920) that were important for transmitting the content of the history course but not related to threshold concepts that are common across other history courses. (Adler-Kassner, Majewski, & Koshnick 2012, snapshot 1)

By focusing on course themes over deeper disciplinary concepts about how knowledge can be generalized and propagated, many teachers missed opportunities to foster transferable

understandings about those core ideas and values; the notions and reasons behind history's practices, which are fundamental to transferring that learning to other courses, in and beyond history. Also, by not explicitly emphasizing and *discussing* those specific rhetorical purposes, together with the associated practices that define history as a *meaningful* and *useful* discipline, teachers missed opportunities both to help students see the distinct *value* of historical thinking alongside other ways of thinking in disciplines across their general education experiences, and also to help them see the *relevance* of that thinking when related and applied in those other situations.

The research moves on to look at students' shifts in thinking about context, purpose, and audience as they progress through these courses, their writing and interviews showing various personal ways of understanding and applying these rhetorical concepts in their course work. And the researchers note that students and teachers both at points explicitly noted the presence of—or alternately the need for—connecting their coursework to those shared threshold concepts (both in examining subject-matter content and in creating disciplinary texts for these courses), to support learners developing more valued and useful academic understandings.

This cogent desire at both ends of the educational exchange for clear and meaningful discussions, which support personal connections with academic knowledge, underscores the importance of this study's observation about teachers' rhetorical awareness as they translate academic notions into social learning practices. Where teachers' pedagogical focuses shifted away from fundamental (rhetorical) concepts in their discipline, they sometimes misrepresented those notions and other times disregarded them altogether in pursuing course-content with students: describing but not enacting the discipline, expecting but not actively enticing student affiliation with its expert perspectives.

One can imagine the emotional and motivational impacts that this principle-to-practice disconnect might have within students' personal learning experiences, as they make efforts to maintain interest in a subject whose content seems arcane and detached from their lives, and strain to complete assignments that make no apparent contribution to the field's discourse at large nor perhaps even the classroom's own intimate enactment of that discipline. Atop these personal-social impacts, Adler-Kassner, Majewski, and Koshnick (2012) describe this disconnect in a way that foregrounds its personal-academic impacts; the loss of educational opportunities to explicitly talk students through a historian's perspective, and to help them across that threshold, by recognizing their own relative perspectives:

> The result was that a course that stressed how context was essential for
>
> understanding texts in the past failed to teach students the particular context
>
> of their own thinking and writing within the course. Historical thinking, it
>
> was assumed, was the only possible approach to the material, rather than …
>
> as an approach embedded within a particular community of scholars. (Adler-
>
> Kassner & Majewski 2015, p.197)

The educational value, then, of tracing such rhetorical threshold concepts (here: context, purpose, and audience) in academic environments is partly that it encourages teachers to see both themselves and students as *subjectively* involved with the discipline: mutually exchanging experience-based perspectives on its content, and trying to coordinate those views in such a way that both teacher and student gain additional experience *being* a contributing member toward that scholarship community. Tracing a discipline's threshold concepts from a point of academic theory to a point of social discourse  calls on that discipline's teachers to examine their own dispositions; to notice whether and how they transfer their personal *understandings* of core concepts into their interpersonal *enactments* of

those concepts with students. And so by juxtaposing teachers' conceptual understandings with their approaches to classroom discourse, this study points directly to the pedagogical importance—across academic disciplines—of *explicitly* voicing connections between the academic principles that cohere a discipline and the social practices that cohere a learning environment. Practically, this work of translating disciplinary notions into pedagogical values, aims, and practices is a *rhetorical* act. And this study illustrates how maintaining consistency between those value-based aims and practices requires a teacher's intentional awareness of a classroom's subjective, multi-perspective social reality.

## In Educational Research and Practice

Maintaining focus on these pragmatic interpersonal issues in classrooms may not come naturally to post-secondary educators in many academic fields. Yet they all teach scholarship produced from socially-mediated disciplines, and propagate that knowledge-field though discourse with students who carry diverse experience-based perspectives, which makes their social-emotional awareness in classrooms crucial to effective teaching—even, or perhaps especially, in higher-education situations, where students are being asked to thinking critically and creatively within fields of study; to *personalize* disciplinary attitudes, understandings, and motives.

Fortunately, writing studies' core/threshold concepts center around building awareness of an audience's situated expectations, motivating purposes, and interpersonal affiliations as foundations for successful communication. This pragmatic, rhetorical focus in writing's disciplinary concepts, in turn, disposes its educators toward reflecting on how they themselves are conveying their field's driving notions and values to an audience of relative novices in classroom discourse. Furthermore, when looking for signs of *success* in that

discourse (i.e., the personalized transfer of core concepts), this rhetorical focus also inclines researchers in writing studies to seek out teachers' and students' voices directly within that educational exchange: looking through discourse for explicit moments of reflection and insight, which show personal understanding and affiliation with the discipline's ideas and practices[3]. So studies by writing educators, both of their own and others' pedagogical experiences, tend to draw focus toward the interpersonal subtleties of classroom discourse: the journey to influence students' learning experiences and educational take-away, beginning with the teacher's own internal perspective of their academic discipline[4].

For example, by utilizing a rhetorical lens and methodology, Adler-Kassner, Majewski, and Koshnik's (2012) study of how threshold concepts are defined and variously addressed by teachers in general education courses provides a clear example of how rhetorical examinations of educational exchanges can foreground *classroom dialog* as an important focal point for assessing and developing pedagogy in an academic discipline. The follow-up piece on this study by Adler-Kassner and Majewski (2015) then expounded on the threshold concepts that are most critical for educators to carry consciously, within themselves, into that dialog with their students about that academic disciplines.

The first of these threshold concepts for teachers, according to the authors, is realizing "that there *are* threshold concepts critical for understanding and practicing their discipline": as individuals develop more expertise as members of a community of practice, practices associated with that community become less visible. So actively recognizing that disciplines have threshold concepts helps teachers as individuals to help others see how

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3    One can see evidence of this, for example, in Writing Studies' academic journals (e.g., *College Composition and Communication* http://cccc.ncte.org/cccc/ccc/issues), wherein articles regularly meta-reflect on specific classroom rhetorical approaches, and often include incisive direct-quotes from their subjects as a centerpiece of the main title.

these distinct descriptive/normative understandings underlie the field's distinct "ways of thinking, attitudes, and orientations toward learning" within those disciplines, and so propagate the field's distinct and emerging knowledge-base. Secondly, they emphasize teachers coming to recognize that their own discipline "is not the universe": that their beliefs, knowledge, and conventions are context-specific—and that other groups may share alternate, and alternately useful, ideas and rules within their communities. Coming to recognize these kinds of fundamental rhetorical realities in a classroom's interpersonal exchanges can be fundamental to educators achieving pedagogical aims with their students:

> [These ideas] sometimes come as a surprise. This is especially true in regard
> to writing as a universal skill applicable in all contexts rather than a series of
> particular disciplinary conventions... Faculty members who complain that
> they are frustrated with student writing but are unwilling to reallocate
> "content" time to writing instruction have not yet recognized that what they
> might consider a form of "universally" good writing is quite specific to their
> disciplines and thus inextricably linked to content. (Adler-Kassner &
> Majewski 2015, p.190)

Thus, educators developing a rhetorical awareness of the threshold concepts they are introducing to students, and the situations through which students perceive and internalize such concepts, helps educators to understand their students' struggles in learning fundamental disciplinary skills—skills which they themselves have slowly acclimated to, and which are not immediately intuitive for newcomers in the community. This recognition and bridging of interpersonal differences, again, constitutes a fundamentally *rhetorical*

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4   How teachers then translate this personal principled understanding into interpersonal practice, then, will be focused on in the next section.

approach to analyzing classroom communicative dynamics: who is the audience; how can the current educational environment best be used to stimulate core ideas within that specific audience? And so, a third threshold concept arises for teachers: that the image of successful student learning involves learners "demonstrating particular ways of thinking within the discipline" and that this "can be supported through deliberately sequenced learning opportunities." That is, recognizing the rhetorical realities of interpersonal exchanges can help teachers to more explicitly perceive their educational purposes, contexts, and outcomes for students in classroom environments—and to more deliberately shape the pragmatic social framework that directs and drives those learning experiences.

In practice, what this can lead to is (1) more explicit and engaged educational dialogs, where teachers actively evoke students' personalizations of disciplinary thinking and participating, and genuinely seek to understand their students' subjective states of learning through those interactions; (2) more flexible and cross-contextual awareness of student learning transfer, where teachers recognize the validity of students' creative interpreting and re-purposing of disciplinary knowledge, and pursue evidence of that transfer beyond the discipline's or even the scholastic academy's environment; and (3) more dialog-based, internal-to-situation assessments of students' learning, where teachers critically and deferentially explore students' reports of their learning experiences and educational take-away, seeing that feedback as a simultaneous reflection of the individual and the environment together: the learner-knowledge relationship, that was produced through a learner-environment relationship, and that therefore provides insights into the environment-knowledge relationship that teachers and students *actually* fostered together through classroom dialogs.

For example, when Adler-Kassner and Majewski (2015) describe a teacher in history providing her students with opportunities to learn course content, they emphasize that teacher's awareness of her own expectations and her attention to students' experiences, plumbing her classroom descriptions in a way that shows the arc from core concepts she intends to share, to the activity frameworks she creates to give her students scaffolded learning opportunities, to the educational dialogs she has with the students within that frame to shape their learning experiences; from the notions that concepts'  changes over time, and that reading primary sources requires moving between texts and their contexts constantly, to having students practice reading as a historian, extracting as much information as possible about culturally / temporally / linguistically distant situations from the details of primary texts, to moments of careful listening to those students and socially guiding their learning experiences, in dialog: "most of them, when they paraphrase the phrase they just read, they don't get it right. So [I say], 'Okay. Let's go back. Let's read. Why? What does this word actually mean?'" Helping educators across fields to see teaching in this pragmatic, interpersonal light opens roads for awareness and refinement in disciplines' educational exchanges.

Furthermore, by attending to students' educational take-away not only in course, but beyond the discipline's defined contexts within and beyond university, educators can glean a more complex and realistic sense of how students personalize that academic knowledge, usefully and intentionally. As Doug Brent (2012) points out, explaining why he elected to research students' transfer of writing knowledge in work placements that are not particularly writing-related, opportunities for students to use their disciplinary learning can occur anywhere:

> [W]riting tends to happen in the most unexpected places. Had I rejected
>
> students whose job descriptions did not explicitly mention writing, I would
>
> have missed opportunities to observe students encountering, and sometimes
>
> generating for themselves, writing tasks as a by-product of a wide variety of
>
> work environments. (Brent 2012, p.567)

Realizing that students' academic learning can support, or fail to support, their real-world

participation in ways and places *beyond* what educators can intuit—is a valuable truth for all

disciplines to recognize, when inquiring into the educational effect of its classrooms (relative

to their intention), because evident learning in the classroom is only learning in a local and

narrow sense: true knowledge generalization and propagation is, by definition, personal and

creative. Thus, where knowledge transfer is an educational goal for a discipline, looking at

learner-knowledge relationships more broadly across situations—and more openly regarding

the forms and purposes in which that knowledge can be visibly evoked—is necessary for

seeing the full reality of educational success.

In practice, writing researchers show us of what "looking at learner-knowledge

relationships" consists: close, situated and personal attention to what both the teachers and

the students are conveying in dialog about their experiences and perceptions. And inquiring

into learning, through these subjective channels, affords an image of flexible transfer—one

that conforms to the learners' situated reality, and thereby catches many details which more

rigid and/or cursory modes of inquiry might not validly label or notice as signs of learning-

applied. Elizabeth Wardle (2007) uses discussion-based assessments of her own students to

show transfer of writing knowledge within the university in the years beyond her course,

explicitly looking for their situated transformations of that learning. By looking flexibly for

evidence of student rhetoric-and-writing knowledge awareness in their reports of classroom

experiences, she finds signs of disciplinary knowledge growth both tacitly, in their reports of

practical behavior (e.g., reading and analyzing research articles, recognizing textual

organization, conducting research, planning and reviewing large writing projects), and

explicitly, in their ways of discussing university writing and their relationship with it:

> The language students used in interviews suggests they gained some meta-
>
> awareness about language use, most commonly about similarities and
>
> differences in writing across disciplines. Nearly all the students consistently
>
> discussed differences in disciplinary writing—a perspective they could not
>
> articulate when they came into FYC. (Wardle 2007, p.73)

And in their work experiences beyond the university, Brent similarly recognized in dialogs

with students this often-tacit, internalized sense of rhetorical knowledge as practice—which

the students referred to as a "commonsense"—infusing their reports of dealing with life's

situated exigencies: evidencing a personal grasp of audience, genre conventions, rhetorical

flexibility, and clarity in adjusting their textual reading and creating within their given

communities.

> Without always knowing how they did so, students were able to make
>
> complex rhetorical judgments about audience and genre, in some cases
>
> constructing for themselves ad hoc rhetorical genres such as the proposal, the
>
> mouseover text block, or the lesson plan, using models as starting points and
>
> then modifying by trial and error. (Brent 2012, p.588)

Importantly, these signs of knowledge transfer are made evident not by the behaviors

themselves but by the narrative reports of those processes, that illuminate students'

perceptions and intentions within those acts. A *dialog-based, internal-to-situation* approach

affords that intimate insight into student learning and transfer: an insight which is needed to

catch the rich and complex process of a students' actual  educational growth; to inform

disciplines as they refine and develop their community's pragmatic intentions, activities, and

principles within educational exchanges.

**In summary.**

Seeing dialogic persuasion as crucial to the academic aims of learning transfer, means

recognizing that an educator's guiding ideas, intentional strategies, and routine practices

must be informed by an awareness of students' subjective states: an experience-based

wisdom or *phronesis* about those right words, actions, and timing for getting students to

connect—personally—with subject-matter. A student's personal emotions, knowledge-bases,

and identities determine which aspects of a learning experience they will focus on, how

those select perceptions will be cognitively interpreted, and to what extent those resulting

conceptions will be valued: i.e., seen as positive, relevant to life-situations, doable, and thus

worth propagating. If educators are unaware of how students are relating personally to

academic content, and so fail to align or adjust their practice accordingly wit that audience of

learners, their educational exchanges in classrooms may end up sustaining little influence

beyond that immediate rhetorical situation.

Students comprehending and demonstrating comprehension of knowledge touches

only the surface of an educational exchange: their *academic performance*. Students

appreciating, reflecting on, and applying their learning beyond assigned prompts and

directives provides a more complex and realistic metric of an educational exchange's

rhetorical effectiveness: the student's *academic achievement*. This is the rhetorical view and

the pragmatic approach that educators and researchers in writing studies bring to the work of

teaching in post-secondary institutions, where pedagogical priorities too often marginalize the personal and social foundations of higher learning.

Real academic achievement, through the ecological / transformative lens of knowledge propagation and learning integration, relies on this: not simply on a student's simple *ability* to perform, but on their *disposition* to incorporate educated understandings intelligently into their everyday use of those personal abilities. And a person's relationship with their learning environment fundamentally supports their inclination, attention, and effort toward accomplishing tasks within that activity system. So a student's personal relationship with an educational environment (their affiliation with individuals, tasks, and purposes there) fundamentally influences that student's "academic achievement" within that environment (how deeply they will connect with orientations, notions, and practices there).

*

On this topic of the knowledge-environment relationship in student learning, the discipline of writing  offers one additional point of insight from its rhetorical vantage of the educational exchange: the practical importance of educators' principles to the way a learning environment matures, under their leadership, exchange-by-exchange. In a classroom, understandings develop between teachers and students in rhetorical moments—moments where individuals' lifelong trajectories of experience meet, and mutually influence each other. This holistic reality of the educational exchange, wherein so much of the subjective context (the depth of the audience, the breadth of their situations) is dynamic and unknown, places the educator in a role of constant learning and decision-making about what is desired, possible, and available between themselves and their students in that next educational moment.

In the discipline of writing, educators directly interact with students' evolving social expressions of their internal understandings, through cycles of prompts and comments, propelling students' texts and revisions forward. This process grants writing teachers constant fuel for practical reflection; for refining their awareness of how small details of interaction, layering in individuals and resonating between them in classroom environments, can greatly influence students' perceptions of the knowledge proffered there. Clear principles, that connect academic purposes to interpersonal practices, help educators to stabilize the direction of these emergent moments, in intentional and effective ways. And what writing scholars have come to recognize, building largely on these direct experiences with students' learning, is that these principles need to be environmentally adaptive to be rhetorically effective. While a discipline's core orientations, notions, and practices importantly unify a knowledge-field, the disciplinary principles that prioritize which elements of that field to emphasize in practice *naturally* vary, responding to the needs and values of that unique environment: the institution, community, individual educator, and varying student body who complexly embody and propagate that knowledge in moments of educational dialog.

## A more *Holistic* view of the Knowledge-Environment Relationship:
## Education as Interpersonal Coordination of Social-Academic Experiences

Again, fostering intentional and successful (i.e., integrative) student learning requires in the educator a twin awareness: socially, of what learner dispositions are being nurtured by the educational environments that circumscribe students' learning experiences (rewarding, supporting, valuing certain  behaviors over others); and academically, of how core concepts

are being understood and judged by the students, as they engage with the tasks and dialogs in that environment.

Of course, the line between teacher's ideal aims and in-the-moment practices educationally is a complicated one. Efforts to reach those ideals are impinged upon by surrounding institutional demands and pressures; by daily disruptions and distractions from larger society that funnel into students' minds and hearts; and by the constant internal flux of personal emotions, mental preoccupations, and physical energy levels that the teacher must manage merely to maintain their own homeostatic balance (that basic personal stability on which healthy educational interactions rely). To make sense of and manage these difficulties, educators rely on *principles*: a ready set of practical guidelines that link their overarching values and purposes to in-the-moment attitudes and actions; that helps to prioritize purposes an intentions in the face of situational exigencies, and so clarify choices of action by focusing those possibilities within a moral-pragmatic framework of what is right and effective.

Within a rhetorical view of learning and education, teachers' guiding principles are fundamental to classroom interactions, because they lie at the heart of an educator's intentionality: what is "right" and "effective" in a teacher's mind must be tied, somehow, to the educational goals—ostensibly, of nurturing positive, influential, and lasting connections between students and disciplinary content through the structured course environment. Without making principled connections between scholastic purposes and interpersonal practices, especially in a communication-based discipline, less central goals (e.g., looking good for an institutional review, limiting classroom complexity, unloading excess stress) may unintentionally be prioritized in teachers' actions, to the detriment of core aims (e.g., seeking student perspectives and troubles, drawing out questions and making relevant

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connections to their life experiences, maintaining an equable and emotionally safe academic environment). For this reason, the issue of guiding principles arises regularly in the field of writing pedagogy.

**Principles' Place in Teachers' Educational Work**

As Linda Adler-Kassner (2008) points out, teachers' personal principles serve as a foundation for building theories of practice that "work"; that individuals are actually inclined to use and develop in their professional interactions: "they resonate with those who enact them—because they reflect the principals of those who are doing the enacting." These principles, she explains, extend from educators' personal stories; those narratives that connect an individual's experiences to broader understandings, themes, and perspectives, and so extend the social significance (and practical usefulness) of that biographical development beyond the discrete individual and/or situation. In this way, basic self-awareness and self-understanding proves crucial for teachers because, by making sense of their own lives and learning trajectories, they form a foundation of understanding for making sense of others' stories of experience (as Parker Palmer, 1997, points out: internal division begets social distance; the closer teachers are to themselves, the closer they can be with others – e.g., learners in the classroom).

However, as has been discussed before, academic notions of truth/self disconnect have lead to a like disconnect in many educators' minds, between personal experience and professional work. And this can steer professional attention away from principles, since they are linked to emotion and extend from lived experience, toward professional cultures of public discourse wherein ideas and theoretical frameworks are questioned and applied *without* invoking that connective thread between ideals and strategies (Adler-Kassner 2008).

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That base of immediate experiences and sense-making stories, which allows educators to form principles that are emotionally *resonant* and theories that are conceptually *meaningful*, likewise supports the emergence of educator practices that are principle-based and theory-informed. Whereas a conceptual division between truth and self, by neglecting that common base, tacitly promotes a practical disconnect between ideals and applications; scholastic intentions and social approaches.

Rhetoric-and-writing, as a field, has been turning its academic attention recently back toward this personal base: a growing body of research shows active interest among Writing Program Administrators in more explicitly linking ideals and strategies, making clear connections between the field's broad claims of importance and purpose, and its interpersonal means for working toward those ends (Adler-Kassner 2008). Especially in the expressivist tradition of writing, educators have remained willing to acknowledge and explore the personal, emotional and spiritual components of writing as they shape the discipline's stories about students and subject-matter. And more broadly across the field, notions of transformative learning and situated expertise development are providing now more academically normative theoretical in-roads for connecting ideals to strategies, on a foundation of situated personal experiences and reflective understandings.

As Adler-Kassner (2008) outlines, teaching from a point of principle requires first identifying ideals – those personal stories and motivations from which one's core intentions and strategic work extend; then framing professional stories of the discipline, and of work with students within that discipline, accordingly – in ways that reflect a community's particular working goals and immediate situational realities. Thus, the work of moving beyond academia's commonsense interpretations and methods in educational environments, of genuinely connecting educators' principles and practices, is at its core necessarily a local

process; requiring attuned response to specific exigencies within institutional structures, to consequent goals within work communities, and at center to the emergent educational reality among teachers and students.

**Principles as a Stabilizing Core when Exploring Diverse Perspectives**

Rhetorical approaches to education invite such a principled and discursive formulation of the learning environment. And communication-based disciplines such as writing align naturally with such approaches: their fields cohere around an academic valuing, understanding, and practicing of situated human discourse as the creative source and location of subject matter knowledge. So through course content—if not institutional or program culture—such disciplines continuously, tacitly emphasize that teachers attend to the rhetorical situation they and their students together create; that they intentionally connect what is educationally valued in the discipline and what is environmentally supported in daily interactions.

An explicit and ongoing discourse about educational values and purposes, among educators and with learners, may perhaps be seen as a mixed-blessing within a discipline. Academically, validating a multiplicity of situated perspectives can blur the unifying boundaries of a discipline, both at its core, where proponents of various philosophies may dispute the primary focus and aims that *constitute* the discipline, and at its edges, where open discourses can enrich but also confound the supposed borders that *delineate* the discipline. And socially, recognizing the human complexity that underlies the rhetorical work of educational exchanges—of persuading for interest, coordinating understandings, and fostering valued dispositions—problematizes attempts to canonize "research-based best practices" both for the field as a whole, since the academic *goals* of practices in the

discipline change shape to serve various community environments, and for the educators as individuals, whose goal-based *strategies* must respond to constant biographical changes in themselves as models of the discipline and in their students as learners of the discipline.

In rhetoric-and-writing, we see clearly these effects of a principled, practice-oriented, and personal approach to maintaining the academic discipline: both its difficulties and its benefits. Academically, at its core, the discipline supports a diverse array of values and assumptions underlying the goals of post-secondary writing classes. Curricular texts show that these core focuses vary among institutions and teachers: facilitating expressivist goals of self-expression and personal voice/truth-finding, or critical-cultural studies goals of critiquing social hierarchies and cultural hegemonies; democratic-rhetorical goals of informed participation in civic issues, or pragmatic goals of successful written expression in school/work contexts; aesthetic goals of appreciating writing craft and loving language, or process goals of managing writing tasks well (Beaufort 2012).

And academically, at its boundaries, the discipline of writing finds itself particularly well-structured to operate with and through other disciplines: to cross philosophical and sociological boundaries of discourse, merging fundamental concerns and exploring complimentary methods in a manner that Corinna Delkeskamp calls disciplined interdisciplinarity (Klein 1986). While many disciplines' focused concerns and specialized methods dispose participants toward a productive unification and insularity, writing's complex connection with and responsiveness to its surroundings—those social and historical, personal and technological elements which continuously impact its methods and suffuse its content—renders its experts primed to fortify their discipline by seeking points of perceptual similarity; shared principles that illuminate parallels and compliments among diverse practices:

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This complexity of writing invites eclecticism and tolerance of difference in

research along with mutual understanding of each other's procedures,

theories, and ideas. Even more it invites integrating the multiple perspectives

of data of differing disciplinary traditions in a single inquiry, and it invites

new forms of conceptualization that bring together the insights of the

disciplines in a common vision, reuniting those elements that were separated

for analytic purposes, but which have since gone their own research ways.

(Bazerman 2011, p.9)

As Charles Bazerman further points out, this discursive move pushes opposite to the

conventional course of academic commitment and focus by which disciplines build their

acuity of knowledge and strength of findings—but it also expands the disciplinary aperture

of discourse, allowing in perspectives that academic specialization might darken and silence

in its monotonic conventions. What enables the writing discipline to *remain* its own, in the

midst of such curious explorations and productive expansions via other fields, is (once

again) a central and explicitly conveyed awareness of purpose in that work, of disciplinary

commitments within the individual that transcend and unite contexts: that is, of one's driving

and focusing *principles*. Bazerman reports his own academic experience of using principles

as a centering anchor for his intellectual explorations across conventional boundaries of

scholarship: "The more I continued the interdisciplinary journey, the easier it became to see

what I wanted to learn from each of the disciplines, to keep myself from being caught up in

their issues and work as an amateur. I did this by becoming more explicit and articulate

about the commitments I had to solving problems of my own field" (Bazerman 2011).

That is, the challenge of maintaining writing's disciplinary cohesion, given its

interdisciplinary character, evokes an active need in the rhetoric-and-writing community for

explicitly asserting and recursively examining core principles; the salient beliefs and values that underlie a person's orientations and priorities within professional practice. Thus, openly and continuously discussing such principles in academia provides a means for scholar-educators in writing to maintain a consistent sense of disciplinary identity and purpose amidst the field's diverse explorations; a rationally clear and emotionally resonant link between writing practitioners' scholastic philosophies and personal experiences, robust enough to withstand the various directional gravities of their dispersed and unique situated discourses.

Socially, it is this principle-enabled openness of dialog which yields a final valuable insight from writing about the work of education: that an educator's principles—where general, value-framed ideals connect to specific, pragmatic strategies through a base of storied personal experience—require explicit and ongoing discourse to remain clear and stable, in the face of personal stresses and professional challenges, when dealing with the complex and and dynamic rhetorical reality of everyday educational exchanges.

*\* Implications for the learning environment #4 (emergent process):*

*Co-creating the discipline in a classroom, exchange-by-exchange.*

In its recent history, both the writing discipline's evolving, multifarious practical priorities and its consistent, defining principles are visible—through its dominant pedagogical orientations and through specific scholarly reflections on those practices. First, the flow of rhetoric-and-writing's orientations has shown dynamic and responsive adjustments in concert with other disciplinary fields' findings (Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak 2014): using linguistic insights (e.g., about style and coherence) in the 1950's to enrich educational aims; using composition studies' research on the writing process in the 1960's and 1970's to inform pedagogical strategies; using using critical literary and rhetorical understandings of writing's

genres in the 1980's and 1990's to tailor curriculum usefully toward academic argumentation's specific exigencies (along with the issues of race, class, and gender that inform them); analyzing various disciplines' specialized, situated views of the academic writing genre in the 2000's and 2010's to inform writing's disciplinary view of writing across contexts; and drawing on emergent psychological research about learning transfer from the 2010's through the present to improve the ways educational environments facilitate students' situated experience of "thinking like writers" and help them to generalize that knowledge-base across their life contexts.

Furthermore, within those general trends of shifting and expanding focus, a span of educational philosophies within the writing discipline has led to an ongoing professional dialog, among scholars in diverse writing programs, concerning the various principled plans for applying these evolving ideas to present social structures and practices in education.

For example, Anne Beaufort (2012), from a pragmatic writing-across-the-curriculum perspective of learning writing, orients practice around such knowledge-centered principles as helping learners *frame* specific tasks into more abstract principles that can be applied elsewhere (e.g., by connecting writing tasks to ideas of form and function, so that knowledges of writing process, genre, and rhetoric are "nested" together); giving learners opportunities to *apply* key concepts to different problems and situations relevant to them (e.g., by selecting a particular theme or subject, broad enough to allow for a range of student inquiries while focused enough to allow for depth of repetition); and teaching practices of mindfulness—i.e. meta-cognition—to facilitate student awareness of their learning in these situations (e.g., by organizing larger activities into series of "scaffolding" assignments, explicitly teaching big concepts tacit within those writing skills, providing exploration-guiding questions and time for reflection).

Alternately, Elizabeth Wardle (2007), from a more aesthetic and process-based writing-about-writing perspective, emphasizes more the environment-centered principles that orient educational practices: creating writing assignments that are purposeful and "goal-oriented" within a course, and connected to the content students are reading there, so that students view that rhetorical problem as "authentic" and "engaging"; assignments that challenge the students to think and decide, and that relate to their interests, so they feel a sense of connection to the conversation and "ownership" of their work (not simple "busy work" to reach one "right" answer); assignments that are bolstered by high teacher expectations, and direct explanations, so that students understand clearly what is being asked of them and why. And from a more expressivist perspective of writing and self-discovery, Thomas Newkirk (1997) emphasizes more the learner-centered principles that justify and intrinsically drive student writing processes: that writing provides a means for individuals to move from the particular to the general, so making sense of their experiences and learning therefrom; that writing creates an external representation of the individual, so allowing for self-exploration and discovery from a more objective distance; that writing invites the individual to construct their self narratively, so to see their perspectives and beliefs growing, and to recognize in themselves their fundamental capacity and desire for change—and ostensibly that such moves are positive, and should be respected and nurtured where educators assign and respond to student writing.

More synthetically, from a rhetorical-social perspective of writing education and assessment, Bob Broad (2003) emphasizes some fundamental principles that can help writing programs recognize with clearer focus what they value about writing, and how to reflect those values directly in their teaching and assessing practices, in ways that students can access and understand: principles such as providing safe and stimulating environments

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for educators to discuss their values, coordinate community goals, and grow as professionals; structuring assignments such that they support valued disciplinary practices (e.g., invention, drafting, collaboration, research, and revision); and evaluating students in ways that communicate both impartial fairness and clear standards within the program (e.g., by judging students on the basis of their best work and involving outside instructors as co-readers of that work).

Nonetheless, similar through all these diverse orientations in the writing discipline as practiced, is this. Firstly, (A) writing educators, at the post-secondary level, work to create environments that socially support students making personal connections with academic learning—by making those educational exchanges continuously *discursive* and *responsive*: among teachers as representatives of the discipline (Broad), between teachers and students as individuals sharing a mutual disciplinary dialog (Newkirk), between teachers' intentional frameworks for learning and students' learning experiences (Beaufort; Wardle). And secondly, (B) writing scholar-educators by-and-large *explicitly* discuss their principles, exposing for reflection the underlying knowledge and values that inform/justify those principles, as they connect general theories to personal strategies for shaping educational environments.

At the level of general pedagogical discourse in the field, the implications of this may appear unremarkable at first glance: educators discussing what disciplinary knowledge they want to pass on, what research supports their institutional approaches to that educational task, and what their consequent recommendations for implementation are. The subtle and important detail within these commonplace discussions is their consistent centering of focus on the learning process of the students; not on the material itself, and objectively conveying it well, but on *what the material does for and to the individual learning it*, and subjectively

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encouraging those student-learning relationships in intentional and lastingly persuasive ways. This distinction of focus was expressed rather eloquently by James Britton, at a Dartmouth seminar in 1966, when he asserted that the key question in defining a discipline should not be "What is the subject matter?" but rather "What do we want students and teachers to be doing?" (Harris 1991, in Boone, Chaney, Compton, Donahue, & Gocsik 2012). We can see the influence of that subjective, practical distinction in academic values shaping educational environments in post-secondary writing from the level of abstract disciplinary frameworks down to the level of individual teacher-student relations.

For example, when Anne Beaufort developed her model of writing knowledge domains to teach students, she did so in terms of those areas' observable *practical value to learners*: "a model of the five knowledge domains to be mastered in order to become an expert writer, based on observing what areas of new learning four writers in a non-profit needed to engage with in order to be successful as writers in this new context" (Beaufort 2012). And others in the field have recognized Beaufort's conceptual framework—of writing process knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, genre knowledge, discourse community knowledge, and content knowledge—as valuable *for the way it can support writers* in amassing and organizing their own context-specific knowledge across their own writing situations (Robertson, Taczak & Yancey 2012). And in creating curricular frameworks to convey this writing knowledge to students (Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak 2014), these educators focus ample attention on *students' learning experiences*; not the simple clarity of presented content, but the complex synchrony being promoted between students' new academic understandings and existing personal experiences: transitioning from high school-based perceptions of writing as a test-oriented skill to post-FYC conceptions of writing as a mode of thinking and communicating, and from writing in a novice role of uncertainty and

ambiguity toward a more expert position of fluency and confidence in challenging writing environments.

Next, at the practical level of applying these curricular frameworks for student learning institutionally, writing programs use the discipline's learner-focused research to inform their ways of creating educational environments (e.g. Boone, Chaney, Compton, Donahue & Gocsik 2012). Transfer-oriented studies of post-secondary writing environments and learners' experiences therein point out routes by which teaching approaches can directly, profoundly impact students' personalization and cross-situational carryover of learning: enabling transfer by providing analogies and scaffolds, motivating efforts amidst challenges, encouraging metacognition, offering ample opportunities to experience, and leaving sufficient time to absorb—in the same way that creating inaccessible, un-supportive, de-motivating, or rushed educational exchanges can undermine students' readiness and disposition to transfer and develop their learning (Wardle 2007).

For example, longitudinal case-studies of writers' learning experiences have yielded important insights about environmental factors that influence students' feelings of connection or disconnection between writing and their lives beyond the classroom, while larger-scale longitudinal studies have yielded information about how those students develop as writers beyond initial learning environments—e.g., regressing in the face of new challenges or exhibiting increased writing competence as topic expertise deepens, backing away from newly-learned strategies or trying to master them, noticing or missing connections between school and beyond-school writing experiences. And programs such as Dartmouth's Institute for Writing and Rhetoric (Boone, Chaney, Compton, Donahue & Gocsik 2012) use these insights as a base for their principles in creating educational environments.

Foremost, they explicitly endeavor to engage learners deeply and collaboratively with composing processes, in ways that will carry and develop across life situations toward evermore refined expertise. Next, they pursue these principled educational goals by constructing social frames that provide students with dedicated leeway to explore and decide, with validated authority to lead and instruct, and with coordinated encouragement to connect and carry over the ideas and practices they learn across varied domains and situations in their lives. And finally, they support the construction and refinement of these cohesive educational environments through, for example, term-sequences that connect teachers in the co-constructing of learning situations, professional development and peer mentoring workshops that facilitate the faculty's circulating of educational research and local expertise, and continual analysis of students' initial and final writing across academic courses to maintain a sense of where current students are starting and are heading in their learning.

Then finally, at the interpersonal level of translating these informed plans into effective educational exchanges, writing's disciplinary focus on learners' personal *relationships* with the field's core concepts during situated course practice has led to professional images of educational interaction—from a teacher-role perspective—which are profoundly dialogic: intimately social, actively perspective-seeking and responsive to experience, and consistently centered by core purposes and principles along a learning-centered path toward synchrony between teachers' and students' respective understandings.

Teachers' individualized classroom goals and plans are, of course, informed by their personal biographies of experience with learning the subject for themselves and with supporting their students' learning—a well of insight which all teachers amass over time. But also particularly in the case of writing educators, these plans are informed by regular

exposure to students' written compositions, which provide insight into how students are privately interpreting and publically aligning with the course's academic content and social environment for learning as it is being conveyed: whether or not as intended. Again, this close subjective teacher-student interaction in writing classrooms has evoked keen attention in the discipline to students' voiced perspectives on factors that make or break the intended educational environment when translated to an intersubjective reality—e.g., whether or not the course work's purpose is made clear, that purpose seems socially genuine and broadly relevant within the course, that work seems personally stimulating and broadly useful beyond the course, et cetera (Wardle 2007).

Thus, when writing teachers discuss pedagogical plans for disseminating academic understandings among learners—or reflect on those attempts and witnessed outcomes—it is often in terms not of a divided and pre-scripted transaction, where the students *pay* requisite attention to the teacher and *receive* prepared knowledge, but of a shared and evolving discourse, where both they and the students contribute mutually to and realize gradually together a unique understanding of core course notions, orientations, and processes: one which is tied to the collective social and individual personal dynamics of that educational exchange.

These discursive paths in writing classrooms, as stated prior, may aim specifically toward learning different core concepts or learning them with different levels of emphasis. But *generally*, whatever the designated curricular end-goal, these post-secondary writing environments work with students toward those aims along a path of practicing *writing expertise*: the fluent, intentional, and effective use of writing to meet particular rhetorical exigencies of given communicative situations. The image of personal expertise that research provides, and that informs transfer-oriented pedagogy, consists essentially of three elements:

**reflective awareness**, that is, noticing meaningful patterns that novices don't; of **experience-based understanding**, that is, having a great deal of knowledge that reflects specific contexts of application and is organized in a cohesive way that facilitates intuitive, useful retrieval; and of **tacit and situated bounds**, that is, this thorough domain knowledge does *not* necessarily imply being able to teach or express to others, or to flexibly approach new situations (Yancey, Robertson & Taczak 2014).

Therefore, in principle, supporting students' expert relationships with the writing discipline—helping them become "expert writers"—implies constructing classroom activities and discourse that stimulate those expert-like elements in the self-environment relationship: connecting student writers with the *reflective notion* that their writing is a personal practice and a communicative object, with the *rhetorical orientation* toward language-use as situated social action, and with the *real-world practice* of transferring writing processes across disciplinary contexts and contents (Yancey, Robertson & Taczak 2014). And in practice, making such learning activities and discourse educationally effective—i.e., convincing students to value, to find meaningful connections with, and to persist in using core disciplinary orientations, notions, and practices in their current and future writing—implies convincing student writers that they are participating in genuine and meaningful acts of communication that are worth investing in personally and developing expertly: helping them *to feel personal ownership and investment* in their writing, *to maintain executive control and responsibility* over the conceptual content and rhetorical style within that writing, and *to sense the social purpose and consequentiality* of improving that written product and that writing process.

This puts writing teachers in a delicate social role, educationally, where they must provide leadership, guiding and informing the way learners examine and present their

thoughts to others, while also providing a true audience, listening to and questioning those learners' words with the humility and respect through which personal expertise is given the socially validated space to mature. Because students' personal dispositions toward academic content are central to their integrative use and autonomous development of that learning, the teacher's professional social work requires not merely conveying the discipline's core content clearly, but also demonstrating and facilitating personal connections with that content; not merely explaining field knowledge but *persuading student characters*: garnering students' respect for those orientations, interest in that knowledge, and affiliation with those practices. That is, while students can be compelled didactically (objectively, rationally) to learn and demonstrate that learning within the strictures of a classroom environment, they must be persuaded rhetorically (subjectively, with regard for their personal experience; for the emotions, meanings, and identities through which they perceive and make sense of environments) to incorporate that academic learning into their lives: to trust it, value it, and personalize it.

Outside of writing's distinctly subjective academic ethos, in "hard-science" fields like mathematics, the fact that students are forming personal affiliations with the discipline *as-experienced* in that classroom—and that the social and academic sides of that self-environment relationship are bound together in their subject-matter learning—may seem unimportant, imperceptible, or even false. In writing, reflexive emotions and biographical perspectives and social identities shape students' academic work in direct and often baldly evident ways: a teacher's tone of voice, or choice of words, or selection of examples may influence not only the circumambient classroom energy and participation, as it would in math, but also potentially the effort and originality and style of student work which is at the center of the course (as the upcoming examples will illustrate).

Such a discursive path, in the educational exchange, seems to confound the polarizing language so often used to describe educational exchanges: it is neither a "teacher-centered" didacticism nor "student-centered" pedagogical power-lending, but more accurately a *learning-centered* exchange, wherein teachers and students work together to cohere a dialog and to advance it; wherealong both sides' learning socially enables the scholastic movement toward synchrony of perspectives and purposes—not sameness nor unity, but mutuality and coordination.

Thus, the pedagogical aim that centers contemporary, transfer-oriented, writing classroom discourses—to create opportunities for students to practice expertise, in ways that they will carry over usefully across writing situations in their lives—challenges these teachers to be personal, practical, and principled in their educational work: using their experience-informed awareness within the discipline of those environmental opportunities which can fuel deep personal learning, and of those social-contextual factors which can affect students' willingness to value and utilize those opportunities, to frame and nurture desirably transformative learning experiences: ones that are positive, influential, and lasting; ones that students will appreciate, remember, and use.

What this aware and intentional practice looks like, in much of the first-hand literature on teaching writing, is a carefully crafted, gradually refined environment—a narrative arc of progressively connected activities which channel recursively emphasized ideas—providing continual and coherent occasions among teachers and students for learning-centered dialogs: *educational* dialogs that can be honest and intimate (which are inseparable), mutual and genuine (likewise inseparable), purposeful and meaningful (again, inseparable). The image of educational expertise that teachers present in this dialogic classroom work reflects the fundamental qualities of learning itself (the base process in

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maintaining and refining expertise) in that it is not certain or fixed as a "truth" to be known but rather seeking and changing as a *relationship* to be realized with emergent environments and the complex, dynamic patterns that connect them: situation-by-situation (Nowacek 2011), idea-by-idea (Coles 1978), student-by-student (Carroll 2002), exchange-by-exchange (Newkirk 1997) and moment-by-moment (Skorczweski 2005), adjusting as necessary (Beaufort 2012) based on one's experience-informed perceptions as a teacher of others' subjective feelings, thoughts, and motives in that dynamic learning environment.

**The teacher's role: seeing and supporting integration**

   **Situation-by-situation: transfer as an intentional, environmentally motivated act.**

Nowacek's notion of successful transfer as a rhetorical act of recontextualization (2005) has been discussed prior in a more conceptual manner, but the topic is worth exploring here in more detail for its practical relevance to the way teachers build up social environments as contexts for educational dialog. Her situation-specific notion of transfer successes associates knowledge with genre: that is, a useful and malleable social-rhetorical resource that helps individuals sense similarities and minimize the sense of difference across situations (which, genre theories claim, *are* in fact fundamentally similar—not different, as much transfer theory contends). Thus she regards *all* learning that people amass and transfer, like a genre, as "constellation[s] of associations" that afford the individual "ready avenues of connection" in their relationships with various environments. Furthermore, she sees the  students who wield this learning as rhetorical "agents of integration": a metaphor that she uses to foreground the ways in which successful learning transfer constitutes a complex rhetorical act: situated, motivated, and intentional.

Nowacek studies the experience of students in school environments using their learning in this intentional and situation-motivated way. More than simply forging connections between various contexts, these students behave as "agents of integration," both actively perceiving connections between once-separated domains in their minds, *and* at the same time working actively to convey that personal meaning-making to consequential others in their environment (e.g., teachers, other faces of influence or power) in ways that will be interpreted as valid, valuable, and  positive. She calls these two parts of a student's integrative acts *seeing* and *selling*:

> the agents-of-integration construct puts the individual as meaning maker at the center of conceptions of transfer and integration. … Students becoming agents of integration must learn not only to "see" connections among previously disparate contexts but also to "sell" those connections, to render them appropriate and convincing to their various audiences. (Nowacek 2011, p.39)

Here, Nowacek emphasizes the importance of the teacher and larger school structure in shaping what students will recognize as prudent uses of their learning; those which are socially rewarded and reinforced, versus those which are treated as "negative transfer." By talking with students, listening to class discussions, and reading their work, she gleans a very human portrait of learning: that students often find themselves at the delicate seams between parts of their lives, excited when they sense connections and frustrated when they feel a conflict—say, between academic and personal life.  When the student experiences both meta-aware seeing and successful selling together, in Nowacek's model, this constitutes successful integration: unsuccessful selling in the educational environment can result in frustrated integration, even if the connections are well-seen; even unconscious seeing, when

well-sold, may be felt as "successful transfer"; and only when the individual fails to sell that ruse of integrative functioning, does their act feel to them like frustrated transfer.

When Nowacek applies this agentive, rhetorical framework to specific examples of students' learning experiences within educational exchanges, her close attention to their motivations and intentions in writing yields a clear view of how learners' acts of transfer—while all arguably intentional and intellectually valid—meet with varying levels of rhetorical success in their respective classroom environments. Furthermore, her analysis demonstrates the powerful social influence that teachers' apparent intentions and motivations in classroom exchanges can potentially undermine students' dispositions to connect with those disciplines.

For example, on the first point—that students apply their academic learning with rhetorical purpose in educational exchanges—her examinations of  "Data" and "Kelly" stand out as demonstrative cases. Data intentionally uses  claims learned in his history classss to guide his literature class analysis of *Doctor Faustus*, and receives an "A-" for his paper: demonstrating successful seeing *and* selling of connections. By contrast, Kelly  makes a conscious decision to use her reading of *Canterbury Tales* in literature to inform a psychological profile for her medieval-diary history assignment, a connection which she was *not* able to sell to her teacher. He had requested that students emphasize physical details of the material surroundings, and so she received a non-A grade: Nowacek argues that this intentional but socially unvalidated act is not a case of "negative transfer" but rather of frustrated integration.

This, then leads to the second point—that teachers' exchanges with students, and their apparent intentions and motivations therein, can directly influence students' learning-centered relationships with that discipline—in regards to which Nowacek's observations of "Betty" and "Tygra" prove illuminating. Betty evidences feeling a disconnect between her

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personal identity as a Quaker and her institutional identity as a student at an "all-faiths" Catholic University. Within this context, she perceives that her theology teacher is carrying an agenda of getting Catholic students to accept rather than critically examine Thomas Aquinas' religious philosophy, as he distributes an assignment with phrasings that "suggest there is a party line to which successful students will adhere," such as "be his defense lawyer … make a case for the reasonableness of Aquinas's theology on this issue." Betty, in order to side-step her personal qualms about voicing a strong argument for Aquinas, uses a genre strategy from her philosophy class of writing a dialog rather than a thesis-driven paper, and so gets a relatively high grade (though at what cost to her long-term connection with the discipline of theology?). Relatedly, Tygra expresses feeling an academic disconnect between two disciplinary ways of knowing. She applies in literature class her history class's perspective that modern world views are different from pre-modern ones, and is corrected for attempting to theorize generally about peoples' thoughts within those historical cultures, and so is left being *unconvinced* by her teacher's belief in the validity of directly analyzing the words in older texts, which strikes her as "a little stupid because we know very little about the time period and we're drawing with our modern conceptions."

These four cases serve as illustrative images of a larger, almost definitional, scholastic reality: teachers and students, within learning-centered relationships, are both actively working to persuade one another of the social coherence (or functionality) and the intellectual validity of one another's values, notions, and practices.

The pedagogical challenge, then,  in classroom activities and discourse (from a genre-informed view of learning and a rhetorical view of education) is for teachers to use their leadership—rhetorically, integratively, based on their learning and teaching experiences—to help students develop their own personal and social strategies for

transforming "experiences of frustrated transfer into experiences of successful integration" (Nowacek 2011). A core difficulty in this, as seen above, is that in order to see (and from there support) with any nuance a student's learning, one first has to learn that student. That is, helping to engender deep and lasting changes in individuals requires not only personally understanding a discipline's core concepts and seeing how its tools of practice tacitly represent those ideas, but also perceiving the visible surface hints that students are—or not—finding those connections in their own way: not just repeating an activity appropriately as intended, but showing signs of change through that activity (even "inappropriately") that may transcend the immediate classroom environment.

*The teacher's developing expertise: learning how to see student's subject-matter relationships.*

**Student-by-student: social "game" versus personal purpose motivating students' academic identity-performance.**
In a study similar to the previous, Lee Ann Carroll's (2002) book *Rehearsing New Roles* explores how students as writers at Pepperdine University find their own ways of being successful within that specific environment, and in so doing highlights these two importantly distinct faces of the educational environment: what students are pragmatically *doing*, for grades and credits that reflect their work's quality (within the institution's eye), and what students are personally *learning*, driven by their life interests that are rooted in deep values and goals (within their own eye). What Carroll's extensive student interviews reveal is that the quality of these two are not at all tightly correlated: students' work processes and students' learning experiences may occur together in their an institutional environment, but

looking at what processes transfer is not the same as looking at what learning is being achieved.

Looking at the processes that students demonstrate mastery of, and seeking instances where students visibly transfer those processes to other environments, as mentioned previously,  invites disappointment because it focuses too narrowly on standard versions of fields' practices, rather than on the personal re-purposing and recombining of these tools—or the meat of ideas therein—by the learner (Wardle 2007; Robertson, Taczack, and Yancey 2012). But moreover, Carroll illustrates, focusing on the transfer of taught processes means buying into and perpetuating the institutional "game" of social performance-and-reward that students are navigating in school; a game which can motivate students' immediate efforts and graded outcomes, but does not necessarily connect to—and may unintentionally interfere with—their general growth in academically valued character dispositions and knowledge relationships.   One particular quote from a student gives insight into how teachers' search for certain specific versions of "correct" style or content can lead to learners' personal disinvestment and detachment from that process and its outcomes:

> Susanna wrote on a self-assessment that college "forces" students to change
> their writing. When I asked what she meant, she answered that her English 1
> teacher was "really picky" and "I felt like I had to change the way I was
> writing in order to kind of fit the professor. I mean, I think that is true in
> English classes. Every professor is different and so you have to change
> however you're writing for that professor." This is a truth universally
> acknowledged and asserted by almost every student in our study. Whenever
> they are writing for grades, students, in order to be successful, must give
> professors what they want. (Carroll 2002, p.47)

This student's words communicate her focusing of attention away from the generalizable lessons of the writing discipline and toward the more immediate quid-pro-quo that she perceives in that social exchange: giving the teachers what they want, in exchange for a grade, asserts itself as a practical priority over investing deeply or personally in the quality or intended rhetorical purpose of that writing.

However, alternately looking at the learning that students experience, and seeking instances where students visibly carry with them that growth or change, reveals a more educationally fruitful face of the scholastic environment being described so bleakly above. Specifically, students in Carroll's study commonly reported instances of experiencing learning that was significant to them personally, even when the quality of their work was— in their own eyes—poor, and not representative of their abilities or understandings:

> Professors tend to evaluate student papers as text and as representative of
> what students know or of what they have learned in a course and
> representative of their abilities as writers. … Yet, students in our study
> repeatedly discussed papers that in the student's own assessment were not
> great writing but did represent significant learning. … Leslie, for example,
> aiming toward a career in marketing, pointed out that her paper analyzing the
> political condition of the state of California is not "the exact pinnacle" of her
> writing; however, it demonstrated an important change in her thinking.
> Before the course, she was not really interested in politics, now she was. Paul
> explained that his response paper on religion in Japan was not outstanding
> writing but illustrated his growing interest in Asian culture... Paul followed
> up on this interest by taking an additional art history course on non-Western
> art. / We will see that in their major fields students continue to look for

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connections between their own interests and academic learning, finding their

own ways through the curriculum. (Carroll 2002, p.57-58)

These particular experiences of personally significant learning, distinct from the quality of

students' work, are *unintended* educational outcomes: positive and influential and likely to

carry across contexts over time, but also somewhat tangential to the specific educational

aims of those courses. At this broader level of personal growth, a teacher's informed

understanding of students may prove socially enriching for the student and emotionally

rewarding for the teacher, while still *not* appearing directly important to pedagogical aims, in

the narrower academic sense. But at the the level of *intended* educational outcomes, where

seeing students' learning experiences with academic core content *relies* on one's knowledge

of their socially idiosyncratic patterns of interest, interpretation, and execution in

personalizing knowledge and practice, a teacher's keen awareness of students' general

subjective  interactions with course content—the feelings they exhibit, understandings they

voice, intentions they demonstrate, etc.—proves *directly* relevant to their educational

efficacy. That social attuning of  teacher with student provides a subjectively specific

touchstone for recognizing students' learning in relation to that academic discipline.

Carroll provides a good example of this as she discusses one of her composition

students, Chris, who follows a natural developmental pattern of using an available tool,

which stimulates a personal realization, which in turn allows him to move beyond the tool—

letting that practice fall away while carrying over the learning. As Carroll points out,

composition teachers gradually amass a store of specialized knowledge about writing

processes that can help learning writers to develop more complex understandings and skills:

e.g., brainstorming or freewriting to generate ideas, mapping or outlining to organize,

writing multiple drafts and enlisting readers' perspectives to aid revisions, all providing the

developing writer support en route to accomplishing some larger rhetorical task. Through experience, writing teachers learn, ideally, to recognize where students are in their development as writers, not by their "correct" use of these pedagogical tools, but by their successful personalization of the ideas and principles behind those tools, when they are composing texts in their own way. And this is evident not simply in the academic work itself, but in the student's specific relationship to that goal-oriented task, as Chris's example demonstrates:

> one of my students, Chris, in a recent composition course worked with me for two semesters writing papers that were very fluent in style but never quite convincing in content. For one assignment in my class, students experimented with making rhetorical outlines explaining how each section of their essay was meant to affect a reader. This was an "aha" moment for Chris. The rhetorical outline helped him more fully grasp the idea that writing was not only a vehicle for expressing his own thinking but that he could strategically structure his discourse to persuade readers to take his argument seriously. Although Chris did not continue to make formal rhetorical outlines, he began to write more effectively, not simply lost in his own stylish prose but actually enjoying his ability to influence me and his peer readers. The rhetorical outline served as a tool to move him to a new level of development. (Carroll 2002, p.75)

Though Carroll's telling of this pedagogical interaction focuses on the academic development, her description of Chris's learning is infused with details that belie her acute social attention to his progress in the conversations and interactions surrounding that academic work. She first characterizes their interpersonal relationship as a mutual one, both

of them working together *with* each other on his writing toward the communicative goal of more effectively convincing fellow readers in the classroom.  She then takes his perspective, as a learner, looking past his performance into the growth that he evidences, and finally elaborates on what that evidence was: not his effective use of educational tools, but his apparent personalization of their tacit lessons; not narrowly his budding academic achievements in persuasive writing, but his social *enjoyment* of that ability to influence others in his immediate communicative environment.

This type of specifically attuned, disposition- and transformation-level assessment of a student's evident learning is not possible when a teacher's attention fixes on the surface of students' discrete tasks and their similarity to standardized models—because that data alone provides no solid evidence of the student's personalization, only their performance. This assessment is enabled by Carroll's teacherly attention to characteristic patterns within her students, and to signs within those patterns of transformative learning, that occur in the social environment surrounding academic tasks: the agreed-upon educational aims, the coordinated learning-centered activities, the personal interests and goals that students and teachers are each pursuing together through those activities, and the interpersonal dialogs that negotiate these exchanges toward some semblance of pragmatic synchrony. Importantly, this teacherly attention is at once personally focused and educationally aimed; it is indivisibly social an academic: it recognizes that a students' feelings of attraction or resistance, conceptions of meaningful connectedness or disparity, and identifications in affiliation with or against a course's aims and efforts directly influence their decision whether to socially perform academic competence or to socially pursue academic personalization with that field knowledge.

In this way, the distinction in principle between looking at students' work as an objective abilities demonstration versus approaching it as a sign of their subjective relationship with the discipline can  become, in practice, the difference between unintentionally versus intentionally shaping the emotional and motivational details of learning environments and the educational exchanges which occur therein.

Dawn Skorczewski further expands on what this teacherly attitude means for the relational work of the writing classroom in her book *Teaching One Moment at a Time: Disruption and Repair in the Classroom* (2005). To support students in the development of their ideas, she explains, teachers must be at once aware of their unique social influence in shaping knowledge in the classroom, and the limits of their expertise when it comes to knowing what is healing or liberating for a given student. That is, the work of teaching—of disciplinary identity formation and learning—occurs in the *intersubjective realm*, the shared world of experiences between individuals. It is through this common and coordinated experience that individuals can build a "mutual recognition of one another's motives, desires, and implicit goals, as well as the feelings that accompany this process." Because teaching occurs within such a relationship—within localized zones of synchronized understanding among unique perspectives—Skorczewski emphasizes the pragmatic delicacy of teaching "in a moment."

With a smile or a snap of hostility, the right story or the the wrong energy level, a teacher can build camaraderie or shatter trust, grip others' imaginations or slip from their attentions. So a teacher has to monitor her connection with students, Skorczewski explains, through subtle acts of *checking in*; comparing "what she is observing in herself with what she believes is happening in her students' minds" and testing the environment with a

challenge or question to see if her observations and assumptions are accurate (for example, am I sensing my students are bored, restless, or confused?).

This translates to a lot of careful listening and attending to where students seem to be internally, based on evidence and experience, in relation to the class educational environment. It also means carefully establishing and responsively maintaining one's teacher role in relation to those learners (navigating the tricky line between personal authenticity and professional pragmatism), applying that role with "humility and flexibility" in dealing with practical dilemmas endemic to classroom discussions (e.g., wielding one's leadership to ensure that students' ideas receive ample room to develop and to be understood socially), and managing one's own professional learning revelations while working to provide stabilizing support for students' ongoing learning experiences.

### Exchange-by-exchange: school work as student self-performance, opportunities for dialog.

Thomas Newkirk, in his book *The Performance of Self in Student Writing* (1997), argues eloquently for the importance of this careful and humble—i.e., emotion cognizant and intention respecting–learner's mindset in teachers when they engage with students in educational exchanges. He makes three key points en route to this assertion. First, writing (most transparently in expressivist writing) is a process of self-discovery, where first-hand experiences can be placed down as objects and regarded from a distance, where personal beliefs and values that one performs socially can be explicated and questioned critically, and where the identity-forming story of one's coherence and situated growth and ideal direction can foster a sense of one's distinct contribution to the world and one's commonness with other growing "I's" and one's general malleability as an unfinished individual. Second, teachers are generally indoctrinated with, and disposed to promote, educational institutions'

academic bias toward reason (away from emotion) and their aristocratic bias toward

aesthetic distancing from "ordinary urgencies" (separating events from human responses),

leading teachers to instinctively dismiss or "correct" students' existing sensibilities,

experiences, beliefs and values as passively absorbed cultural myths, sentimental

outpourings, and commonplaces, which are presumed morally/intellectually inferior to those

of the institution. Third, entering into students' perspectives and understanding the genuine

use and value of their ideologies—a la Peter Elbow's (2008) suggestion of the "believing

game"—provides a social suture for this pervasive divide in classroom educational

exchanges, and so an academic means for both validating and helping develop students'

perspectives.

Whereas corrective monologs can breed social inequity and pedagogically damaging

ignorance in schools—leaving teachers potentially unaware of their own biases and students

pressed to disconnect from their own powerful motivations, meanings, and feelings—the

educational dialogs that Newkirk describes, where teachers seek to learn students' intentions

and ideas as part of supporting and challenging their growth, with "gentle counterpressure,

even working within the student's ideology" (1997), proffers a social balancing and

mutuality that drives toward affiliation and synchrony in educational exchanges.

This contrast between educational monologs and dialogs is made clear in the two

following passages. The first one lays bare the social divide that hierarchical, morally and

intellectually presumptive approaches to teaching can provoke in classrooms full of

academic outsiders and novices, and the discourse-blocking effect that can have on

educational exchanges (emphasis added):

I want to focus on the construction of the students in these arguments—and of

the teacher's relationship to the students. Students are pictured as morally and

civically deficient … products of a media culture that has inculcated values in

them that perpetuate consumption and rationalize social inequalities. … The

instructor, aware of how these constructions work, operates on a higher moral

plane and by calling these moralized beliefs into question, can create the

critical awareness necessary for true resistance. … <u>Yet the very cultural</u>

<u>commonplaces, the moral bedrock embodied in these [students'] discourses,</u>

<u>are quickly dismissed; … There is no ethnographic interest in the moral</u>

<u>utility of these commonplaces</u>, or in <u>the possibility that students may not be</u>

<u>parroting the language of authority, but testifying to beliefs that have meant</u>

<u>something in their lives</u>. (Newkirk 1997, pp.89-91)

Here, an attitude of academic cultural superiority is used to justify dismissing students'

commonplace values and limiting their intellectual discourse—framing that repressive act as

liberating them or building their critical resistance. By contrast, this second passage lays out

the practical opportunities for personal affiliation and intellectual expansion that exist

beyond superficial right-versus-wrong assessments, when teachers actively look for the sense

and meaning in students' perspectives (emphasis added):

The authors refer dismissively to this [student's] essay as a "Boy's Life

narrative"; the student, they argue, falls back on the authoritative language of

parents, coaches, and other powerful adults. … "To the student who wrote the

above paper, we can only say, 'No, that's not it,'" … There are, of course,

options other than saying, "that's not it." We can listen to the story. We could

express admiration for the way the writer transformed himself from an

overweight kid to the team captain. That is an impressive achievement. We

could also show curiosity by asking him to fill in some of the gaps in the

story—how he was able to carry on without his mentor present. Finally we

might ask ourselves what motive (other than pleasing us) the writer had for

"problematizing" a code of belief that has served him so well. … <u>On the

principle that we should not set out to change what we don't understand</u>, I

would like to make the case for the *empowerment* that comes from cultural

commonplaces stressing personal agency. … Those who believe they are

responsible for acting morally are more likely to act morally than those who

see themselves as victims of social forces. And a wholehearted belief may

have more "cash value" than a thoroughly problematized one. (Newkirk

1997, pp.44-45)

Here, Newkirk demonstrates the intellectual grist available in a piece of student writing that

is summarily dismissed in Bartholomae and Petrosky's 1986 *Facts, Artifacts, and

Counterfacts*. As far as what this dialog-championing principle—that one should understand

another's mind and heart before setting out to change it—means for a teacher (of writing, or

of any subject) in their work and development, Newkirk offers insight from his own

formative memories of classroom dialogs, which he uses to ground (in a personal, situated

way) his general educational principles. These narrations of his experience not only lend

specific support and validity to his refined pedagogical framework, but evidence how his

dialogic efforts and struggles in the classroom have contribute directly to his becoming

gradually more aware, intentional, effective in his exchanges with students:

Students who challenge him to expand his grasp on generational and cultural

conventions of social interaction, through their playful and casual use of vernacular;

My first teaching assignment, … I felt at sea in a culture I didn't understand,

unable to make even the most basic decisions (What do I do when a student

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calls me 'Mr. Thing'? Laugh? Reprimand?). In retrospect, some of my

misinterpretation is comical. (Newkirk 1997, p.1)

Students who help him to realize the full breadth of possible interpretations of his words and

actions that are available—by their unexpected and undesired learning responses thereto;

Alan wrote his first paper of the course on his brother … In the conference I

probed, diplomatically I thought, ways in which he might make this profile

more complex. Did his brother have a humorous side? What gave him

difficulty? Was there, perhaps, a negative sound to this single-mindedness. …

On the course evaluation he wrote, 'Mr. Newkirk is a pretty good teacher, but

for some reason he doesn't like my brother.' / Alan and I were

miscommunicating about more than writing. This exchange concerned the

nature of heroes, the difference between conditional and unconditional

admiration; we were talking across an ideological divide and not incidentally

an age divide. (Newkirk 1997, p.37)

Students who force him to recognize the bounds of his expertise and the limits of his

rhetorical  influence on others' perceptions in genuine discourse—through their own

expressions of intellectually valid knowledge-bases and their own socially persuasive

interpretations;

[Newspaper images of museum works alongside ads with super-thin models]

seemed to me a good lesson for my Freshman English class on how culture

and media can construct completely different images of female beauty. …  As

I recall, most of the conversation centered around the Kate Moss picture.

Wasn't there some danger, I asked, in this almost anorectic image being

presented to young women? Isn't it an impossible, even unhealthy ideal? The

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women in the class sensed no danger at all. One commented that this was

only one way of looking attractive, not the only way. Another said that the

jean ads actually expanded the range of attractive images … Choices had

been enhanced. So a lesson in social construction turned 180 degrees and

became a lesson in students' virtually unlimited belief in their own power to

choose. (Newkirk 1997, p.43)

Students who drive him to feel discontent with less-than-ideal educational exchanges and so

continually refine his personal principles of practice—through their genuine performances of

self, and the emotional exigency that creates in someone who fundamentally values them,

and want to support them (as they are) in their learning and growing.

Previously I often felt constrained to dislike elements in student writing that I

thoroughly approved in their lives—their optimism, energy, capacity for

enjoyment, idealism. Translated into writing, these qualities often appeared

cliched, trite, naïve; they were everything I had been conditioned to dislike.

… This last semester, I tried to listen more carefully to these sections I had

dismissed. A student writes about working in an animal shelter and concludes

with her resolute conviction that she can make a difference for animals. I

listen to that language of resolution and make a point of telling her how much

I admire her conviction, her undeflectable self-confidence that would surface

in several of her papers. It felt right. It felt as if I was finally paying attention.

/ And if that attitude seems 'sentimental,' it may be time to reexamine this

term of rebuke. (Newkirk 1997, p.107)

What becomes visible through such first-hand educator accounts as Newkirk's is an intimate

(if  sometimes tacit) glimpse into the process of teachers developing practical expertise in

the pragmatic rhetorical work of educational dialog: how their neat rhetorical visions of persuasive education meet with the messy pragmatic realities of intersubjective classroom discourse to yield more dialogic principles for teaching—and how those principles then facilitate gradually more self-/student-aware educational exchanges.

This personal and interpersonal insight into how expert educational dialogs evolve is professionally important: arguably to all teachers who intend to convey effectively to others a perception-guiding narrative of a their discipline, but especially in communication-centered disciplines like writing. Firstly, again, at a *basic pragmatic level* (Carroll 2002), students' learning relationships with an academic discipline are realized through discourse and so are *directly* and *visibly* influenced by these social acts of encouragement, correction, validation, dismissal, or other environmental responses that culture their further acts of discourse in the classroom. Secondly, at the *pinnacle of pedagogical achievement*—where teachers' and students' specific course-situated understandings of academic aims and means grow together to a point of fluent, coordinated, generative perspective-trading—successful educational exchanges are, for all intents and purposes, synchronous dialogs.

**The teacher's practical wisdom: using experience-based recognition of student learning patterns to shape educational dialogs.**

 **Idea-by-idea: transitioning between assignments and educational dialogs, toward academic synchrony.**

The composition teacher William E. Coles, Jr., in his book *The Plural I: The Teaching of Writing* (1978), offers a narrative retelling of a single humanities course he taught over one semester, which offers in its details a uniquely explicit first-person account of how—practically—an experienced educator applies their personalized principles of teaching to the

framing and the nurturing of classroom dialogs, and how they intentionally work those

situated social-academic interactions toward synchrony. Coles' primary point in this

retelling, which he repeatedly reiterates, is a firm push past the tempting notion of monoliths

(or even ranges) of research-based best practices for teachers, and toward teachers' fresh and

continual asking of fundamental questions as they teach their discipline[5]; that point is that

his practices work because they are *his* practices. That is, his methodology with the subject is

"an extension of [himself]," a rhetorical approach, for addressing the exigencies of

archetypal classroom situations, which reflects his particular academic moral character and

social dispositions:

> None of the students with this first writing assignment … convinced me that
>
> he had a modicum of interest in anything he was saying. … Part of what it
>
> means to develop a style as a teacher is to begin to find ways for one's self. I,
>
> for example, am incapable of meeting [this] phenomenon of Themewriting
>
> other than head on. A matter of temperament. … I don't mean that I behaved
>
> savagely with the students' phoniness when I marked their papers, but I did
>
> try to make my final comments on them raise the question of just how stupid
>
> I'd have to be to believe that they were stupid enough to believe what they
>
> were saying. … "Come clean now—didn't writing this bore the hell out of
>
> you?" Or: "Look at it this way: what did *you* learn from writing this paper?"
>
> Or: "How much interest would you have in someone who claimed to be
>
> interested in what you say here?" I wrote such comments knowing that I

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5    "What, for example, is the Answer to such questions as the following: Where do you begin with the
teaching of writing? What do you move to and by means of what steps? … What do you do in class with what
your students write? … Where do you want to come out with a writing course? Where do you want your
students to come out? / How would we respond to a teacher of composition who claimed to know the Answers

wasn't going to pass the papers back to the students until the end of our first

regular working class and in hopes, therefore, that I could shape the class into

the context necessary to make such questions felt as more than rhetorical

wisecracks. (Coles 1978, p.17-19)

This passage about Coles' method of framing the classroom dialog—here, around students'

initial writing assignments—illustrates his explicit awareness of both his *pragmatic*

*academic aim* (i.e., getting students to write things that they feel are actually worth saying;

that are convincingly genuine) and his *rhetorical style in pursuing that aim* (i.e., with

humorously straightforward challenges to students' insincerity, introduced to them at a time

when they are socially primed to interpret those responses as intended). And that cohering

description takes into account both the teacher's and students' subjective positions within the

course as it links educational intentions to implementations. Importantly, Coles points out

that intuiting where *students* will begin, generally, in their dispositions as  incoming college

writers—here, with patterns of blindness-to-audience and impersonal affectations of

intellectuality—comes through repeated teacherly observation of students encountering these

circumstances: all teachers of writing encounter, learn, and must find their own way of

dealing with that common phenomenon; a way of provoking more genuine content out of

students' individual minds and into the shared classroom environment

Thusly contextualized, Coles' idiosyncratic explanations of his own methods provide

a general model of how common educational aims in a discipline become personal, practical,

principled ways of teaching in the lives of expert educators. His book maps the entire arc of

his course and its educational dialogs (the teaching and learning enacted between himself

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to such questions? / How would we respond to a teacher of composition who saw no reason to keep asking
them?" (3)

and his students), in this same subjectively and rhetorically attentive manner, and so along that trajectory illustrates several other key points (beyond professional commonness and personal uniqueness) about the pragmatic intentionality of expert educators.

First, in setting the foundations of a learning-centered environment in the first two classes, Coles' reading of the syllabus, and his interpretations of students' responses thereto, evidence both the academic and social influence of his practical experience. He does not read the syllabus on the first day, but rather on the second, after students have turned in their first writing assignment and been explained the flow of the class (turn in the current day's writing assignment, receive the next day's assignment, and discuss as a class select examples of their previous day's writing). Coles clearly crafts this first assignment to glean an initial understanding of his students' perspectives and dispositions as learners—what they currently see as the purpose of college in their own lives; plus an example that details something important to them in their education which they have changed their mind about, how that change occurred, and its consequential impact on their perceived place in the world—and he states that purpose concisely at the top of the assignment prompt. As he collects these statements of student positions, he then reads aloud his syllabus; his own carefully crafted definition and justification of the specific educational purposes and according processes he intends within that humanities course, which is dappled with preemptive acknowledgments of likely student experiences within that educational exchange:

> You may feel at times that you are not being taught what you aught to be
>
> taught, that I do not seem to give you the answers you seek, but you actually
>
> are in a situation where no one knows the answers. The best we can do is treat
>
> writing—and the writer—with respect and imagination, and in our
>
> conversations about writing and the writer hope to say something. … You

supply the material for your own discourse, while the assignments are

contrived both to define a way of thinking and writing about something and

to direct our general movement from day to day throughout the term. …

Every year I make a new sequence of Assignments, dealing with a new and

different problem, so that for all concerned, teacher and student, this is a new

course, a fresh progression in thought and expression, a gradual building up

of a common vocabulary, a more precise definition of terms. (Coles 1978,

p.11-12)

Coles also offers preemptive projections of how learning will advance among individuals as

the course progresses, and almost prophetic reflections on what that learning will mean

within individuals as they move beyond the immediacy of this educational exchange:

As the term advances you will make increasingly complicated statements about your

own activity as a composer, problem-solver, writer. Whatever continuity you

construct from one paper to another, from one class discussion to the next, will be

your continuity and yours alone. It can only be as good as you make it... In the actual

day-by-day conduct of the course, this section of Humanities I can become, at its

best, a dramatic dialogue, where you and I exchange remarks, you and your fellow

students converse with a certain amount of common understanding. This is enough to

expect, and it is really a good deal. … although there is, as in all courses, a

vocabulary we will develop together, you will within a relatively short time, a few

months, a year or two, be able to say only what you can say for yourself. Whatever

you learn, *you* learn. This goes for all formal education, when looked at from any

distance. (Coles 1978, p.12-13)

Academically, Coles is expressing to his students a wise, experience-based and usefully distilled, image of how the course functions as an educational tool. Though not included in the selections above, he does clearly define—as he sees it—the nature of writing and composition as a discipline; the specific location that supplies knowledge, fuel-for-thought, within that discipline (i.e., the writer, here the student), and the role relations between teachers and students in enacting the mindsets and activities of that discipline. But more to the point of expertise, Coles explicitly demonstrates for students his prepared awareness of the internal learning struggles they will encounter, and offers and empowering reply to them in response (i.e., you may feel uncomfortable or uncertain at not receiving answers, but that is because, in writing, your and all of our discourses together build up those answers as a community); his experienced perspective of in-class learning at its best, how it can be expected to transfer across life circumstances, and thus what he values as a teacher in the classroom (i.e., your consistent presence, your effortful thought, and your genuine voice as a writer in your writing and in our evolving dialogs about that writing).

Socially, Coles conveys a likewise practical wisdom in describing his pragmatic intentions with this document and his interpretation of students' responses. While externally his rhetorical approach is to be as honest and transparent as possible with his students when setting the foundation for their shared educational environment, internally that rhetorical approach is being informed  more candidly by his nuanced awareness of where students are in themselves at this point in the class. That seasoned insight enables him to make sense of students' outward social responses more realistically, and not to take for granted their acquiescence as denoting their personal understanding or acceptance:

That statement … is my attempt to be as honest with the students as I know

how about where we are, what our situation is, and what we are going to try

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to do together. Few students at the beginning of the course have trouble with

it: first, because they ave very little in the way of history to enable them to

understand what it means; and second, because what they do understand of

the statement they don't believe. After all, not many students entering college

have had the experience of having their writing seen as a subject, of having

taken it very seriously themselves or of having had it taken very seriously by

anyone else. Therefore, to say to a group of college freshman … remarks such

as there being no formula in the course to discover and make use of, no

answers in any final sense to the questions be asked, few students can hear

what is being said at all. / This explains, I think … the nature of the responses

it does provoke. (Coles 1978, p.14)

As he explains what students' questions, and lack of questions, actually signal to him about

their underlying attitudes—their focus of interests and motives—on this second day of class,

his words denote neither distancing judgment nor blame, but readiness and purpose. His

voice of experience expects these attitudes, a common pattern born of the student-school

relationship, recognizes them simply as a difficulty to be dealt with—a difference to

bridge—and re-asserts his honest-if-incomprehensible syllabus as his current best personal

approach for preparing that social-and-academic bridge in their classroom environment:

No one that day asked me to explain, for example, what I meant by a stylistic

self. … Will we be doing any creative writing, one student wanted to know,

… Do you care as much about form as you do about content? How long

*exactly* do you want these papers to be? … What are you *really* after? That's

what the students really want to know. What kind of game is it this time? …

Just let us know where the sidelines are, the ground rules of your particular

ball park, and how soon we can call it a day. … The best way I know of

coping with the situation is to make available to the students what I do: a

statement that the course can give them a way of understanding more fully as

the term goes on... The second class meeting, like the first, is for the future.

(Coles 1978, p.15)

Second, in expanding beyond these predictable starting foundations over the first two weeks,

Coles takes on simultaneously a leading and a learning mindset as he works to advance the

intellectual and interpersonal coherence of that learning environment. Again, both

academically and socially, Coles' collected experience and practical wisdom show in his

ready ability to analyze students' papers for the potential lessons they provide about

composition, and to monitor himself in real-time as he facilitates students efforts to look at

those papers analogous nuance and complexity. The central topic of the course's writing

assignments is "amateurism and professionalism," but this quickly proves itself to be

somewhat incidental grist for fueling genuine and demanding classroom conversations about

what and how students are trying to communicate; their authorial voice and clarity of

purpose, their supporting arguments and evidence, their self-presentation and its internal

consistency, and so on with Coles' guidance through core concepts in composing writing for

an audience.

Academically, in choosing which student papers should serve as the base texts for

classroom discussions in these early days, Coles describes himself as intently preoccupied

with intuiting what students are will be ready—and likely—to see in the material he

provides. For example, in assignment 2, he struggles with the dilemma of having found a

few well-crafted sentences but being uncertain of whether students would perceive them as

outstanding or further recognize what makes them stand out (1978, p.27): this, the difference

between an educational dialog where they develop personal insights and one where he is

tempted to *tell* them what insights they should outwardly perform. In this case, he takes that

"gamble," and loses it[6], veering to heavily into overt guidance and undermining the

opportunity for genuine educational dialog. But as the course moves forward, he gradually

refines his sense of where students are in their learning and what they will likely see, through

cycles of seeking[7] and seizing upon moments of students' expanding awareness (in writing,

in reading that writing), publicly exploring and distilling those moments through dialog, and

so building out the classroom's base of shared understandings:

> Maybe, but I still don't believe it. He says he practices a lot. He'd have *had* to
>
> know how pool players talk to be this good." / It was the first direct
>
> connection anyone had made between professionalism and the use of
>
> language, between professionalism and behavior. / "You don't mean that to be
>
> a professional you have to sound like a professional, do you?" / It was the sort
>
> of minor-seeming question that certain students love to climb with, … *[Coles*
>
> *brings up an example from a recent football post-game interview where a*
>
> *player snubs a reporter for using an ignorant-sounding phrase]* "Would you
>
> say that he sounded like a professional in saying it?" / "Sure, it was a put-
>
> down. He was saying that if you know anything about the game, you don't
>
> talk that way. I see what you mean now, I think. … He doesn't have to sound
>
> like a pool-hall punk. But if you know pool, you just don't say 'clear the table,'

---

6    "... it was too late. In seeming to ask as I had for the Answer to my first question, I'd lost the
opportunity to have a conversation about a response to the second. … the class would have seen the response as
the Answer, a place to stop rather than something to go on with. When I end a class with a butcher's move like
that one, it's a long time until the day after tomorrow." (33)

7    "He stopped and then said, 'Okay. But I'd like to think about it.' / He could have meant no more than
he'd conceded the fact that I was bigger than he was. He also might have been thinking. And so might some
others. We'd see." (25)

you say 'run the rack,' right?" / *[Coles]* "… I think I know what you mean

when you say that you don't believe this happened. It's the *paper* you don't

believe, isn't it? The sentences this writer uses to represent what happened?

The writer can't talk like an amateur about his professionalism that way and

be very convincing." / I then turned immediately to the next paper as a way of

continuing what we'd just been talking about. (Coles 1978, p.53-54)

In this example and throughout Coles' description of the beginning weeks, these developing

academic discourses appear to rely constantly on the likewise developing social coherence of

the classroom. Above, Coles describes a student is willing to engage with his questions, and

that dialog leads to both sides expressing "I see / I know" signs of thought coordination and

development: an educational exchange facilitated by the student's familiarity with Coles'

blunt-but-affirming personal style of questioning (which had not yet been established, and

interfered with academic discourse, in earlier classes: see footnote at "seeking") and by

Coles' awareness of that student's particular disposition (which had not been established, and

limited Coles' predictive ability, in earlier classes: see footnote at "loses it").  And in this

way over the first half of the course, the educational dialog—and Coles' teacherly role in it—

can be traced progressing from managing the friction between students' habitual school

mindsets and Coles' particular classroom culture[8] while carefully laying foundations of

public support for students' moments of growth[9], to managing personal relations among

---

8    "'But isn't a writer entitled to his own opinion?' Smart and seasoned. They also know the game. … 'what's that jaw-breaking phrase "improvement of his own primitive institution" mean anyway? That's his "opinion," that sort of thing, or is it in there just to wow Teacher?' / 'But he does have examples supporting those views.' Did they ever know the game." (22-23)

9    "I'd mimeographed one other paper to look at that period, a paper I knew to have been a real step for the boy who had written it. In many ways it is clumsy, but for its writer, a fellow who up to that point had only been lunking along inside the incantatory formulae about Man as a Rational Animal, it represented a reaching out that I wanted to praise: … '[On the last paper] we had people arguing on the meaning. Here we have a question about meaning but nobody's arguing. How come?' / 'With the fish paper we were arguing about what he was saying. Here we seem to be wondering about how much he's saying.' / 'That's a nice distinction. In other

students as they voice diverse perspectives within that shared culture[10] while even coming privately to depend on and celebrate students' unique characters as crucial assets in continuing to advance the class's dialog[11]. Along this educational journey, Coles keeps one productively discontent eye on his ideal social and academic aims (an expectation which reality seldom plays into perfectly), and one self-assuring eye on the class's visible progress toward synchrony (a learning experience that he and the students share together) in the educational environment, exchange by exchange:

> I would have liked to have had a fuller, more immediate recognition of the complexity of the paper, and more of a community effort to earn the right to admire the quiet dignity of the identity the writer makes for himself in it than in fact we had. I would also have liked to use the paper to draw together more of where we'd been as a class than I was able to. On the other hand, I knew that what we'd done that period we could not have done two weeks earlier— not even with a paper that would have given us that chance. They were coming along. (Coles 1978, p.104)

words, no one of the possible meanings we've raised for this paper excludes any of the others—which is to say the paper's complex rather than confused...' " (57, 59)

10  "[Jerry] was quickly put on the defensive by a couple of other members of the class who saw no fallacy at all in the imitative form of the girl's sentences. … I stepped in by asking Jerry if what he was objecting to wasn't really a matter of there being no character to the girl at all. / 'How do you mean?' / To show him I picked five students at random and had each of them read aloud the first sentence spoken by 'she.' [Each was to emphasize a different word in the sentence] … After the reading, I asked the class which way the sentence was written to be read. No one could decide, and no one could read the sentence and emphasize all the words at once without sounding ridiculous." (79-80)

11  "I began by asking what, exactly, the advice of the paper seemed to be. The response was: / 'Well, here's another goody-good. Steve gives up fraternities.' / I've experienced that derailment enough in the classroom not to be surprised that it happens, but when it does my initial reaction still is one of fury with the seemingly uncanny knack of the students to turn insensitive only when I am least prepared for it—and only, it seems, when we as a class have the most to lose. … [this student continues his attack, which Coles cannot dismiss himself without undermining his carefully nurtured educational environment] I could see Harvey, who'd written the paper, with his head down, his eyes on the mimeographed sheet in front of him. When the hell was Dan going to say something, Or Dave? Where was Jerry? / … 'Gee,' I said after a while, 'wouldn't it have been wonderful if the writer could have admitted some of this to himself, if only he could have been honest as a writer instead of such a phoney?' / 'But he does admit it, he knows damn well he likes parties.' That was Dan,

Third, the course progresses from this base of coordination toward its learning-centered

aims:  a maturing of the educational exchange wherein the group's academic and social

developments can be seen more overtly as interdependent. The students enter into more

complex and intricate discussions about the nature of professionals and amateurs—by that

topical route, more sensitive and discerning approaches to creating and critiquing their

group's writing—and so also into more personally challenging (emotion-risking and

investment-demanding) educational exchanges. As a teacher, Coles invites this by providing

prompts for writing which offer increasingly more tangled compositional challenges and by

selecting student papers for discussion which provoke potentially more hard-edged critiques

of students' works:

> I wrote Assignments 13 through 16, which ask the students to compare the
>
> advice of some professional writers about science, in order to give us a
>
> chance to draw together some of our concerns with our two nominal subjects
>
> (amateurism and professionalism and advice) in relation to our real one. … I
>
> wanted to have a class on what the right to judge depends on. / I started with a
>
> [student] example of judgment that is unearned … The class had little trouble
>
> with the silliness [of this student's composition]: the general terms of the
>
> paper, the distance between its assertions and [professional writer] Thomas's
>
> sentences, the fact that the argument of the paper might as easily apply to any
>
> one of a thousand pieces of prose. (Coles 1978, p.120-122)

And within such frames, students must confront these situations in evermore academically

advanced and socially coordinated ways, responding to Coles' rapid-fire challenges of their

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God bless his profane eyes. / 'Admits it where?' / 'All through the paper. There's too many of these remarks. …'
/ And from there, it was a matter of working out how much more was meant than was said …" (102-103)

ideas and elicitations of their evidence as a group, climbing up one another's words (underlined below) to see and express more clearly the writing practices, underlying meanings, and extractable principles before them:

> [Coles begins] with the question of what, for the writer, the ideal audience for Thomas would seem to be. / "Well, he doesn't handle it that way exactly … He writes more about how he doesn't buy Thomas than who Thomas is talking to." / "Why does he do that? Does he say?" / "Yes. In the first paragraph. He says he doesn't want to drag out a 'Mickey Mouse Characterization.'" / "What's that mean?" / <u>Someone else took over.</u> / "I think he means he doesn't want to make Thomas's audience a bunch of slobs." / "Why not?" / "Because they aren't necessarily, like we said." / "*As* we said. He doesn't characterize Thomas's audience at all then?" / "Wait a minute," <u>Sam broke in,</u> "sure he does. In the last paragraph he says that Thomas's audience would be made up of a bunch of people who don't give a damn. Maybe they don't know much about writing, but his point seems to be that they don't care whether they are or not." (Coles 1978, p.131)

And it is important to distinguish, as students co-construct these forward-straining realizations, that Coles has educational intentions—rhetorical aims—in the content he offers and the dialog leadership he provides, each class. But what the students come to perceive and believe and know, he views as their own versions (underlined below); personalizations of the discipline that are *analogous* to his, perhaps, but that are by no means destined to arrive at the same conclusion. Those moments of synchrony cannot be compelled, but only found, in dialog:

"The ideal audience *would be* made up of slobs, then?" / "Well, they'd have to be what this guy isn't." / "Which is?" / "Involved, like— *as* he says. Involved. Interested." / … "How does he show it then?" / "The way he takes Thomas's prose apart. I don't think he could have found all those contradictions if he hadn't been interested." / … <u>And this, of course, is why I too admire the paper</u>. Because the writer's condemnation of Thomas, tinged as it is with something like regret, is what gives what he writes its quality of moral as well as intellectual seriousness. (132)

As Cole's narrative reenactment of this course continues, teasing apart the academic from the social aspects of these educational dialogs becomes increasingly unnatural: the classroom's interpersonal affiliations and their discursive coordination of writing attitudes, understandings, and processes work  integratively in that learning environment. That is, the students are embodying and enacting their own respective personalizations of the writing discipline together, drawing on a shared base of experiences-made-public and conceptions-made-common through dialog: they are neither simply self-expressing nor discipline-performing for Coles or their peers, but more synchronously contributing their personal self-discipline relationships to the interpersonal learning exchange, aimed at dealing with the writing-related puzzles that Coles tosses into that matured educational environment. And that dialog, that genuinely mutual manner of educational exchange (perceptually demanding and emotionally fraught as it is to foster in his practical retelling), seems to enable that educationally productive synchrony: between the social and the academic aspects of course affiliation, between some core part of the learner and of the discipline, between the teacher and the student together, in a learning-centered environment.

Finally, the latter third of the course begins to bend toward reflection on change: dedicated spaces for students to turn their awareness inward and see what influence the course has had on their ways of relating with their environments (here, perceiving and using language in communication); to turn their attentions forward and imagine how that learning can be made to serve them (in their studies, and their lives, beyond Humanities I). With prompt topics like "What have you been doing in this course so far?" "Explaining a scientific law to a nonscientist," "The humanities as a requirement at an institute of technology," "The value of studying the humanities," "You as a student of technology and of the humanities," and "Putting things together" (Assignments 18, 25, and 27 through 30), Coles directs the group's matured educational dialog in a manner that lays groundwork for students' transfer—that creative carry-over into their broader futures—of their personalized understandings of humanities-oriented composition.

In assignment 18, Coles selects student papers that describe the frustrating effort of participating in the course, and the "double-edged" way that it sensitizes your perception of written communication outside of the course—drawing students' attention in dialog toward the motives and rewards (beyond extrinsic grades) that *keep* the first student putting in that continued effort, and the learning that the second student demonstrates in the extracurricular interactions he describes. A few assignments hence, Coles notes privately in his own mind how well these students are doing with their efforts and evident progress in personally applying their learning, which by this point can even surpass the quality of his prompts he provides: "The students were a lot better with the Assignment they had to work with than either it or I deserved" (205). By assignment 28, Coles is able to draw on the students' own use of language (underlined below) to highlight what *both* he and they have come to see as the value in studying humanities; growing in awareness of how language is used to structure

our experience of the world (240), and so growing in control of the way one creates that structure to become one's self in the world:

> "All of these 'old terms' … have suddenly become new. … Why does he end up saying that what's happened to his definition of anarchist is 'more important' even than his having heard of [self-proclaimed anarchist writer] Goodman?" / "Because Goodman was only the way he came to his new awareness … [of] the fact that there're a lot of things he thought he understood that he sees now he doesn't." / "That he has a lot of definitions, as we all do, a lot of names in which he's locked the world. A 'battle with the language' is a matter of seeing that the old definitions won't hold anymore and that one has to develop new ones. It's not a place to stay—or that one can. 'So now I am looking at the term anarchist,' as the writer says so beautifully. What the writer's done here is to turn a key; he's unlocked the world. And, in the process, he's unlocked himself as a locker." (Coles 1978, p.246)

This explicit public airing of students' personal relationships with the course's learning-centered activities and educational dialogs reaches its crescendo on the final class day, where in discussing Assignment 30 ("Putting it all together"), the interpersonal synchrony of that educational environment—in Coles' persuasive, mimeograph-corroborated retelling—is palpable. The select student's writing (both in its quality and its content) bears testament to their profound internalization of and appreciation for the socially situated experiences, and therein-subsumed academic lessons, of the course. And, in reading this piece together, the classroom community conveys—visibly to Coles' eyes—a generally shared recognition of that paper's value; that it eloquently summarized  the personal *meaningfulness* of that shared learning experience, in a way that resonated with others' analogous experiences.

Coles offers a succinct paraphrase of what constitutes such educational meaningfulness in his writing course: i.e., that the student has, in a self-aware and agentive manner, *chosen* to integrate course lessons consequentially into their ongoing perceptions, intellectual behaviors, and even identity narratives in this world).

> That paper no one had any trouble understanding why I reproduced in its
> entirety or why I used it to conclude the class. … but in the time that was left
> us after I'd read it through, I didn't get a chance to do more than state a tithe of
> what I admired it for: the manner in which the writer refuses to disown
> completely his first-day-of-class naiveté, the way he speaks of making a
> "partner" of his confusion, … his distinguishing between being led and
> leading himself, … and, above all, his consciousness of the activity of writing
> as an action ("the -ing form") undivorceable from the actions of seeing,
> thinking, and learning—a fusion which his paper not only makes, but is.
> (Coles 1978, p.270)

And he concludes his retelling of this course by explaining how such meaningful connections—between individual learners and interpersonally-propagated knowledge, which form in learning-centered environments through socially situated dialogs—implicate *all* learners in the educational outcomes of each:

> Perhaps more important than anything else, at least to me, is the way in which
> the paper as a gesture...enacts the most meaningful paradox of teaching and
> learning. The paper is a rejection of dependency, on the course and its
> procedures, on an earlier way of seeing, on me as a teacher. What the writer
> does in his paper, as he is well aware, he has done by and for himself; … But
> as the writer is also aware, this triumph does not belong to him alone... he

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could not have done what he did without the rest of us. [So the student is

asserting, here,] a re-creation of himself as an individual whose independence

is conditioned by its new and free acknowledgment of its dependence—both

on the self from which it came and on the rest of us as well. In the formation

of that plural I, each one of us in that class had had a sharing. (Coles 1978,

p.270, cont'd.)

The agency and choice that students have in this learning, at its most stimulating, deep, and

transformative (first block of the quote above), implies a fundamentally persuasive and

rhetorical  approach to education and so a teacher's work. Effective teaching—i.e., that

which is experienced by  students as positive, influential, and lasting learning, in a manner

pragmatically intended by the teacher—requires fostering learning environments and

composing activities therein which entice students' personal affiliations with the discipline-

as-embodied by those involved in the exchange: a process which is at once social and

academic.

These interpersonal exchanges' fundamental role in fueling and guiding the academic

outcomes of personal, situated learning in classrooms (second block of the quote above)

foregrounds the pragmatic importance of maintaining mutual, learning-centered dialogs—

i.e.,  discussions where participants actively trust, listen to, and build upon each others'

communications in service of shared developmental goals—when coordinating teachers' and

students' analogous personalizations of educational content. Whether that intended core of

expert understandings centers on disciplinary values or on the principled practices that flow

therefrom, whether that core is located within the humanities-I of writing or the

technologies-I of hard sciences, whether it is pursued at the level of pre-school basics or

graduate school specializations: at either end, and in all corners, there is still a "plural-I" being developed between teachers and students in a classroom.

This narrative was published in 1978, and points out in its introduction the marked absence of works that trace the full path of teaching and learning work—from educational intentions to educational outcomes—and thus the full, coherent image of what practical wisdom looks like in the work of teaching and learning. Still now, almost forty years on, educational scholarship in general (and particularly at the post-secondary level) is thick with elaborations on the technical terms of varied pedagogical philosophies and on the curricular scaffolds of various research-based practices, but relatively little in the way of full and coherent narratives which trace the pragmatic arc of classroom exchanges among teachers and students: that phronetic transition from principled educational intentions, to personal manners and rhetorical strategies, to practical social and academic outcomes.

This is markedly true at the post-secondary level, where current pedagogical cultures conventionally settle into habits of quick-and-efficient habits of information distribution and assessment, far afield from the relationship-centered and emotionally attentive discourses of early childhood educational environments. This is despite the fact that emerging scientific research (see previous chapter), and longstanding scholarship in fields like psychology, attests to the intimate relation between peoples' emotions, biographical reference-points, identity-based motivations, and their according attentions, interpretations, and efforts in learning and in changing their ways of relating with their environments (see the brief review below).

To a degree, the field of writing studies proves somewhat an exception to this, for reasons noted above and to which the brief sampling of works above attests. But even within that rhetorically oriented approach to studying and discussing the work of education,

intimately situated analyses of educators' classroom practices often—and understandably—focus on specific pedagogical challenges or strategies, and then selectively cite those teacher anecdotes of experience which relate to that topic (e.g., teachers' struggles with professional identity OR teachers' strategies for of fostering meta-cognition OR teachers' relationships with their institutional environments, etc.). While this approach is apt for bringing into focus specific pedagogical and methodological concerns within the discipline, it splits apart that fundamentally unified base of teaching and learning: namely, how individual teachers' formative experiences shape or inform their educational principles and practices, how expert teachers uniquely develop and refine their practical wisdom (i.e., phronesis) in line with these personalized frameworks, and how or to what extent they are able translate those clean internal understandings of ideal teaching into the messy moment-by-moment work of guiding learners' experiences through educational dialogs.

These questions are admittedly basic: they drive at fundamentals of teacher motivations and identities, of teacher-student relationship dynamics, and of student learning experiences rather than at the myriad fine-tuned conceptual nuances that advance distinctions and definitions among high-academic disciplines. Nonetheless, that is quite exactly the potential importance and value of these questions: they seek to explore the commonalities among expert teachers' paths of developing educational dialogs with learners through educational dialogs with learners, in ways basic enough to transcend differences among program ideologies, institutional cultures, and perhaps even disciplinary characteristics; in ways that focus past technical conventions and commonsense explanations that surround educational exchanges, and focus on to the essential rhetorical concern common within those educational exchanges. That is, "How do I as a Teacher, an expert

learner in this discipline, help my students to connect with that discipline as meaningfully as I have?"

<div align="center">*</div>

Teaching, when conceived as analogous personalization, centers on this above question: how people use their own learning experiences to understand, stimulate, and support other peoples' learning experiences. Accordingly, the following research study focuses on this question, as it analyzes educational dialogs in the classrooms of three expert post-secondary writing teachers. The next chapter will present in detail a methodology for studying teachers' personal, practical, principled ways of understanding and generating those educational dialogs with students—based on a rhetorical view of teaching as socially situated, mutually persuasive, and values-based.

<div align="center">

**Toward a Study of Practical Wisdom**

</div>

"How do expert teachers do what they do? And what are the common steps of good teaching?" The desire for practical answers to these professionally important questions motivates much research into teachers' beliefs and practices, and many attempts to shape new teachers' professional language and methods around that wisdom of practice.

The difficulty in this—given the situated, personal nature of teaching and learning in general; even more so of *good* teaching practices and *healthy* learning experiences—is that there is no purely technical, mechanical solution to the social challenges of an educational exchange (Duffy & Kear 2007). There is no one-size-fits-all teacher personality that works best, to be practiced and performed; individuals build their teacherly selves from the personalities they already possess. There is no teacher disposition that works optimally for every student; some respond more positively to certain manners and styles than do others.

And there is no activity or conversation topic that guarantees student interest and understanding; even from class to class what works 'best' and what fails in practice can trade, either by manner of delivery or by idiosyncrasies in the students and in the day's context.

Accordingly, expert advice on teaching often boils down to 'Build your self-knowledge' and 'Read your environment'—because ultimately "we teach who we are," sharing subject-matter by and through our selves as integral wholes (Palmer 1997), and the best way to achieve that connection ultimately just "depends": on our educational purposes, our available resources, and our relationships with our students in that moment (Tobin 1991; 2010).

At surface level, these are unsatisfying answers because they do not operationally solve the immediate classroom difficulties that teachers face: student disengagement, misunderstanding, disrespect, and so on down the road blocks to enjoyable, memorable, and influential educational exchanges. Nor do these answers promise a path that leads to any stable resolution: in research, teaching is described as a continual process of checking emotions (Sutton & Wheatley 2003; Sutton 2004; Mayer 2011), balancing practical tensions (Lampert 1985; Aultman, Williams-Johnson & Shultz 2009; Newberry 2010), and navigating moral dilemmas (Lyons 1990; Gholami & Husu 2010)—a process of professional development that is rooted in early personal learning experiences (Kagan 1992; Bullough 2005; Flores & Day 2006) and evolves integratively from the beginning (Nias 1984; Meyer 2009) through the whole (Kelchtermans 1993; Tochon & Munby 1993; Woods & Cakır 2011) of one's practice as a teacher.

Nonetheless, this is the research-based reality of teaching and learning as interpersonal practice. And by recognizing a teacher's maturation process as self- and environment-bound, research findings in teaching and learning not only resist prescribing

definite and repeatable solutions for particular educational exchanges, they resist the surface and technical interpretation of questions about teaching work in general (Halliday 1998; Shulman & Shulman 2004; Lin, Schwartz & Hatano 2005; Lampert 2009; Fairbanks, Duffy, Faircloth, He, Levin, Rohr & Stein 2010). To focus on matured teachers' beliefs and practices as packageable *protocols* rather than organic *outcomes*, as machines rather than fruits, reflects a misunderstanding of expertise and teachers' practical wisdom:

The question about teaching and learning, posed above—the generative version that supports situated, personal growth in educators—is not "How do expert teachers do what they do?" as daily activities and interactions in the classroom; is not "What are the common steps of good teaching?" as a (prescriptive) list of specific situations and right responses. Rather, the question is "How do expert teachers do what they do?" as cycles of practice and reflection about their emotions, identities, approaches, and goals;  "What are the common steps of good teaching?" as a (descriptive) account of recurring experiences and emerging readiness.

The "good teaching" question is not about teachers *accomplishing monologic actions* within environments (conveying set content, evoking expected performances of that content), but about teachers *building dialogic relationships* through those environments (creating shared learning experiences, coordinating practices and ideas and values within those experiences). It is those tight relationships that lead, through uncertain fluxes of exchange, toward the most essential goals of teaching; toward personal affiliation, practical understanding, and intentional synchrony.

**Bringing a focus on educational dialogs.**

In the interest of forming answers to that "good teaching" question, a significant amount of research has been done on the beginnings and ends of teacher development: differentiating the novice from the expert, and tracing reflective narratives of personal-professional growth. Much research has also been done on the insights and approaches that constitute successful educational exchanges: distilling practical wisdom into terminology and protocols that can be disseminated. And complimentary research has also been done into students' perspectives and learning experiences: how they relate to teachers and educational environments, and the impacts that can have on learning outcomes.

However, research that merges these perspectives—the ideal intentions of the teacher, the observable interactions between teachers and students, and the students' take-away from that exchange—is rare. And merging these perspectives is important, not only from a methodological standpoint (to allow the biases implicit in teachers', students', and researchers' subjective views balance one another in analyzing the educational exchange) but from a philosophical standpoint: educational exchanges transcend teacher and student perspectives; they are dialogic learning experiences coordinated within intersubjective space, where all perspectives inform and extend all others through social acts of public enactment.

Of course, many smaller dialogs (internal and external, actual and imagined) contribute to an educational exchange. The pragmatic arc of a course term is filled with private moments of teacher planning, student work, teacher and student reflection; asynchronous interactive moments of teachers creating course documents, students writing papers, teachers and students giving feedback; and divided interactive moments of students talking beyond the teacher's ear, teachers conferring with one another, and asides between teachers and students confidentially. But these moments all ultimately contribute to the social-academic environment for larger classroom dialogs: where individuals' affiliations,

experiences, and contemplations of course identity-and-motive come into mutual contact; where teacher monologs and student questions and group discussions are *intended* for all to hear, *intended* to influence the classroom community as a whole, *intended* toward moments of interpersonal synchrony (feeling with, thinking with, endeavoring with).

So these educational dialogs among teachers and students, emerging over the arc of a course, will be the ultimate focus of the research study to follow. In keeping with a rhetorical view of the educational exchange (as intentional, audience-oriented, persuasive communication) it will begin by exploring teachers' educational intentions and personal communication styles; then the social environment between the teachers and students, as they present it; and finally the social-academic dialogs that occur within the group as the term progresses, informed by the students' and teachers' perspectives on that learning experience.

By focusing on these sites of discourse, in this rhetorical manner, with this combination of perspectives on the educational exchange, this study hopes to make three contributions to ongoing research in teaching and learning: (1) to present a method for exploring teachers' personal-professional beliefs and practices in teaching as a coherent and experience-based individual lexicon; (2) to present a pragmatic image of post-secondary educational exchanges as integrally social and academic; and (3) to illustrate areas of synchrony and dis-synchrony that can form between expert teachers and their students—and to draw from these together some practical lessons about the role of dialog in developing practical wisdom as a teacher.

PART II


A RHETORICAL METHODOLOGY FOR STUDYING TEACHERS' APPROACHES:

Tracing the pragmatic arc from educational intentions, to learning-centered relationships, to

academic dialogs among teachers and their students


"[Researcher] 'Name all the tools used to produce things.' [Subject 1]: 'We have a saying: take a look in the fields and you'll see tools.' … The answers of these subjects were typical of the group of illiterates with whom we worked … Words for these people had an entirely different function from the function they have for educated people. They were used not to codify objects into conceptual schemes but to establish the practical interrelations among things."

– A.R. Luria (developmental/cultural-historical psychologist, 1902-1977), in *The Making of Mind*, Chapter 4: "Cultural Differences in Thinking" (1979)

CHAPTER 4

ANALYZING PRACTICAL WISDOM IN TEACHING

**What a Rhetorical Approach has to Offer Educational Research**

Rhetoric-and-writing scholarship takes a notably integrated view of educational aims, content, and practices. Distinct from many other academic fields, rhetoric-and-writing focuses on the means by which humans convey understandings and compel change in others. This humanizing move, in turn, connects scholars' disciplinary knowledge creation, educators' curricular content creation, and students' compositional text creation as part of a continuous—social, intellectual, cultural; dialogic, experience-informed, subjectively motivated—process that supports the growth of academic disciplines.

This research implements that integrative viewpoint into its focus and methodology, explicitly examining the practical space bridging two well-studied pairs of endpoints in educational literature: specifically, teachers' ongoing dialogs (externally and internally, both in teaching and in reflection), through which they develop professionally from novices to experts, and teachers' rhetorical style or manner of leading educational dialogs, through which they translate pedagogical ideals into classroom interactions.

**First, Regarding the Bridge between Novice and Expert**

There is a lot of descriptive research available on the experiences of beginning teachers—their emotions, thoughts, senses of identity and motive—as well as prescriptive suggestions about attitudes, knowledge, or strategies that those beginners should adopt, understand, or use. This latter work is often supported by descriptive research about attributes of expert teachers—their principled attitudes for organizing and prioritize practice, their experience-informed knowledge of practice, and their personally effective strategies in practice—as well as the explanatory autobiographies of experienced teachers, full of prescriptive insights about the art and craft of teaching (using terms which have become meaningful to *them,* through experience over time). But such research often focuses either objectively on early classroom action (what is done by young teachers learning), or subjectively on sage reflections (what is distilled by mature teachers about their craft). Less common is descriptive research that explores expert teachers' ongoing self-development *as though they were beginners and experts*: comparing their views to their performances, not to prove consistency nor find inconsistency, not to glean pedagogical answers nor find practical problems, but simply to observe their mature learning process as educators.

That is one aim of this study, to explore the dialog that teachers negotiate between their internal narratives (with themselves) and their actual classroom exchanges (with students): the way past experiences feed into their current ideas and intentions, and the way fresh experiences fuel change in their existing frameworks, on that individual path from beginner to expert—that they have distilled and refined narratively from the time they were first students, up to the time of each new class they teach.

**Strategies** (responsive / personalized)      **Attitudes** (practically-organized / principle-prioritized)

**Knowledge-Beliefs** (experience-informed / conscious of limits)

**EXPERT TEACHERS**

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        /\
       /  \
      /_  _\
      |  |
  ...process of
  developing...    ←    *{my research focus}
      |  |
      /  \
     /    \
    /      \
```

**BEGINNING TEACHERS**

**Knowledge-Beliefs** (general / presumptive)

**Strategies** (imitative / procedural)      **Attitudes** (emergent / conflicting)
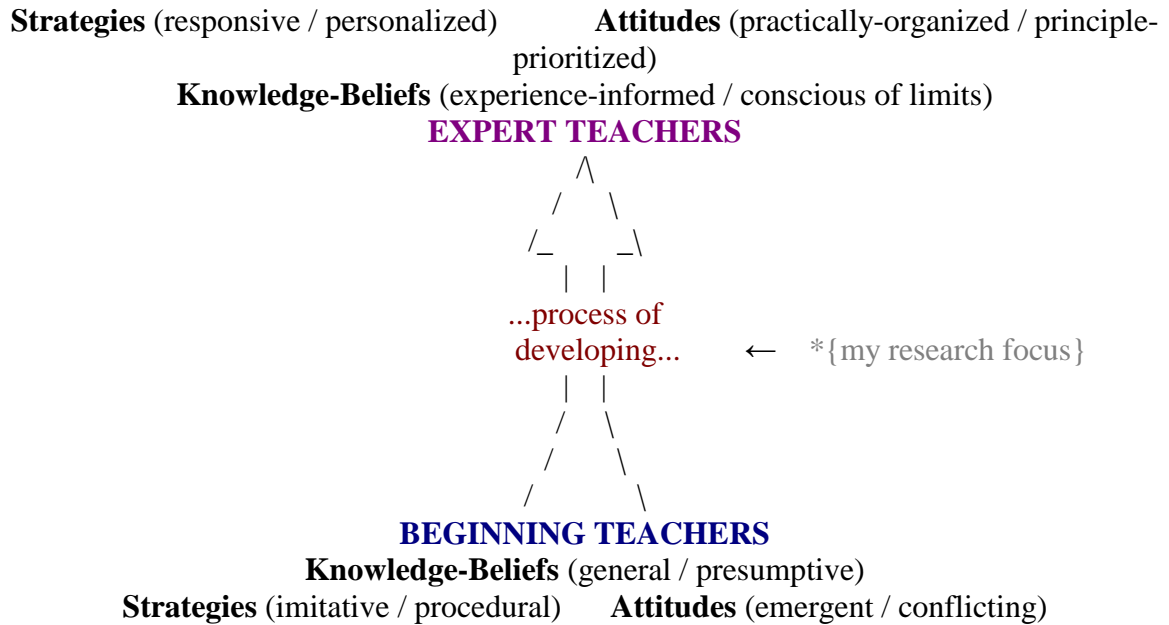
*Figure 2.* The developmental progress from novice to expert, in teachers.

Tracing this thread through expert teachers' emergent manners of educating is important, because it places their practice as novice and expert on a historical *continuum* rather than treating their early and mature approaches as products of two distinct species of practitioners. This is important for two reasons.

Methodologically, building up this historical view of teachers' practices is crucial for truly understanding those practices as *personal*, ongoing processes rather than technical, bolted-down protocols; as extensions of more basic functions that have developed into higher forms. Vygotsky makes a relevant point on this issue when he discusses approaches to studying higher psychological functions (1978)—specifically, the principle that the only way to really understand higher stages of a developing process is to understand its origins; therefore, by concentrating on the *process* by which higher forms are established (rather than on the current products of that development). For this study, the evolving process in question is the teachers' practical wisdom in framing learning environments and nurturing educational

dialogs—which is a complex of personal functions in concert, rather than a particular

psychological function—but still the value of a taking a historical view transfers relevantly,

and so likewise its methodological implications:

To study something historically means to study it in the process of <u>change</u>.

(Vygotsky 1978, p. 64-5)

Focusing on teachers' patterns of progress (rather than simply on their current practices)

requires gaining an understanding of their biographical narratives and their according use of

language in regards teaching: the subjective storylines and semantic networks that

encapsulate their personal development in regards to teaching. Tying teachers' practical

explanations and justifications of their educational methods to these idiosyncratic values-

frameworks and associated life-experiences, will allow this study to look below the technical

surface and see each teacher's actions as moments in an ongoing development; to move

beyond simply describing *what* they do and *why* it may work, deeper into exploring the

*process* behind those products and the *causal-dynamic relations*[12]—the links between

external stimuli and internal responses—that importantly fuel that process of professional

development.

Pedagogically, taking the time to examine *how* teachers come to do what they do,

before assessing the quality of *what* they do, offers an image of similarity rather than

difference to encourage teachers at the unsure beginnings of their teacherly style and

identity. Every teacher's path is different, but their direction of travel is the same: toward

their own continued learning, and the support of student's analogous learning experiences.

And so illuminating that direction—while it yields no long list of mind-revolutionizing

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12   (Vygotsky 1978, p. 63)

vocabulary nor cure-all response strategies—can provide teachers with an awareness of how experts direct their attention and reflection in practice; how those teachers they admire worked their way to that point.

**Second, Regarding the Bridge between Ideal and Practice**

Literature on educational exchanges and teacher development tends to pool not only at the ends of novicehood and expertise, but also at the ends of idealized beliefs and realized outcomes. Some pedagogical literature (which I have cited) focuses on theory or principle: offering mindsets and practical orientations, conceptual terminology and general strategies. Complimenting this, there is lots of literature that focuses on evident teacher progress or classroom outcomes: offering concrete methods for training teachers' mindsets and augmenting their practical approaches, often by direct curricular translations of said pedagogical theories and principles. Again, this literature may be deeply subjective, exploring teachers' self-reports of educational intention and practical reflection, or alternately quite objective in seeking evidence of concrete pedagogical benefits (e.g., teachers' ways of interacting or reflecting, students' academic outputs or experiential feedback) within prescribed frameworks. Less common is literature that blends these two approaches: tracing the tenuous line-of-principle between teachers' idealized frameworks and their complex, messy practices.

```
PEDAGOGICAL                                                |\   LEARNING
  PRACTICES              *{my research focus}               | \  OUTCOMES
   (ideal)        \_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ ↓ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _|  \    (actual)
 (subjective)              ...process of developing...         \   (observable)
  (narrative)     _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _      /   (pragmatic)
      |        /            INTERPERSONAL              |   /        |
      |                        MANNER                 |  /         |
      |                      (rhetorical)             |/           |
      |                    (intersubjective)                       |
      |                       (dialogic)                           |
      |                           |                                |
Environmental Framework    Social/Academic Exchange    Educational Influence
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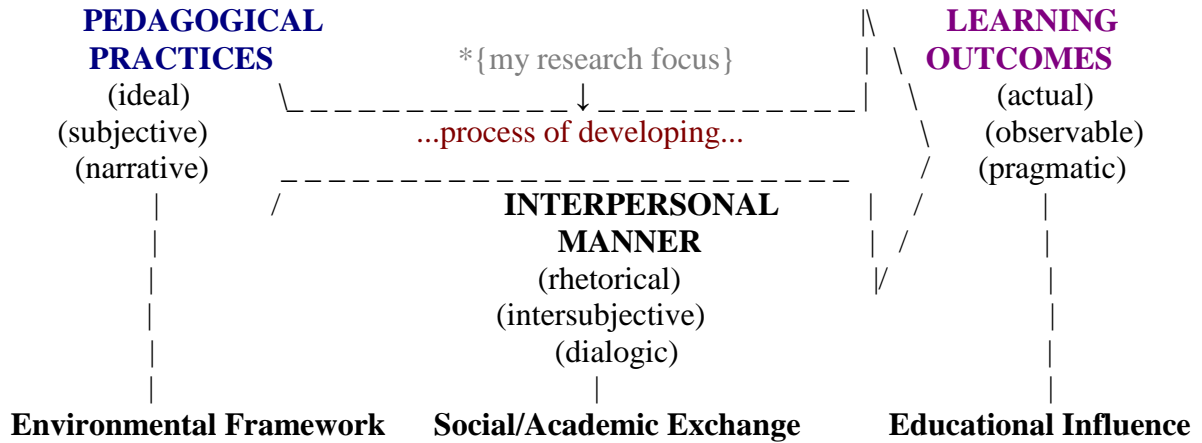
*Figure 3.* The developmental progress from practices to outcomes, in teaching and learning.

Making this belief-to-practice connection requires two likewise connected—subjective and "objective" (more accurately, intersubjective)—layers of data gathering and analyzing. First, it requires finding that unique coherence of beliefs and values within teachers' own vocabularies: the personal meanings that they attribute to educational notions and practices, the personal experiences in which they ground those abstractions and archetypes together. Second, it requires using those frameworks to make deeper sense of what teachers doing: how they are translating ideal intentions and underlying motivations (illuminated by their unique ways of sense-making and values-prioritizing) into actual manners of educational practice and ongoing situation assessment.

This focus on developmental process (here, the *interpersonal* manner of the teacher relating with students, which mediates the influence of technical terms and protocols on actual human learning outcomes) is, again, important for two reasons.

Methodologically, using the internal metric of teachers' pragmatic intentions and students' learning experiences allows for a more fair, accurate examination of observed educational practices and outcomes. On this point, Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein (2005)

offer several salient notes about attitude-behavior research. One is that people's attitudes and *can* be good predictors behaviors of their behavior—when the evaluative measures are *compatible*: that is, general attitudes as predictors of behavior patterns; attitudes toward individual behaviors as predictors of single actions; or (tentatively) implicit attitudes as predictors of less consciously-monitored behaviors like facial expression, eye contact, blushing, and so on. The other is that, where people's stated attitudes and intentions are actually inconsistent with their observable behaviors and responses, forming "implementation intentions"—specific mental images of when, where, and how they will carry out their attitudes as action in real life—can be very effective at closing the intention-behavior gap in numerous normal, everyday activities: enhancing vigilance for relevant situational cues, resulting in more seemingly automatic (swift, efficient, instinctive) goal-directed actions.

That is to say, an individual's *reasoned action* (Ajzen & Fishbein 2005) in real-life scenarios is more complex than simply doing what one knows is right in theory; it is a personal process of emotional, attentional, and willful control: a person's **background** experiences influence the **beliefs** they form (i.e., ideals about what is true and possible), providing a cognitive base for the **attitudes** they carry (i.e., values about what is good and most important within that idealized reality), which lead through **intentions** (i.e., projected images of self-action, which beliefs and values can inform) to *observable* **behavior** (i.e., *actual* control of that response, or lack thereof). In educational environments—which are socially intimate and ethically complex—developing  this awareness, intention, and control as a teacher takes time and effort. It requires learning from direct experience and personalizing indirect knowledge so that it is consequential to one's belief-guided perceptions (Kagan 1992; Lin, Schwartz & Hatano 2005), to one's value-based decisions and

intentions (Elbaz 1981; Gholami & Husu 2010), and ultimately to one's identity-rooted willingness and responses (Feldman 1997; Lampert 2012) in connecting with students and supporting their learning. This awareness can be hard to put into words or share in an explicit, organized manner (even for experts, regarding their own internal frameworks) because practical experiences slowly give rise to theoretical understandings, interweaving the conscious and unconscious, tacit and verbal (Marland & Osborne 1990; Breieir & Ralphs 2009; Elliott, Stemler, Sternberg, Grigorenko & Hoffman 2011; Wood & Cakir 2011): that is the nature of first-hand expertise and practical wisdom.

So research methods *invite* evaluative inconsistencies between individuals' beliefs and practices when they mis-pair general statements of attitudes with specific observations of behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein 2005): missing the the complex way that individuals' webs of idiosyncratic understandings, rooted in personal experiences, connect to their current responses and their ongoing learning. Likewise, research methods *invite* evaluative inconsistencies between classrooms' educational intentions and outcomes when they apply externally-imposed values on internally-defined dialogs: missing the emergent way that educational goals adjust and mature among teachers and students, as they coordinate progressive interactions in that learning environment.

Focusing, instead, on *finding* points of coherence in that educational exchange—as framed (subjectively) by the teachers' rhetorical intentions, as filled (intersubjectively) with the students' and teachers' dialogic learning experiences—works to uncover that belief-to-behavior transition: where teachers use experience-based intuition and personal-practical theories to create their own manner of resolving clear ideals into imperfectly known realities.

Pedagogically, focusing on these historical roots and individualized structure in a teacher's manner emphasizes the natural variation among people's iterations of expertise and

practical wisdom. Teachers' experiences and frameworks reflect personal ways of relating

functionally within educational exchanges: personal paths of learning what they need in an

environment to operate optimally (that expert awareness), personal structures for making

sense of those patterns of experience in terms of salience and interconnection (that wise

distillation of focus). Even the most common teaching-related terms and widely-used

techniques change shape to fit each individual teacher in this way: expert teachers develop

not by straightly incorporating right-words or right-protocols, but by personalizing concepts

and approaches into something that is meaningful for *them*. Using a research method that

reflects this, that treats a teacher's personal manner as a central tool in education—one which

is actively shaping, not simply shaped by, professional notions and practices—validates two

important parts of the learning teacher's experience. First, the method validates the broad

uniqueness of teachers' approaches, and the intimate creativity between teachers and

students, in dialog, bringing those approaches to maturity. Second, it validates the  span of

words and diversity of meanings that teachers invoke when communicating their

experiences, insights, and philosophies.

Like notions of "Science" or "Divinity," theoretical phrases such as

"Transformational Learning" or "Liberation Pedagogy" evoke and guarantee nothing

concrete by their use alone: it is their roots in individual human experiences and their ties to

personal thought processes and projected intentions that make them, in reality, profound and

meaningful. And like the principles of "giving support" or "being kind," practice-guiding

ideas such as "metacognitive reflecting" or "critical questioning" evoke and guarantee no

educational outcomes by their curricular presence alone: it is their placement within an

environment's activity frameworks and their manner of practical embodiment among

individuals that make them enjoyable, memorable, and useful there. It is from these basic

understandings of mind-and-language's   personal and situated character, grounded in sense-memories and responsive to immediate contexts, that this study takes its historical and developmental approach to studying expert teachers' rhetorical approaches with, and pragmatic influence on, students in educational dialogs.

**IDEALS** – Perfect / Clear:
(Values and Beliefs, informing Images of End-Goals)
*envisioned and revised here

**PLANS** – Principled / Intentional:
(Reasons and Evidence, supporting Practical Priorities and Preparations)
*translated and prepared here

**INITIAL ACTIONS** – Imperfectly Functional / Imperfectly Aware:
(Hopes and Expectations, becoming Artifacts and Actions)
*applied and tested here

Teacher's Developing Manner
of Practice in          **PROGRESSIVE RESPONSES** – Reflexive / Immediate:
Educational Exchanges   (Experiences and Interpretations, evoking Attention and Dialog)
*adjusted and coordinated here

**MOTIVES** – Personal / Formative: ←----------------- **REFLECTIONS** – Professional / Cultural:
(Needs/Wants, Desires, Inclinations)          (Dis/Satisfactions, Ruminations, Social-Ethical Identity)
felt    imagined    developed          experienced    focused on          refined

*Figure 4.* A historical / developmental framework for examining teachers' personal-professional growth, through cycles of educational exchanges.

The integrated complex of human emotions, cognition, and motivation that are involved within teaching and learning interactions—whether progressively over time, or immediately moment-by-moment—is difficult to translate into a likewise integrated study. The conventional (unnatural) division between cool-objective truths and warm-subjective experiences teases its way into scholarly conceptions of environment and self (Haskell 2001), curriculum and learner (Dewey 1902), professor professing and pupil receiving (Freire 1970), and so makes warm research data such as metaphors, idealized narratives, expressions of emotion seem separate or alternative in focus to data such as literal descriptions, recorded interactions, analyses of reasoning—rather than connected as

compliments in the human reality of teaching and learning. But by combining more traditionally scholastic areas of focus on verbalized cognition and empirical behavior (Figure 4, marked blue) with more rhetorical notions of identity-based motivations and emotions, intuitive intentions and responses (Figure 4, marked red), a fuller and more cohesive map of educational exchanges presents itself.

In this image, where education (however mediated) is recognized fundamentally as intersubjective interaction (value-laden, mutually persuasive, dialogic) within a rhetorically crafted relational environment (systematic, deliberate, and sustained: Cremin 1976), the teacher's personal connection with their subject-matter and social connection with their students become conjoinedly relevant to their professional growth in academic service: those internal motives and interpersonal affiliations, in a rhetorical framework, drive the historical emergence of a teacher's craft and the present development of their educational exchanges with learners.

## Research Questions

So, to bring the academic literature around this current study to a concise head: *Learning* is personal and situated; a natural process that is sense-based, and environmentally responsive. *Knowledge* is genred; a human tool that is practical, and communicative—used for finding similarities among situations, and for propagating those understandings among kindred individuals. *Transfer* is rhetorical; an individualized action that is motivated, and intentional—done creatively to make knowledge personally useful across varied situations, and also to "sell" that approach (Nowacek 2011) to influential others as sensible and valuable. And all this being so, *Education* is persuasive; a community practice that is

purposefully influential, and necessarily[13] dialogic—organized so that experienced community members may engage in principled exchanges with others, use personal learning experiences and practical knowledge-bases to stimulate others' analogous personalizations of those valued societal dispositions: ways of feeling and identifying, sense-making and communicating, imagining and doing in a shared world.

This latter notion, that educational practice is deeply intentional and social, serves as the guiding foundation for this research. Its topic, broadly, is that of the learning-centered relationship and of the educational exchanges therein. Its focus, within that topic, is that of teacher expertise and practical wisdom within those classroom interactions: how long-experienced and well-regarded educational leaders translate learning goals for their students into social-academic practices; shaping environments to evoke learning experiences, and (more to the point of this study) progressively directing educational dialogs through those learning experiences.

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        _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
      \                                          /
       T          ↔    Developing this    ↔      S
   teacher                   :                     student
        \                  Social                /
         \            (expectations : trust     /
     Learning            respect : engagement  Environment
          \            affiliation : effort)  /
           \                  :              /
            \           in service of this  /
             \                ↓            /
          Mutual    \        SM       /  Understanding
                    \ subject-matter /
                      Academic
                       \   /
                        \ /
                         V
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13   (in the most healthy, synchronous, deep iterations of an educational exchange)

*Figure 5.* The focus of this study: how do experienced, successful teachers translate (rhetorical) academic intentions into (pragmatic) social actions?

So how do "good" teachers navigate this educational dynamic with students (Figure 5), in a persuasive and sustainable manner? How do these experienced teachers develop social learning environments wherein their rhetorical intentions with students can be realized pragmatically? How do these unique teachers define their manners of practice: their ways of building mutual expectations, respect, and affiliation; garnering in themselves and their students the emotional trust, cognitive engagement, and motivated effort necessary to reach coordinated academic understandings? And how do these imperfect teachers—beset with biased emotions, incomplete knowledge of students, and limited control of the learning environment—refine those educational exchanges to keep them healthy (and sustainable), coherent (and relevant), reliable (and genuine)?

I have honed these broad interests into three specific points of inquiry to guide the current research analysis:

1.          How do "good" (i.e., experienced and successful[14]) teachers describe historically and frame conceptually their practices? What are their belief-/values-based goals for the academic learning environment, and their identity-based communicative style in those educational exchanges? What experiences ground those beliefs, values, self-concepts, and the approaches which they explain / justify?

2.          What are the social foundations of these academic learning environments, from a rhetorical and pragmatic standpoint? What are teachers' and students' comparative goals, motives, and assessments of each others' characters within the classroom community?

3.          How do educational dialogs progress, socially and academically, over the course of that term? What seems to matter, observably, in moments of coordinated progress?

What do teachers and students recall as impactful, memorable, valuable in moments of reflection—about their educational take-away?

Admittedly, these questions did not start out so clearly defined at the outset of this study: it began with a general interest in learning about sincerity's operational role in a teacher's practice, what it is and how it contributes to a student's connection with the teacher and the subject-matter; with a general understanding of emergent neuropsychological research, on grounded cognition and emotional primes, mirror neurons and theory-of-mind; and with a general knowledge of where I did *not* want to get caught in my studies, at the static surface-level of teachers' "best" current common practices, or popular terminology, or polished character presentations.

So the methodology chapter that follows will outline my approach to conducting such a study: watching the classroom interactions of three expert writing teachers, with vastly different approaches, and interviewing both them and their students to form a grounded understanding—in their terms, from the standpoint of their values and aims—of how these teachers have shaped and continue to shape their educational exchanges, toward an image of good teaching, and how their students' learning experiences compare with those intentions.

## Methods and Rationale

### The Topic: Practical Expertise and Wisdom in Teaching and Learning

Studies of phronesis, or practical wisdom (e.g., Breieir & Ralphs 2009; Rose 2009), show that individuals' most readily applicable experience-based understandings tend to exist,

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14   (i.e., demonstrating sustainable, positively reviewed, and actively developing practices)

sensibly, in use-oriented states that those individuals find difficult to put into words for others: that is to say, in neat, organized, coherent ways that are abstracted away from those immediate practical situations. It is not that these understandings are inexpressable, but rather that their intended purpose – like that of proverbs and parables – is not primarily to make comprehensive arguments in public, but to support internal decisions and personal actions.

Researchers often have a difficult time operationally defining this aspect of understanding that is so closely tied to the *doing* of successful practice. For example, it has been described in general as a balance of wisdom, intelligence, and creativity, synthesized (Sternberg 2005) or an expertise marked by personal connection with the subject (Dai & Sternberg 2004) and the recognition of salient situational cues during decision-making (Klein 1993, 2008); for teaching in particular, it has been described as a practice-stabilizing internal centeredness (Duffy 1998) or a practice-enlivening fire (Palmer 1997). And when such understandings are explored within the lives of working professionals, they are usually organized in terms that reflect their simultaneously principled, practical, and personal nature: professional life stories (Clandinin & Huber 2005) and leadership stories (Sternberg 2008), personal-practical theories (Fairbanks, Duffy, et al. 2010), maxims (Richards 1996), and so on. But these often belief-loaded (Mercier & Sperber 2011), partly implicit (Tobin & LaMaster 1995), and storied (Feldman 1997) knowledge structures reflect not a lack of awareness or a disorganized framework in individuals' understandings.

Rather, these narrative forms with their idiosyncratic styles reflect the general nature of human learning, as described before: a process of building sensory memories (Barsalou 2008) and adaptive strategies (Immordino-Yang & Damasio 2007) for responding effectively to familiar situations and adjusting to novel ones (Levinthal & Rerup 2006), the gradual

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course of which is unified through a biographical sense of self (Damasio & Meyer 2009), oriented and controlled through an integrated system of emotions (Panksepp 2012), and situated socially and morally by an innate capacity to  theoretically perceive and empathetically align with the internal states of others (Saxe). Stated in writer's parlance, human learning is an emotionally resonant, character-centered plotline of change and development, marked by vivid scenes whose concrete imagery illustrates recurring patterns or signals dramatic turning-points in that character's path. While knowledge itself may appear impersonal (data-piles, descriptive vocabulary, conceptual frameworks, standard procedures), learning said knowledge is a process of personalizing: of incorporating new perceptual approaches into one's current understandings, exercising new dispositions within one's actions, adding stories to and changing the overall shape of one's narrative.

While unconsciously adopted beliefs and unacknowledged perceptual biases can problematically corrupt arguments, evoke false confidence (Kahneman & Klein 2009), and distort, for example, teachers' views of educational situations (Kagan 1992), the opposite has also been found to be true. That is, when individuals attend to their personal processes of believing, perceiving, deciding, and translating into action their intentions, that conscious focus can support meaningful changes in personal behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein 2005) and professional development (Adler-Kassner, Majewski & Koshnick 2012) into the future.

**The Focus: Teachers of Post-Secondary Writing**

Education in all fields relies fundamentally on personal interactions between those in teaching and learning roles, and *quality* education arguably relies on the personal and interpersonal awareness of individuals in those educational leadership roles. However, certain fields lend themselves more innately to that explicit personal-interpersonal focus.

Composition courses, for example, are centered on a dialog between teachers who embody an academic audience and students who write (most frequently to their teachers and/or fellow classmates) to develop their technical competence and authorial voice as a rising member in a larger literacy community—be it toward scientific / technical fields, research / journalism, fiction / poetry, or some other purpose. And the teacher's conversational presence during the students' writing and revision processes (not just as an expert critical audience, but also crucially as an experienced fellow writer) is crucial in turning those writing classrooms into more authentic and immersive writing experiences: situations where the students are writing to be read and understood.

This means that, in courses oriented around rhetoric-and-writing particularly, a teacher's interests, beliefs, biases, attitudes—whether conscious or unconscious, if they influence that teacher's reading of and response to texts (Tobin 1991)—become directly academically relevant to the students, who are seeking that audience's understanding with a vested interest. Likewise this academic focus, in endeavoring to model and evoke authorial manners of thinking and writing, acutely links the subject matter of the course to the teacher as a person: not just their intentionally presented social identity as a classroom leader and composer, but their core biographical self, which they can modify and adapt but cannot excise from their teaching practice (Uitto 2012) nor their relationship with students (O'Connor 2008). And these characteristics of the writing discipline, in turn, augment the likelihood that such a teacher, as they gain experience, will refine their professional capacity to synchronize with students attentively and productively in moments of teaching interaction (Tochon & Munby 1993), to conceptually organize and adaptively carry out the work of teaching in ways that are personally and professionally sustainable (Nias 1999) and fulfilling (Hillmann 2004), and—of great importance for this study—be able to *express* their

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personalized, practice-storied, principle-themed understanding of teaching: including the complexly intimate and responsible relationships that underlie it (Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Shultz 2009), the pragmatic classroom activities and educational goals that constitute it (Ben-Peretz 2011), and the teacherly values that motivate it (Gudmundsdottir 1991b; Day & Lee 2011).

With this in mind, I sought out three expert writing teachers for this study of expertise and practical wisdom in teaching and learning. These individuals were all selected from within the same university and the same writing program, hand-picked for their many years of teaching experience and notable levels of success (i.e., the writing program's administrator informed me that they were all highly regarded in reviews by their students and colleagues, and the program's pedagogy-training instructor described their professional efficacy, commitment, and overall apparently genuine connection with their work), and finally for their distinct approaches to teaching post-secondary writing (again, as described and corroborated by my two above connections in the program). I purposely sought this similarity of professional context and performance, paired with this diversity of personal approach, in my three subjects so as to remove the temptation to compare their "best" expert practices or "natural" teacherly instincts and character dispositions. By doing this, it was my intention to clear the surface of easy answers and to look more deeply at how these teachers developed and were continuing to progress in their roles: as educational leaders, facilitating others' learning trajectories, in a way that works for them in their environment.

Post-secondary writing as an academic subject is generally somewhat consistent in its core elements: a foundation of basic language signs and structures, rhetorical techniques and genre conventions, for communicating effectively in a variety situations, to audiences across a variety of interpersonal distances both physical and cultural, with a variety of purposes

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both explicit and implicit. But how that subject-matter comes to exist in lessons, discussions, essays and revisions of any given writing class will ultimately be the product of the teacher's story about that subject-matter (Gudmundsdottir 1991a)—i.e., the select elements that they choose to emphasize, and the manner in which they work to propagate those understandings—and the dialogic progression of that story between students and teachers, as they negotiate its maturation interpersonally (with all the surprises, and resulting shifts, that occur along the way) within that learning-centered environment.

To explore that growing social-academic connection, between a shared subject-matter and unique individuals, and to see how experienced teachers managed that educational challenge rhetorically and pragmatically, I designed a study that combines and adapts several approaches to observing participants' interactions and exploring their subjective thoughts, feelings, and motives—in a way specifically targeted at tracing the pragmatic arc from teachers' rhetorical intentions, and classrooms' interpersonal foundations, to a course's progressive educational dialogs.

## The Approach: Being with, Seeing through, Learning from the Interpersonal Environment

Methods of classroom research that focus on the explicit and technical ("rational" and "professional") aspects of learning interactions, with *prescriptive* measures of success, maintain a subjective distance from the personal, situated experiences of classroom teaching and learning: fundamentally at the level of collection, and more subtly at the level of analysis—where the underlying assumptions that guide data-collection are likewise used to explain and assess those observations. Such approaches may open researchers up to the range of logical fallacies that follow from too little (subjectively distant) information viewed

through a single (outsider) perspective: from presumptive claims[15], to circular definitions[16], that human minds invent in the absence of sufficient inside perspective about the actual (personal, situated) developing process[17] that links teachers' historically-defined intentions to classrooms' dialogic outcomes. The personal distance of such approaches increases the odds that teacher and student voices will be missed or misheard – subject to the undue / unnoticed influence of the researcher, trying to make sense of experience-grounded personal lexicons that are referencing intimate interpersonal situations.

Accordingly, the present research takes a personal, practical, principled approach: reflecting the experience-based, socially situated, ideal-driven and story-bound nature of teaching and learning; with goals and reasoning, identities and relationships, operational intentions and experiential outcomes defined *internally*. The focus of this study is the space between/underneath polished frameworks and standardized assessments: the teacher and student experience of dialogic exchanges in the classroom (as well as the internal dialogs stimulated thereby), and the personal developments that flow from that exchange (i.e., the teacher's ongoing "professional growth" and the student's ongoing "education").

This approach to educational research boils down to the operational challenge of how to collect and analyze data about what occurs publicly in teaching and learning interactions (the *concrete situations* like lectures, discussions at group or individual levels, assignment-feedback correspondence), how those experiences are remembered and personalized privately (the *idiosyncratic changes and developments* within involved individuals, such as

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15   e.g., "This teacher said A but did B; I think A means not-B; this teacher's beliefs and practices are disconnected."
16   e.g.. "I believe that good teachers/classrooms exhibit B; this teacher/classroom exhibits B; this teacher/classroom exemplifies good teaching / educational interaction."
17   e.g., "How did the teacher come to favor A; what does it mean to them as an ideal? How was A adjusted in the space of teacher-student learning interactions in service of B? Was B intended by the teacher and appreciated by students?"

emotional associations, sense-making interpretations, and judgments of usefulness and value in future goals), and how those human meanings get coordinated in those shared spaces (the *intersubjective relations and understandings* that progressively emerge among those individuals, including emotional affiliations, rational expectations, and motivating purposes).

This operational aim with data collection and parsing, in turn, raises two important methodological considerations. First, a researcher must subjectively observe, creatively transcribe, and purposefully essentialize those shared external happenings between teachers and students: an engulfing totality of physical energies, subtle attitudes, and situated dynamics that cannot be perceived or captured fairly through questionnaires, recordings, or even distant observations alone, but requires an involved personal presence. Second, a researcher must find ways of judiciously exploring the internal feelings, conceptions, and motives that individuals hold privately: a psychological space that, in all fairness, no one but the individual can ever directly explore, but that the rough metrics of common language and experiential analogy can shed some useful light upon.

In theory, these problems can be addressed methodologically by (1) *observing openly* – with explicit, structured, and continuous focus on extending one's awareness broadly (using all senses, in all directions, equally toward phenomena that draw attention and absences that dodge attention), and (2) *interpreting deferentially* – using case examples to define the research topic, participant voices to define the situation, community frameworks to define values and goals, and stories of experience (their emotional imagery, rationalizing plot-lines, recurrent themes of value) to help analyze the success of those ideals as practically implemented. In practice, the quality of these relies on a third methodological point, (3) maintaining personal *reflexivity* – transparently including one's own self, one's

presence as a researcher, among the factors of influence in one's research site (e.g., via one's tone, posture, attitude toward subjects, and social role as an observer). Arguably, this reflexive move can make the researcher's subjectivity more of an active asset in their observations and interpretations: steering perceptions in a direction of curiosity and learning over assumption and assessment, and analytical intentions in a direction of ecological connection and authenticity over evisceration and novel spectacle.

This methodological approach described above encapsulates the general theoretical attributes of grounded, ethnographic, phenomenological, narrative research. *Grounded methods* form theories from the site of observation upward: developing coding schemes, noting patterns, forming categories, and so forth in cycles of data collection and analysis—as opposed to utilizing preexisting frameworks formed out of other research sites, by other researchers, to organize one's own observations and orient one's findings. *Ethnographic methods* study human interactive environments and organizations by integrating personally into the research site: gaining access to communities through the acceptance and guidance of active members, familiarizing with the values and practices by being present for conversations and interactions, and making sense of these sites with the input of native perspectives in a researcher-state termed "participant-observation." These methods suit the study of teacher-student interactions and their educational outcomes because the myriad personal histories and surrounding communities feeding into teachers' pedagogical frameworks and students' responses thereto make each classroom a unique micro-cultural site of interaction and learning; one with its own definitions of what is valued, acceptable, and effective in that community.

To focus the scope and attentional direction of such open approaches, *phenomenological methods* work at understanding others' subjective experiences,

specifically by utilizing the observer's own subjective experiences as a means of empathetically experiencing that shared, intersubective, environment *for* others: accepting that one cannot perceive the environment as that other, but can train one's immediate focus (and one's own catalog of first-hand sensations, memories, desires) on the human experiences that appear to be happening in others' subjective states. And to inform that deferential imagination of experience, *narrative methods* use peoples' stories, and their techniques for communicating such stories, to gain insight into their personal feelings, perspectives, and motivations: examining attributes of language such as metaphoric imagery, rational arguments, and thematic statements of general values or identity-specific goals—to see how the individual connects and distills those concrete, richly complex experiences within larger biographical plot-lines and symbolic frameworks. These methods suit the study of learning-centered exchanges because education in society pivots on that intersubjective contact-point, where one individual and another individual contact a mutual object and seek a closer synchrony of understandings.

For educational researchers who endeavor to understand the large-scale average outcomes of conventional structures and strategies on specific measures of teachers' efficacy or students' progress, other techniques (larger sample-sizes, thinner slices, stiffer metrics) are more appropriate and tenable. But to study the personal and situated means by which the same educational practices either succeed or fail, stimulate or repress, connect or distance the learner's relationship with societally valued curricula—to study the rhetorical art and pragmatic craft of educational leadership—these close, context-rooted, flexible approaches are the more equitable and accurate in-roads to understanding.

**The Method: Observation-Grounded Inquiry and Discourse Analysis.**

For this study, the methods of data-collection draw largely from ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative interviewing, while methods of analysis draw largely from grounded theory and discourse analysis. Each part, the collection and analysis, then adapts and develops those research principles and strategies to suit the specific intentions of the study (to rhetorically and pragmatically examine expert teachers' educational dialogs with students) and specific exigencies of the site and its subjects (three unique teachers and classroom student bodies, within an American, West coast, public, research-1 university undergraduate writing program).

All of the methods to be detailed below have been used and refined in practice by various fields, so the approaches themselves are not particularly novel. Rather, it is their unique combination within a single study that enables more connective insights about the history and development of experts' dialogic teaching practices.

*Grounded Theory*, in its purest forms of practice, forms theories from the site of observation upward (Charmaz 2001/2002): using cycles of data collection and analysis to note patterns, develop coding schemes, form categories, and so forth—as opposed to utilizing preexisting frameworks formed out of other research sites, by other researchers, to organize one's own observations and orient one's findings. The techniques associated with this principled work ethic (open coding, theoretical coding and memoing, cycles of sorting and writing), and its notable absence of pre-identified theories or frameworks, reflect its intention to give research subjects – whatever they might be – their due as a specific, complex, and unique phenomena before essentializing, abstracting, and analogizing it with other phenomena being witnessed and interpreted by others. Its methods are a tacit reminder of that human sensory base that contributes to every researcher's analytical work.

From such a grounded perspective of recursive data-gathering and theory-formation, what many see as theoretical *tensions* between research styles can be alternately viewed as *layers* of process in a more synthetic research. That is, research practices like transcription are situated acts that reflect a researcher's emergent understanding of the phenomenon being studied and the theories informing that study (Green, Franquiz, and Dixon 1997). So in studies grounded in a specific situation (such as a teacher's learning-centered interactions with a class of students), where the researcher is constantly accumulating new insights about subjects, which in turn influence theory development and ongoing analysis, the subjective mindsets underlying various research approaches may prove distinctly useful in well-timed combinations.

This is the notion being applied by this study to variants of discourse analysis, so that their focal lenses may be used as progressive compliments in studying the multi-layered dialogic work of teaching.

*Discourse analysis*, as a broader methodological field, studies how people use language in real world contexts to carry meaning and influence to others. It's sub-fields (Green & Dixon 2002) include *conversation analysis* (CA), which holds a radically concrete, decontextualized stance: that analysts should draw their explanatory claims from directly observable evidence in subjects' talk-in-interaction, where in essence all textual and contextual issues are constituted—in the interpersonal here-and-now, between immediately present individuals. Alternately, *sociolinguistic* and *critical discourse analysis* (CDA) emphasizes the relevance of contextual elements in language-use, such as a participant's gender, class, ideology, and control of communications' production and distribution: information which analysts may use to make more situated sense of various ways individuals are using and assessing language—constructing, promoting, and responding to discourse

events and other texts within and around their immediate lives. And finally, studies of *pragmatics* focus beyond the literal words and meanings in peoples' utterances, emphasizing instead the intended and actual effects of those speech acts on the interpersonal environment: analysts here use a more practical and rhetorical frame, looking for utterances' underlying prosodic features and discourse principles as a means of grasping speakers' active intentions—how they wanted their speech act to influence others, and how those others actually interpreted and responded to them, in that situation.

Each of these emphases in analyzing discourse can be seen as serving a distinct function in phases of observation-grounded inquiry. CA-oriented approaches are well-suited to a researcher's initial sense-making and question-forming about subjects' social interactions, e.g., classroom interactions: observing and noting in concrete ways that eschew overreaching assumptions and abstractions about personal identities, intentions, or context. CDA-style approaches are then useful for enriching the researcher's understanding of such observations, e.g., through supplemental interview data of teachers and students: questioning and exploring subjects' situated perspectives in ways that draw out the social dynamics underlying those group interactions. And pragmatics-oriented approaches can then build from that base a researcher's deeper explorations of discourse and text, e.g. teacher's educational attempts to foster student connections with core content, and students' course products and learning reflections in response: interpreting the progressive course dialogs in ways that attend to the personal, practical, principled goals individuals pursue in these educational exchanges.

Again, these varied lenses for studying language-in-use carry important methodological implications for research practices such as transcription and content analysis—e.g., CA's commitments to neither attribute psychosocial features to a speaker nor

take their statements about the social world as a source of information about that world. So, when applied as categorical boundaries, these lenses can create clear epistemological limits as to what may be officially acknowledged and asserted by a researcher (Hammersley 2003). But below such values-relative variations, the core principles of practice in discourse analysis are generally shared—e.g., that a transcript should be visually and spatially readable, with coherent representations of nonverbal events and prosody, and have discriminable and contrastive categories for coding and commenting on its most relevant aspects in that research (Edwards 1993, Bucholtz 2007). So, when applied as compliments within progressive cycles of researching and theorizing, these approaches can help the researcher in a utilitarian manner: to focus attention on what is evident at the moment, to manage the timing of claims about relevant context, and to forestall extrapolations about intention—so that these layers of understanding might be developed in a supportive sequence, each forming a grounded platform for the next, and so strengthening the total data collection and analysis.

The manner in which observation-grounded methods of data-collection and subsequent cycles of discourse analysis progressed in this specific study will now be described and explained in more detail, in the sections below.


**Preliminary Research Studies:**

**Recognizing the Need to Balance Teacher, Student, and Observer Perspectives**

Two terms before collecting my primary data, I took field notes in a lecture hall statistics course, and asked students from that course about the comparative role of teachers between high school and university. Most relevantly to this current research, I asked how they perceived the interpersonal role of their teachers (giving the options of "like a parent"

or "like a friend"). With two exceptions (one who said "like parents" and one who said "my parents *are* my friends"), there was general consensus that—as an archetype—teachers were more of an "in-between" concept: more *approachable* and candid than a parent, more *respected* and inducing-of-accountability than a friend.

> "I think professors should be seen more as a mentor, which is kind of a blur of a friend, parent." "Aunt? [laughter]" "I'd say maybe like an older brother, sister." "I don't *know* – I like teachers who are like teachers [laughs]. They're completely different from friends and – someone you can look up to, without expecting discipline. Like, I think *parent*, I think *discipline*, and really strict rules. But with teachers, I think more like *guidelines*. And then with friends, I don't look up to my fr- well, I look up to some of my friends, but I don't – they're not like authority figures. I think a teacher should be respected." "as far as engaging in the class and making the class more interesting, you're gonna want to be more comfortable with your teacher. You're gonna want to have a friendlier relationship, as opposed to looking at them as the – like the parent – as the figurehead of the class: who's not approachable, who's not as willing to relate to you, or to kind of come to your level, to help you understand the material." (excerpts from university student panel-interview data, 2009, Fall Term)

These discussions with students about what attributes they generally valued and looked for in teachers, and comparatively what aspects of these they saw—or saw lacking—in their current teacher, proved helpful in connecting observable classroom interactions to students' subjective learning experiences. Unfortunately, though, these discussions alone left me little sense of the *teacher's* perception compared against the students' views of that

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classroom reality. I knew what I had seen: that the teacher regularly walked around her 145-seat lecture hall engaging students at all corners in conversation before classes, stayed around to answer their questions afterward, and announced that she had office hours. But I did not know how she perceived her role, to what extent she was aware of her students' perceptions, nor how that sense factored in to her classroom actions across the term, and across her career. So I could not place these two views into a dialog.

Subsequently, with my second study, I suffered the inverse problem. In the first study, my personal classroom observations combined with student interviews to help me develop a concretely informed view of educational relationships in that college lecture hall environment—but without the teacher's intentions to compare with students' experiences. This second study provided me with rich subjective explanations of teachers' ideal intentions and interpreted experiences—but without any direct connection to their referenced classroom interactions, nor to students' perspectives of those learning environments. I interviewed six teachers enrolled in a Teacher Education Program, asking them each about the role of dialog and debate in their classrooms: the nature of those events where they occur, and their place as educational mediators in those events. This provided grist for understanding teachers' perceptions of themselves, their students, and their classroom practices. But hearing only the teachers' reported perspectives of interpersonal relationships in those six K-12 classroom environments, with no first-hand sense of the environment itself, left me again with insufficient information to understand the educational dialog.

Here, I learned first-hand two important points about constructing a rhetorical and pragmatic study of educational exchanges. First, that to study and explain classroom interactions in a balanced and informed way, my own, the students', and the teachers' direct vantages of classroom interactions needed to be triangulated—a notion basic to ethnographic

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and mixed-methods research in social sciences (Becker 1996; Johnson 1997; Berreman 1972; Herzfeld 2001; Peshkin 2001). Second, that teacher perceptions provide a logical starting point for exploring that classroom culture. Their ideals become the plans and frameworks for interactions in a classroom; their perceptions and responses influence what becomes socially expected, reinforced, and possible for participants there; their manner of practice impacts students' experiences in connecting with subject-matter, as that classroom community coheres around those structures and strategies. In this way, teachers' self-reported principles, perceptions, and approaches produce practical questions and provide guiding lenses for examining classroom interactions and student learning experiences.

For example, these beginning teachers' statements about their students—sometimes broadly generalized, or infused with emotion- and value-laden character judgments, or with questionably warranted explanations for classroom practices (see quotes below)—left me eagerly curious as to how their students were perceiving their teachers reciprocally in those same situations.

> "Anytime [students] feel limited, I feel like they will start to care, almost no
> matter what [the topic/issue] is ... where they perceive boundaries, they feel
> compelled to challenge those boundaries" (student-teacher, age 23, 8th grade)
> "So they were all talking about *partying* in the parking lot the other day, and I
> [said sarcastically] 'That sounds safe.' And one of the girls said, 'Look. I was
> good twelve years of my life, but this thirteenth year- ' And I [thought] 'Oh
> my God, this is so depressing … you didn't know what beer was for like nine
> of [those years], come on.'" (student-teacher, age 23, 8th grade)
> "[They're in the 'at- isk' elective] so they don't care about school at all. ...It's
> like I'm pulling teeth trying to get answers from these kids. … I need to *have*

answers I want that I can kind of *guide* [them] to, if nobody's talking. And I

would only prepare this way for this class because they're not interested in

having full discussions." (student-teacher, age 22, 8th grade)

Likewise, these teachers' statements about their own desires coming up against the reality of

classroom practices—leading to unexpected and unprepared-for interactions, or to self-

directed frustration and a sense of needing practical guidance, or to student-directed blame

and a resigned sense of incapacity (see quotes below)—left me wanting to see these

classroom interactions from a neutral vantage point, beyond either the teachers' or students'

affective filters.

"I was trying to get them to be on *my side* and think that Cherry is courageous

– I'm going to convince them so we can get it my way and it will go a lot

smoother … But it wasn't working out, and they were just saying 'No! No!

She's a twoface.'" (student-teacher, age 22, 7th grade)

"It's like [I think] 'I just want you back on *track* .' [more than] 'I know this is

what you're interested in, and this is the way I can mold it to work with what

I'm trying to accomplish.' It just seems difficult sometimes. And I would like

to see or watch somebody who does it *well...*" (student-teacher, age 23, 9th

grade)

"I want to do things that are more fun, but I just can't. I feel really limited

because I *know* they would just go crazy. … we're at such a low level of

getting tasks done, I feel like to try and have a coordinated discussion – like

I'd have to *plan* it or something. I don't know how I'd go about it." (student-

teacher age 22, 8th grade)

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Furthermore, their varied individual ways of describing similar classroom scenarios—for example, interpreting learners speaking their minds as a potential asset for those students to control, or as a source of feedback for teachers to use, or as an opportunity for teachers and students to connect develop—made it seem fundamentally important to know what their personal definitions were, specifically and concretely, for words like "peer relationships" or "in-class correction" or "improvisation" in the context of teaching (see quotes below), if I truly wanted understand how their ideas influenced their practices.

> "If it's peers talking about English content? [They're] not listening. But they're really good at listening to each other talk about everything else – [in fact] that's my problem: they're listening to each other and not to me when I'm giving directions … [Students in the 'at-risk' elective] *know* what they believe in … So they will tell you: it doesn't matter if it will hurt your feelings, or if it's not what you expected to hear, they will tell you … And so it's really cool, because they have a lot of personality, but in an unstructured world, that would be unsuccessful." (student-teacher, age 22, 8th grade)
>
> "But I think 'at-risk' kids are way more fun, because you can do more stuff with them, and if they don't get something, [they'll say] 'I don't get it.' Totally tell you straight up. No sitting there going 'I::: get it?' Or they'll be like, 'This activity sucks,' and I'll be like, 'It does? Okay, let's try something else. Thanks for telling me.' Or even simple, like 'I can't see what's on the board. Whereas in [all-white, middle- lass] Chicago suburbs, I finished a whole paragraph, looked up, ' *Why* didn't anybody tell me they couldn't read it? [It's] not embarrassing to give *feedback* . … You should tell me that next time. '"
> (student-teacher, age 23, 8th grade)

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"So anything they shout out, you have to respond to it in some way. You can't just sit back and be like, 'Don't speak out of turn, Jimmy.' That's the *worst* thing that I hear teachers do. 'Don't speak out of turn.' Why not? They're engaged, they're talking about something that's related to the subject. Take it and run with it. Connect it for them. And then they like you for it; they respect you for that, because they feel comfortable. … It's easy to sit up in front with your Scholastic Book Teacher's Guide, you know, and just read the lecture to the class: discussion question one at this time, discussion question two at this time. I mean, that's easy, but teachers are more than just lecturers, you know? They're people who need to get through to 'How does this child learn?' It's difficult: not all children learn by lecturing – it doesn't, it wont, work. So as much as it might be easier to step with a Scholastic book and do it, that's not what our job is." (student-teacher, age 23, 12th grade)

And lastly, their unique teacherly ideals and identities—distinct from their peers and superiors, drawing from personal memories and projecting into personalized futures (see below)—made clear that exploring teachers' idiosyncratic personalities (their interests, strengths and weaknesses, formative educational experiences) would also be crucial to understanding how they had come to form their ideal definitions of "Teacher" and their ongoing definitions of themselves as one such teacher.

"Finally [the Cooperating Teacher] looks up, says [to the student], 'Okay, grade: you're getting a C+. Better start doing your homework.' By now, class is almost starting. 'I'm gonna come to your house, knock on your door, and make sure you're doing your homework.' Which [I thought was] mildly weird, but you could see it as funny. She continues, 'I'm gonna ask for dinner. Are

you gonna make me dinner?' Girl looks at me. [I look back as though to say] I have no idea; I'm sorry. '– I think you would: I think you would make me dinner.' So kids don't look forward to interactions with her. … My *dream* is just to have a really open class where we can just talk about anything. But I think it's really hard to create that *culture*, because everyone's so caught up on their appearances … I told [the Cooperating Teacher] yesterday I thought I was on the same level as the kids, and she said, 'I think that's a problem with a lot of first-year teachers.' [And I thought to myself,] what – that I respect kids as equally as I respect myself? … {jokingly} one of my many flaws."

(student-teacher, age 23, 8th grade)

"The dynamics always change: there's always good parts to a group dynamic, and there's bad parts too. But the point is to really make sure the good parts are working … you do a good lesson that the kids will pay attention [to]. And the bad-dynamic side of the group, where like maybe they're more inclined to talk to each other because they're friends or something, will sort of disappear if they're engaged with the lesson itself. … I see all these teachers that they're sooo burnt out, and it's because all they're doing is just *concentrating* on the *negatives*. I mean, it's easy for me to say now, only being my second year in teaching, but one thing I would want is to never be that teacher who's just complaining all the time. If I'm gonna be complaining all the time, then I'm not doing my job – which is being idealistic for my kids. I have to be idealistic for the kids: otherwise I'm just giving up on them, you know?"

(student-teacher, age 23, 12th grade)

These teacher narratives thus provided, by virtue of their coherent subjectivity, process-illuminating glimpses into educational exchanges: emotional, rational, motivated accounts of classroom's leading composers attempting to construct effective environments for learning, based on personal histories of experience and emergent frameworks of understanding, through dialogic interactions with their students.

Of course these teacher statements alone, separated from developmental history and referential context, could not yield much conclusive information about my research interests (educational dialogs, teacher sincerity, and interpersonal synchrony in classroom interactions), but they provided a window into this; a directing lens for analyzing classroom interactions, and for further inquiring into students' experiences and assessing their take-away from those classroom exchanges. So it was this combination that I planned for my subsequent research: to trace the bridge from teacher ideals to student learning experiences; from teachers' stated mindsets and imagined interactions (rooted in personalized lexicons and sense-based memories), to teachers' and students' observable interactions (knowable only by participants present in that intersubjective space), to student interpretations and reflections on these educational exchanges (shared only candidly, beyond even the ears of the teacher, with trusted others).

So my research strategy became clear: to find willing teachers, and to watch them in dialog with students; to learn about their storied views of educational purpose and practice, and to explore their actual educational relations with current students; to return again to those classroom dialogs and trace their social-academic progress, and to hear students' accounts of what was experienced and learned—compared against a classroom-internal metric of intentions and efforts, aiming rhetorically and pragmatically toward mutual persuasion and understanding, acceptance and belonging, integration and synchrony.

# Observation-Grounded Inquiry

The first stage of this research into educational dialogs, in expert teaching, was the data-gathering. The goal in this initial inquiry was simply to develop a foundation of understanding about the persons, situated practices, and driving principles involved in those educational encounters. Aware, as a researcher and as a teacher, of my own experiences and inclinations, habits and strategies, values and motives—shaping my interpretations of every classroom that I participate in—I took special care to explicitly and deliberately think out my approach in amassing this initial base of knowledge: the character traits that I should inhabit when participating in those classrooms as a social presence, and the various forms of information that I should seek out from those situated individuals I observed.

Regarding the former, I attended to the fact that the more trust I earned from community members, the more full, direct, and unguarded—i.e., accurate—their accounts of personal experience, behavior, and intention in those educational dialogs would be. I defined in my mind that character, most likely to evoke trusting and informative responses from others, as the "curious learner": motivated by wonder and interest (fully enough to override impulses toward judgment and assessment). Accordingly, I planned to execute all my data-gathering interactions with this interpersonal manner—intentionally and proactively.

Regarding the latter, I recognized that I would be tempted, naturally, to fill in any gaps in my data about educational dialogs by using my own experiences and imagination (which is to say, my biases and presumptions) to make organized sense of that complex reality. So I mapped out the arc of an educational dialog, from a teacher's intentionally composed course-frame to student's variously personalized course learning experiences, and began composing question-sets with a variety of specific structures (grids and free-

responses, verbal and written formats, privately and collectively administered) to gain the fullest sense I could of my subjects' own experiences—and to make my own sense-making as informed as possible—in those progressive educational exchanges.

This deliberate researcher mindset was informed partially by two decades of studying interpersonal dynamics and training internal focus and emotional control through martial arts. And these strategic tools of inquiry were inspired partially by my academic side-interest as a rhetorician and educator in psychological research and their creative research methods. But largely, this study's research approach and strategies were developed from my base of academic exposure to ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative interviewing methods.

**Ethnographic Fieldwork**

Ethnography comes out of the research traditions of anthropology, studying how specific groups of humans live and make sense of the world, and its traditional definition includes such practices as living with subjects continuously over extended periods of time, participating in daily life with group members, conducting interviews and tracing genealogies. As the ethnographic approach has been adopted for use in studying educational and other professional settings, these methods have accordingly been adapted – spending less time with subjects, observing only certain targeted activities within specific locations (e.g., teacher and student educational work in classrooms), and so forth – but the approach remains oriented around those original objectives: to observe first-hand the life experiences of others in real-world contexts and to make sense of activities and situations from those participants' perspectives, using field recordings and discussions to deepen that potential for understanding as a participant-observer. This streamlining of method, then, raises some specific concerns for the field (Hammersley 2006), such as the tendency toward more micro-

analytical focuses and ahistorical views that may pay scant attention to the broader histories and greater contexts that inform participants' experiences in specific situations – and, should researchers attempt to in-fill those greater personal contexts with general socio-historical explanations, a greater tendency also to supplant participant understandings with analytical ones (which may not be congruent with participant reality).

That is to say, detail-focused methods *can* directly examine issues that educational researchers want to learn about and bring to the attention of wider audiences – e.g., capturing social contexts, personal motivations, student values and classroom practices, relational disjunctions and internal contradictions in closer and more probing ways than do surveys and measurement-focused procedures (Wolcott 1988) – but while the methods themselves do not impose perspectives on those situations (i.e., a notepad is a more intrinsically neutral medium than a semi-statistical survey with prescribed frameworks and value scales to make its data measurable), the researchers themselves may still bring outside perspectives that can distort impressions and distance observations if they are left unacknowledged (i.e., once written on, a notepad collects the researcher's observations, but potentially also their biases, judgments, and assumptions).

This issue lies at the center of both ethnographic research's methodological validity and its principles of professional responsibility (Berreman 1996), namely the researcher's responsibility to those they study, openness and transparency in their research activities, personal accountability for the ethicality of their behaviors, and a responsibility to society at large in conveying findings and their implications fully and forthrightly to the public. This deferential responsibility also lies at the heart of what makes grounded social methods so fitting for studies of teaching and learning – as with education, the mandate of ethnographic research is a dialogic and self-transcending one: to form close, honest relationships in which

knowledge can be concertedly developed, attentively organized and prosocially disseminated.

The value of close watching and fine description is that that process moves the researcher *beyond* a set agenda: in capturing the details of a moment, seeking first just to perceive and let information come, ethnographic observers leave themselves available to "discover something true about the world of human lives" (Frake 2007) beyond what they expect, desire, or are interested in at the outset. And from there, the researcher's systematic observations – by generally scanning the situation and individuals or by searching more specifically for paradoxes, problems facing the group, etc. (Delamont 1991), and enriched by other qualitative data – continue along that vein of naturalistic investigation, where one expects initial perspectives to evolve (Peshkin 1985, 2001) and so postpones judgments or overcommitments to draft titles and storylines in one's data: it is this withholding of assumed understanding that allows one's target of focus to move accordingly as experiences continue entering one's consciousness as an observer.

This situated responsiveness is the basis for the validity structure of qualitative research (Johnson 1997): that extended fieldwork and low-inference descriptions, their subjective proclivities kept in check by triangulating sources and procedures (i.e., using a variety of data, collection methods, researchers, and/or interpretive perspectives) as well as participant feedback and researcher self-reflection, serve methodologically to produce and present findings which (1) reflect the details and patterns of a research site's complex human reality, more accurately so than brief and/or distant monologic views can provide, and (2) can be utilized by others in comprehending and explaining relevantly comparable situations.

So ethnographic fieldwork needs to be seen as a process of *learning* by observation of behaviors and making social practices explicit – e.g., by participant observation within

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educational institutions, following faculty and carefully describing their daily activities, listening carefully to what teachers and students say and do – in ways that view both the subject and researcher as participants together in this search for meaning (Toma 2000): a subject's illustrations and stories, rituals and ideas within a context, are of value to them as living reality and they are to the researcher as data. And the more connected and trusting the interactions between subjects and researchers become in this process (Berreman 1972), the more genuine the subject's data and better-informed the researcher's analytical perspective are likely to be.

This makes the researcher's presence in situations and connection with subjects methodologically crucial for ethnographic fieldwork in education. Before one can take notes, one must observe and participate in the situation, for it is that open awareness of ongoing events and sensory experiences – of initial impressions, key events, actions or interactions that seem significant to participants, and the particular meanings they carry (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw 1995); of sensory perceptions and responses beyond verbal activities and artifacts, carrying culturally constituted values and judgments (about the look of clothes, smell of perfumes, sound of bells and trees, feel of desks or surrounding architecture) that are "calibrated to the 'common sense'" and are real and relevant to persons in society (Herzfeld 2001) – which one's notes stimulate in memory: notes are mnemonic devices that encode concrete details and atmosphere which a researcher can only sense fully when in that situation. Thus, it is more important to be present as a participant who thinks and feels along with others in the room, and who is respectful with one's note-taking practices (neither distracting nor secretive) in a way that maintains that connection, than it is to write down every detail: this personal work of fleshing out and organizing can be done privately, later in times of recollection after observation.

Video and audio recording can further help researchers to recollect, to thicken their descriptions, and free them to be present in the situation rather than preoccupied by the impulse to note ephemeral details. Video also allows for the repeated viewings necessary for CA-style micro-explorations of participants' body language and orientation, proxemics, gesture and facial expression, prosody and other details that may be hard to catch in the moment – and which help the researcher to further note the discourse dynamics in spaces such as classrooms, where affiliation cues like nodding (Stivers 2008), the use of gesture and gaze to signal reenactments within larger narrative tellings (Sidnell 2006), gestures that render abstract ideas or other speech content visible as well as communicating their own independent meanings (Kendon 1997), and various bodily means of both conveying misunderstanding and taking remedial action (Lerner & Raymond 2008) are centrally involved in the coordinated academic and relational exchanges among teachers and students. But video is limited in spatial/temporal scope, captures only what is visible, and allows only for vicarious experience (DuFon 2002): personal presence and conscious, systematic observation within that immediate situation is still the primary tool of ethnography.

**In this study: positioning the researcher to learn from classroom dialogs.**

The first step toward observation, in this present study of teaching and learning in classrooms, was to be clear about where I would be directing my observation and why. Acknowledging that my study's participants, teachers and students alike, would be connected to many overlapping communities that would influence and be influenced by classroom interactions in ways too vast to observe or chart fully, I had to recognize my limits as a single participant-observer and decide: what would actually be available to observe and learn from in the classroom, and how should I observe it?

After discussing with my adviser the notion of "sincerity" (that genuine care, intention, and effort felt within the person doing and perceived by the person receiving) in educational interactions, I realized how difficult that concept would be to operationalize as a focus for my observations. So I thought further about what a teacher's perceived sincerity seems to facilitate, observably, in learning-centered interactions with students; what makes it *useful* in an educational exchange. Reflecting on my own educational interactions with teachers, I arrived at the more operational notion of "synchrony": how experienced teachers tighten the connections between themselves, their students, and a shared subject. This was something that I had witnessed as a student many times: a teacher demonstrating their deep relationship with a subject, building ties of reliable expectation with and among students, and supporting that whole group's connection with the subject-matter. And this was something that I could sit in a classroom and intentionally observe.

From here, I sought out a small sample of teachers in whose classrooms I would be likely to observe educational interactions progressing toward moments of synchrony. I went to a University writing department, asking its director and one of its senior faculty for recommendations on teachers who fit the profile for my research: experienced, well-regarded by students and fellow teachers, with distinctly personal teaching styles. I contacted four, heard back from three, and after the first week of the term (giving each teacher a chance to set the social-academic groundwork for their classrooms, without my presence potentially distracting from that initial connection) I planted myself unobtrusively on a side-wall and began my observations. I examined these three university writing instructors' weekly classroom interactions with students over the course of that entire Spring quarter. Starting in week 2, classroom sessions were observed and audio-recorded, as well as video-recorded

during potentially salient points of classroom interaction (e.g., whole-group discussions, impromptu arguments, intimate asides).

After simply observing the classrooms for several weeks, I conducted a preliminary, optionally anonymous online survey electronically to gauge students' perceptions of the class, followed later by 10-student panel interviews in two of the classes at the quarter's end. Final course writing samples and brief (20 minute) individual interviews were also conducted with 3 students from each class (whom the teachers helped to select, to represent a range of learners' responses to the course) after the final class session. Each teacher was also interviewed individually (approx. 1.5 hr each) in the latter half of that term. These interactions together comprised the observational portion of my inquiry.

*Observing at 90-degrees – attending to teachers and students in pragmatic relationships.* One key principle that I applied in this initial phase of the study was observing at a 90-degree angle: that is, positioning myself at a vantage point in classroom interactions where I could observe both teachers and students simultaneously, seeing their faces' and hearing their voices' mutual influence on one another. This practice-guiding notion shaped the way I attended to spoken, written, and embodied communication in the classrooms—the gazes, postures, questions, responses, negotiations, and chalkboard inscriptions that built on one another over the course of each class—always looking at the pragmatic back-and-forth of intentions and responses (both the teachers' and the students', as a mutual and simultaneous dialog). This notion also informed the way I used tools to aid myself in these observations: I used a watch, pen, and pad of graph paper for time-coded notes, which I used to capture my in-person sense of conversations' flows and moods; I placed a stereo audio recorder with one ear toward the teacher and one toward the students, to capture the back-and-forth alongside my notes as a reference; and I kept a hand-held

video-recorder ready, for capturing board-writing or nuanced moments of interaction that my notes and audio would miss, as educational  discussions built around those chalk-underlined words and nonverbal cues.

I was always aware of my presence in the classroom as I observed these interactions, and tried to minimize my intrusion, even tangentially, into that educational ecosystem: I settled into side-corners of each classroom that I hoped would not draw away either teachers' or students' attention (by a desk, beside an unused projector, in the shadow of an open door), took notes calmly and continuously, moved my gaze gently around the room (neither markedly seeking nor avoiding eye contact), and interacting warmly but when called upon (answering student questions and responding to teacher prompts when they wanted to hear my voice, but maintaining my focus always on learning from them). Of course, my presence was an undeniable reality in practice: by the latter part of the term, all three teachers had called on me at some point as a resource in the classroom discussions (as a graduate student, a researcher, a writer). But nonetheless, I kept myself out of direct eye-line, kept my movements to a minimum, left my gaze calm and my expression soft, and videoed without looking into the viewfinder: maintaining my main focus on the living class itself, in the moment.

My field-notes from these classes were columns of discussion topics, word-bubbles and paraphrases, arrows of interaction and idea connections, and stick-figure sketches of facial expressions and body postures, time-coded every few minutes: they read like rough comic books of the classrooms' dialogic interactions. After class, I would often walk with the teachers back to their offices or toward their next obligations, just listening to what they had to say, and sometimes talking with them about my work or observations where they asked, keeping our interaction genuinely mutual. I held in mind actively that I was a learner, and so

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tried to keep my opinions minimal and my gaze constant and fresh: I saw my judgments and assessments as too embryonic to merit expressing, but conversely saws my laughs of interpersonal affiliation and my smiles of appreciation as appropriate and valuable to let fly.

**Qualitative Interviewing**

Classroom observations over the first 4 to 5 weeks of the term helped to clarify, specify, and expand my sense of both what I wanted to know in general, and did not know in particular, about these teachers' and students' educational exchanges. Specifically, it helped in formulating questions about participants' rhetorical intentions and motives, and their pragmatic experiences (both of which are too privately perceived and subjectively informed by life contexts to understand solely by witnessing immediate, external, public behaviors), in those dialogic interactions. So, to compliment these times in the classroom dedicated to quiet, absorptive learning observations, I enlisted the help of qualitative interviews and surveys as a tool to explore more pro-actively the specific questions, unclear or hidden pockets, and budding curiosities about those classroom interactions.

Qualitative interviewing is, simply put, a means for learning about others' subjective experiences within a research site; the inner personal states and surrounding circumstances that feed into those shared, mutually observable situations. In present moments during data-collection, in or apart from the classroom site being studied (as appropriate), a researcher who has become familiar with the situations and familiar to the participants of that environment can use questions and conversations to collect  witness accounts of small events and larger contexts that the researcher may or may not have noticed or been present for—as well as to garner evidence about those prticipants' perspectives and attitudes, based on the manner of their words and actions (Hammersley 2006). Especially in learning environments

such as writing classrooms, where text production is a crucial aspect of the educational dialog and classroom interactions, conversations with participants can provide revealing insights about  text-makers thoughts, motivations, compositional process, and other circumstantial aspects that help the researcher to see the situated purposes of those artifacts (Lillis 2008).

Conducting interviews of this type is again an ethnographic activity, but with the researcher playing here a more active role: that of a participant in the discourse who is an audience member, but also a co-constructor, of that social text. Because of this, the qualitative interview and its variations (e.g., focus groups, surveys) begin in earnest when the researcher first meets their participants, at the outset of the study. Well before the topic of a formal or informal, spoken or written, correspondence is ever broached with the respondent, the researcher's manner of interaction and self-presentation with the subjects influences how they will respond to questions in conversation. Many factors may stimulate a respondent's unwillingness to share openly or honestly (e.g., out of fear of embarrassment, because of norms and traditions, out of a sense of courtesy, etc.) and so previous interactions with the interviewer, and especially verbal responses or nonverbal reactions within the interview as it progresses, will serve as a touchstone for the respondent in judging what to share and what to alter or keep to themselves (Murphy 1980).

The time and place of the interview will also have an impact on the respondent: what they have been thinking about, what they are planning to do, how comfortable they feel in that space. For example, instructors explaining their thinking while planning for a class versus after teaching one may describe notable different intentions or expectations (McAlpine, Weston, Berthiaume, & Fairbank-Roch 2006): in exploring their situated thoughts, the temporal context of interviews influences both those subjects' current

attentions and motivations. This natural fluctuation in participants' firsthand recall can be counterbalanced, somewhat, by the support of ethnographic / microanalytical accounts, in the same way that those observations can be enriched by participants' self-reported insights—a mutuality that is especially useful when studying teachers' intentional yet improvisational classroom practices (Yinger 1986). In this light, (Gubrium & Holstein 1999) one begins to see the merged border of narrative analysis and ethnography: the need for both participants' voices and researchers' observational understandings of the community life patterns that inform those voices, working together to make fuller sense of, for instance, a situated educational exchange.

Within the interview itself, the manner and packaging of questions strongly influences the discourse that unfolds: for instance, by starting off with easier questions to warm up the conversation, broaching tougher questions as momentum builds toward the middle, and concluding with more unexpected prompts and lighter questions to buoy interest and end on a note of pleasant discussion, the researcher makes the experience enjoyable for the respondent and with that engagement encourages deeper reflection and more personalized answers. Sparingly and tactfully applying probes within this frame is also a valuable way to draw out details of the subject's understanding (e.g., statements to evoke clarifications and elaborations) and to create a receptive space for them to voice these understandings (e.g., looks / words / tones of encouragement or simply some unhurried silence). The degree to which one organizes and composes the form of the interview, of course, depends on the researcher's specific purposes.

For example, two versions of the interview that are distinctly useful in research on teaching and learning are the *standardized open-ended interview* and the *general interview guide approach* (Patton 1990). The first approach carefully words and arranges the set of

questions to take each respondent through the same conversational sequence, and is used to minimize variation in questions posed and facilitate comprehensive responses from a variety of individuals while limiting bias imposed by the researcher's various manners of interacting with those individuals. The weakness of this approach is its reduced flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals – but this weakness that can be partially addressed by tailoring the prompts toward the specific group being interviewed and by carefully phrasing open-ended questions so that respondents can choose their own direction and use their own words to represent what they have to say. The second approach outlines the issues to be explored beforehand, but allows the conversation to unfold more organically, in an order dictated by the respondents. The strength of standardized open-ended interviews in learning environments is that they can be compared, and so bring to light the commonalities and distinctions among teachers or students, etc.; the strength of the general interview guide is that it can be shaped in the moment, and generate thought-stimulating dialog, especially when there are multiple respondents expressing their views (as in the case of focus groups). But plumbing the full potential of these flowing conversations relies heavily on the attentiveness and timing of the interviewer.

The variations of the interview – the focus group and the survey – are, in a way, further extensions of the above approaches: the focus group utilizing the generative nature of higher-energy interpersonal dialogs, the survey utilizing the calmer contemplative nature of clear questions asked with discretion and without the pressure of a dictated pace. *Focus groups* operate on the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed, and accordingly focuses on the shared knowledge that results from a group's social interactions and negotiations (Kleiber 2004) – thus, consensus is not the goal, but rather an atmosphere of mutual respect wherein individuals feel encouraged to voice their points of view and respond

to others' thoughts and ideas. In this way, well-designed focus groups produce information that could not be generated any other way: people's ideas come out as they hear others speak, or have flashes of insight when they are questioned or challenged by others in an unexpected way, and so say things that they wouldn't say in a more formal interview or write down in a composed response (MacNealy 1999). The difficulty of focus groups, then (besides time-intensity and possible expense), lies with the role of the moderator, who is charged with creating an environment that stimulates informal conversation, then following and encouraging that conversation forward: this means demonstrating active listening, such as giving affirming feedback and summarizing points to show participants they are being acknowledged and understood within the group, withholding one's own judgments, noting the verbal and non-verbal tenor of participants, and guiding conversational focus with a sense of purposeful flow and respectful timing. This balance of comfort and energy facilitates maximum participation – making focus groups an excellent means of developing a clearer understanding of students perceptions, motivations, attitudes, and feelings (since as classmates they enter the discussion with commonalities and on roughly equal footing regarding their experience levels).

*Surveys* provide another variant means of collecting subjective data, in a way that compliments focus groups by providing a safely anonymous forum with clear and directed questions, potentially drawing out beliefs and attitudes from those who are less inclined to participate actively / vocally in that "social construction of knowledge" Because of the survey's classically low response-rate, and because open- ended questions and Likert Scale responses have limited exploratory potential—due to the need for brevity and pre-defined categories within the questionnaire format (MacNealy 1999)—these anonymous responses are an unreliable means of gathering representative data about groups. But they can provide a

valuable supplement to observations in the initial stages of ethnographic fieldwork, providing a preliminary sense of students, their general attitudes, their beliefs about and relationship with the class subject and its teacher: subjective data that, though sometimes scant, can helpfully inform later interview outlining and preparation for discussions (showing students that they are heard when they speak is a powerful social incentive in its own right).

Whether personally in a group or in private, over the phone, on a piece of paper, or through a computer screen, these discursive acts of building understanding follow the same methodological principles: creating a credible image of one's self and communicating a meaningful purpose for one's study, adopting a personal tone and asking clearly-worded questions in a fitting format for those purposes, (e.g., bipolar or multiple choice questions where answers are limited: "Where do you sit in class?", Likert Scales or contingency questions to elaborate on those basic answers and explore beliefs or attitudes: "How well do you think you're doing in this class? How well do you think the teacher thinks the class is doing?", open-ended questions for more personalized answers or detailed explanations: "What motivations drive you in this class? What does the teacher want from you in your writing?"). Essentially, the researcher as interviewer is following all the communicative principles for reducing extraneous mental processing, managing essential processing, and fostering generative processing (Mayer 2009): making simple, directed, cohesive presentation of questions, with clear cues that highlight the organization of essential content, to minimize distractions; frameworks wherein respondents control the pace, proceed from areas of familiarity, and are not overstimulated modally, so as to facilitate retention; and where words and images will support the respondent's formation of mental models and a sense of conversational atmosphere, to motivate deeper understandings and more

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personalized responses – the effectiveness of which has been shown in multimedia contexts and interpersonal communications alike.

All these approaches offer an opportunity for the researcher to receive subjective insights about what teachers and students experience outside of and below what is directly observable, which can importantly inform how data are interpreted. Conversely, these discursive interactions, including written surveys, give the subjects a personal sense of the researcher's asserted position in the educational environment and in relation to those subjects.

Because of this, it is perhaps most fitting at this level of research to adopt a critical discourse analysis (CDA) mindset, looking still at the order and structure of what is being said and done apparently (i.e., that CA mindset that is so usefully disciplined when grounding initial observations), but mixing this microanalytic structural approach with a more contextualized and critical eye toward how reality, subjectivity, and knowledge are constructed (Cameron 2009): the location of (1) power, that color relationships between the students and teacher, among the students, and additionally between that collective dynamic and the researcher – who is defining rules, and conversely breaking rules, in conversation (acts conveying power)? Who is being assessed, or called out, or avoiding certain behaviors (power-poor acts)?; the doing of (2) identity, that fluid shifting of apparent attitudes, affiliations, motivations, and self-assertions when negotiating relations with others in various contexts – how selves are being co-constructed within a learning environment, infused with identities crossing over from other relationships, adjusting with and/or resisting norms in the current community; the influences of (3) culture, the commonly accepted norms and truths and values of which underlie students' and teachers' expectations, stories, and

arguments – marked and unmarked phenomena, appropriate and amusing actions, granted and unexpected ideas.

These personal, situational, and relational issues become critically important when exploring the subjectivities underlying individuals' interactions in educational encounters (Duranti 1989). And they are dually important in moments when the researcher is engaging in discourse, actively entering that intersubjective environment as a participant. In those synchronous dialogs, the researcher is using observations about the core cultural principles of teachers and students, and a personal base of preliminary interactions with them, to decide what constitutes appropriate linguistic action and how to shape conversational contracts in the present (Kasper 1997): the levels of candor and imposition, deference and face-saving that participants will view as considerate, and respond to most naturally and positively.

In studying classroom theory, thinking, and action, using the teacher's insights as a supplement to mixed ethnographic methods provides a means for tracing thought-to-action (Marland & Osborne 1990). Kris D. Gutierrez, Betsy Rymes, and Joanne Larson (1995) for example, used the comparison of teachers' monologic social scripts to those of students' counterscripts to explore the unscripted underlife in classrooms (the negotiation and potential sharing of power in the space between social roles/perspectives). Hall, Johnson, Juzwik, et al. (2010) likewise used narrative discourse analysis to explore that evolving space of teacher and student classroom identity construction, spanning from teacher intent to student change. Such methods can also be used to study the arc from teacher values through teacher-student relationships (Pantic & Wubbels 2012). The essential point here is this: narratives are not all large, formal, and permanent; they are evolving, negotiated, practical, and often small (Bamberg 2007), In fact, "restorying" – that flexible variation in an individual's storytelling and that continual revision of their identity  – is one of the essential

attributes of stories (Mishler 2004) as people use them in day-to-day experiences and relationships. By adjusting the frame of narrative analysis to include small stories, researchers can explore brief, concrete instances of how individuals see themselves relating with their environments—anecdotes that can reveal valuable aspects about how they display their identities in local, situated exchanges (Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008).

**In this study: using tools of inquiry to better understand classroom dialogs' underlying motives and relational dynamics.**

The second part of the study's planned data-gathering, after being present in the classrooms as a learning observer for over a month, was interviewing the teachers and students: where class observations were meant to give me an outside sense of the educational dialog in the classroom, these individual teacher interviews and panel student interviews were intended to provide a sense of what the teachers intended and how they communicated it, what messages the students were picking up on and how they were responding to that communication. To enrich this understanding of classroom exchanges, specifically with regards to teachers' and students' social views of one another in the academic context, I additionally gave the teachers an attachment/performance grid on which to place each student in their class: on a vertical axis (how well they were doing in regards to the course goals), and a horizontal axis (how their personal attitudes seemed to align with or resist the values and ideas framing the classroom, socially: see Figure 6, below). And to counterbalance these teacher perspectives, I emailed out a survey to the students: asking about their general habits and preferences (e.g., where they usually sat in a class, how comfortable they were reading aloud or debating others, etc.), their subjective assessment of this class and its teacher (e.g., the topic's salience to them, the teacher's character traits and

interaction style), and their deeper perception of the teacher's underlying values, attitude toward students, and goals for the class in general.

Student Attachment Style & Performance Level Grid

| | Aligning | Neutral / Ambivalent | Challenging |
|---|---|---|---|
| **High** (Develops T-aligned ideas, enthusiastic/ Wary or uninterested productiveness/ Devil's advocate) | | | |
| **Medium** (Conforming to or staying near T and-or peer statements/ Just a grade/ Argumentative tendencies) | | | |
| **Problematic** (Parroting/ Distant, distracted/ Stubborn, takes things personally) | | | |

*Figure 6.* The attachment/performance grid: teachers mapping their perceptions of individual students' / the course groups' social-emotional connection with, and academic ability in, the course.

The final part of planned data-gathering, at the term's end, was a collection of final writing samples from 3 students in each class (selected by the teachers as representing a range of attitudes within the class: see names circled, in Figure 6 above), and interviews with those students in front of their texts, after they had received their final grade for the course. This was meant to provide a sense of, essentially, "What did the teacher want to see evidenced in your writing? How well do you think you were showing it?": that is, regardless

the quality of their term-end performance on graded assignments, (A) to what extent had these students coordinated their academic understandings and intentions with the teacher; and, based on that interpersonal *synchrony*, or lack thereof, (B) how accepting were they of the way the teacher finally assessed their work and achievement in that course?

Both the interviews and supplementary survey activities were structured to evoke from teachers and students those "small stories" that bring practical concreteness and emotional-rational-volitional explicitness to first-hand accounts of learning environments. The main interviews, conducted as the term matured, included sections and questions specifically to make space for that kind of sharing from the teachers (e.g., the "21-teaching terms" open response, discussed below) and from the students (e.g., in the panel interviews, "How is this particular class going – comments, concerns, appreciations?" "What makes a good teacher?" "What does your teacher most want you to learn from this class / how could they help you to do that better – what could change?"). And these styles of response from participants were primed and encouraged by the researcher from the outset, both through casual discourse and through crafted lead-ins to those main interview dialogs: e.g., biographical questions to  elicit teachers' personal narratives of course development *beyond* their present polished surfaces, and direct questions about feelings and sensations to elicit students' sense-rich stories of classroom relations beyond gray general descriptions.

> *To the teachers:* "How long have you taught this class?" "What changes have been made to the course since its initial iteration?" "What teachers from your own experience have you borrowed from or been influenced by?" "What kind of student were you, among your peers and to your teachers?"
>
> *To the students:* "How often, per class, do you: feel your face go red, or your heart-rate increase? / notice the time? / feel the urge to say something? / feel

you're not part of the class?" "If teacher were an animal(s) what would they

be? / How does it feel when you talk to the teacher, in 3 words (feelings)?"

"summarize this course in 1-to-2-sentences to prepare future students."

These questions and protocols were partially planned before observations began, reflecting

my general areas of interest concerning teaching and student learning interactions, and then

adjusted and refined to fit the specific characteristics of those participants and situations—

and the ideas that arose from observing them (e.g., which teaching-related terms I would be

curious to hear and compare teacher explanations of; which aspects of student classroom

experiences I would benefit from hearing in their own candid words on an anonymous

survey). But what remained constant in the crafting and delivery of this qualitative

interviewing was the principle of attending to teachers and students *together*, as mutual

influences on one another in that educational exchange: each one's internal thoughts,

motivations, and preoccupations about that dialog stimulated by the others' apparent surfaces

in moments of shared interaction. Students theorized about teachers' lives and interests

privately when teachers left the room; teachers wondered aloud in their offices about what

students were feeling and taking away from course activities personally. I shaped the

interviews accordingly, as mirrors in their lines of questioning, to illuminate that dialog's

academic and social—intellectually persuasive and interpersonally accomplished; rhetorical

and pragmatic—qualities.

*Exploring at 180-degrees – attending to teachers and students both as rhetorical*

*agents.* To understand those rhetorical and pragmatic dynamics of the classroom, I needed

subjective insight into participants' intentions and perceptions: what purposes and goals

motivated their actions, and what perceptions and interpretations informed their progressive

changes, in those educational exchanges. And to understand that interpersonal growing

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process as a dialog—not as teacher-centered nor student-centered, but as socially mutual and learning-centered—I needed to pursue information about *both* teachers' and students' intentions, and both their perceptions, in that exchange (neither party as the dedicated sound-source nor receiver, but both as an interdependently cycling feedback loop).

Of course, teachers and students have distinct social roles in classroom environments, so their interviews were tailored to those realities: I did not ask the students about how the course was *developed*, nor the teachers about how well the students encouraged *them* to participate. But I did work to make the interviews roughly symmetrical in structure: exploring both teachers' and students'  personal connections with the subject and the school environment; practical aims and expectations over the course of the term; and principled attitudes and ideals about what teachers, schools, and learning interactions *should* be.

A centerpiece in this balancing inquiry was an interview activity I called "21 words": a protocol designed to allow teachers and students free reign in sharing their feelings, experiences, beliefs and judgments about educational aims and approaches—but within a framework allowing for comparison among those students, among the teachers, and between students and teachers. The goal in this was to focus past individuals' quick, pre-meditated ways of explaining and describing: to place them in a framework of fairly concrete terms, free of loaded jargon or response-steering questions, and see what meanings and experiences they associate most immediately with those topics. That is, the goal was to see the broad span and the common core of subjective values, ideas, and motives interacting in teachers' and students' educational dialogs: the rhetorical intentions being coordinated pragmatically within these classroom environments.

For this, I composed a list of simple terms, which I presented conversationally to the teachers (in the middle of their hour-long individual interviews) and to the students (in the middle of their hour-long panel interviews). This portion of the inquiry proved quite fruitful, quite fundamentally informative, as I dug deeper into analyzing my data and tracing the pragmatic arc of these classroom's educational dialogs. So, here, I will provide a few details about this particular procedure.

I conducted these interviews toward the late-middle of Spring quarter, after at least a month of consistent classroom observations. The format of each interview, though delivered with intentional fluidity, was built on this basic structure: (A) a series of class/teaching-related questions, followed by (B) a list of 21 terms for interviewees to explain in relation to teaching and learning, and ending with (C) a series of "context" questions about educational experiences and philosophies in general.

Teachers and students were both presented with 21 teaching-related terms to prompt elaborations on their philosophies—a thematic frame that each could fill with their own stories and reenactments (a la Gee 1997; Sidnell 2006; Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008), practical arguments and evidence (a al Ochs & Capps 1996; Gholami & Husu 2010). This approach is similar in concept to the Q-sort method used in psychological studies to explore individuals' beliefs and practical priorities (e.g., Rimm-Kaufman, Storm, Sawyer, Pianta & LaParo 2006), with the difference that teachers here were freed from imposing *order* or *hierarchies* on these topics of concepts and practices, allowing them to more organically explore connections between their own complexly values-rich definitions and associated experiences. It would be my work, at a later point, to trace the networked lines of coherence in these narrative streams (see the analysis section, below).

The list of terms (below) were all phrased colloquially and broadly, using everyday language and avoiding prescribed associations with any specific positive or negative qualities: these words were selected to evoke *personal* definitions and associations based in experience and belief. From my classroom observations, these terms seemed to strike a balance of being generally relevant to educational interactions and specifically salient as elements defining and differentiating these particular classroom relationships between the teachers and their students. During collection, I referred to this as a "snap judgments" exercise, so that teachers and students would not feel compelled to expound at length on words that they felt we less relevant, and could focus on terms that they felt compelled deeper elaboration: two of the teachers (B and V) quickly interpreted this as a "word association" activity.

Though presented with no-or-minimal additional explanation, the terms were ordered to encourage a progressive building and connecting of ideas: beginning with topics of initial personality and interpersonal relations (1,2,3); transitioning into more pedagogical issues of classroom interaction (3,4,5,6) and perception (7), and practical decisions about structure (8,9) and communication (10, 11); then into maturing participant roles (12) and tones (13, 14), affect and identity (15,16,17); to nuances in shaping and maintaining the learning environment (18,19, 20, 21). And of course in closing, for my own curiosity, I tacked on the notion of "sincerity" to see what others thought about its place or importance in educational exchanges.

     1 - Humor  2 - Personal stories 3 - Modeling 4 - In-class correction 5 - Improvisation 6 - Order 7 - Credibility 8 - Extra credit 9 - Exemptions 10 - Explicitness 11 - "I don't know" 12 - Friendship 13 - Discuss/Debate/Argue 14 - Test 15 - Apathy 16 - Peer relationships 17 - Enthusiasm 18 -

Basics/Review 19 - Tempo 20 - Classroom space 21 - A good question (22 -

Sincerity)

By the time I began administering these interviews, I had had hours of direct exposure to each teacher's and students' classroom environments and several instances of casual conversation with them about the class or other related asides. The interviews went long—in both V's and M's cases they were split by either students visiting or time constraints, and in B's students' case I could not wrangle enough together for a panel interview—but they provided a wealth of information about the teachers' and students' formative educational histories, accounts of their educational beliefs and motives which were much fuller than those expressed overtly in classroom exchanges, and experience-grounded explanations of what *they* think as individuals when using a few basic educational terms.

Some of these explanations were as brief as "Yes, absolutely," or "I have no real opinion," but more often, explanations did what I had hoped they would as I chose and organized them: they drew out distinctions not only in the values and attitudes of individual teachers and students, but in the personal experiences informing those understandings of what basic terms like "friendship" or "enthusiasm" meant in relation to teaching. That is, these parallel interviews highlighted the intrinsically personalized  and idiosyncratic answer to the question "What works?" in an educational exchange.

Of course, the importance of this was not immediately evident to me in the moment: my focus at the time was on being a calm, accepting, and curious learner. The value of this data to my study of classroom dialogs would only emerge gradually, over months of cycles of reflection and analysis.

**Discourse Analysis**

The second stage of this study, working out a way to analyze and present this research that would be appropriate (to the data and its sources) and useful (to myself as a teacher and the field of education), took much longer than the collection itself. The analysis began rather concretely, by transcribing the teacher interviews, and then testing out different ways of categorizing and measuring those responses, in an attempt to illuminate something valuable—about the expert practice of educational dialogs—to focus on when returning to the masses of classroom recordings, and the rich conversations with students that followed those learning-centered interactions.

But this initial analysis stalled, after a while, because through all the transcribing and coding, I could not see what what should be treated as valuable; only a sea of what was evident and seemingly obvious: that these teachers were normal people, who were dedicated to their fields and cared about their students, and who continued to develop their never-quite-perfect practices toward personalized images of a good educational exchange; that their students appreciated that connection and effort, and (though they all had slightly different ideas of what worked best and what might be improved in that course) they each talked about the course and the teacher—those orientations, notions, and processes that they perceived in the classroom, and the leading individual who worked with them through those learning experiences—as practically integrated.

It was not until I went back to teaching a writing course that I began to notice all the practical wisdom that I had taken away from watching those experts: how I was beginning to talk with myself about students' emerging relationships with core course ideas (rather than their performance on isolated activities), to watch their faces and listen to their voices for evidence in this ongoing change, and to adjust myself in dialog—my planned narrative of ideas and examples, my tone and tempo in coordinating our understandings, my manner in

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responding to their questions and challenges—as a tool for their learning. It was this experience of *using* my data that then provided my analysis its direction: through those collected teacher and student voices, I had been learning about the inner-processes that support teachers' sustainable, ongoing growth in their practices, and about the aspects of those observable interactions that students value most explicitly in their educational experience.

With that dialogic process in mind, I went back to my records of classroom discourse, and began to see threads of that synchronizing dialog running throughout the data: from teachers' histories of development, to their current philosophies of teaching and views of their students; from the way classroom relationships formed interaction-by-interaction, to the way that group's academic understandings and goals cultured together over the course of the term. Below the surface of structured activities and the complex topographies of individuals' various broader lives, this focus on dialog helped me home in on the deeper rhetorical purposes and more immediate pragmatic relationships (the ideal intentions and the negotiated paths of discourse) at work in these educational environments, as its participants pushed toward moments of synchrony.

**Narrative, Rhetorical, and Pragmatic Analysis**

Discourse analysis, in general, looks at language-use above the level of the sentence: that is, at the structural and organizational patterns through which sentences fit together as a *text*, cohering based on the audience's knowledge of the real world that surrounds—and lends meaning to—those sentences (Cameron 2009). Thus, discourse is *intersubjective* – a process of being heard and comprehended. So it can be looked at in two ways: (A) with an

interest in its form and structure as language, and (B) with an interest in what that language is *used* to do in the world where it is being received.

Whatever form of discourse analysis a researcher does, that process begins with transcribing the discourse, from a respondent's in-the-moment verbal/nonverbal compositions of ideas and language into a less evanescent and more closely examinable text. This first step of discourse analysis comes with many inherent difficulties: from the impulse to "tidy up" the resulting text (filled with the respondent's time-buying "ummms" and "welllllls," self-editing restarts, and redundancies that are instrumental in talk but that detract from the written text's readability), to the potential loss of meaningful nonverbal information (e.g., a softening of tone, a dismissive handwave), to the inevitable distancing of that text from the broader situational context and immediate interpersonal situation in which that discourse was created (e.g., a student's concerning question, or that late-day exhaustion that sets in just prior to an interview, keeping the teacher's eyes drawn out the window).

Consequently, methods have arisen in discourse analysis to address such issues (Poland 2002), such as  leaving the tidying of quotations to be done by researchers only *after* analysis has taken place, developing a clear and suitable syntax for describing how things are said (pauses, laughter, intonation, vox, etc.), and the reviewing of transcriptions by interviewers or sometimes even the subjects themselves (Wood 2000). In large part, these issues can be addressed, where feasible, by having the intverviewer, transcriber, and researcher all be the same person, and by looking at the transcript as what it is (an attempt at replicating talk in a static and simultaneous format) and treating it accordingly (Cameron 2009). For instance, using punctuation not to impose meaning (conceptual breaks, types of sentences) but to show features like pauses, intonation, elongation, laughter, breathing, extralinguistic phenomena, and so on. Additionally, in service of preserving that originally

communicated meaning, analysts often endeavor transcribe, or check transcriptions, based on their critical awareness of the communicative situation: power relationships, identity construction, and cultural context within and around that discourse—details which can make qualities like a hushed whisper, a hearty laugh, or a long pause potentially important when interpreting the meaning within a turn of talk between individuals.

At this point, where the researcher begins to move from that foundational encoding and sense-making to building a more practical understanding of what these subjects are trying to *do* with this discourse,  then it beneficial to adjust attention toward issues of pragmatics.

*Pragmatics* examines words as deeds, speaking as doing, and speakers/listeners as actors who project intentions, receive underlying meanings, and lend force to one another's words in reality. For example, when teachers discuss with an interviewer their practical approaches for teaching students, that discourse can be analyzed pragmatically at two levels: as a collection of explanatory narratives and conversational reenactments that can be used for understanding teachers' illocutionary intentions in educational exchanges; and two, as a first-hand demonstration of the way that teacher applies language in locutions to persuade and inform the researcher. So too, students' discussions about their work in a course can help explain their illocutionary intentions with that teacher. In a complimentary way, teachers' and students' reflections on course interactions can then help a researcher understand the perlocutionary effects of classroom interactions. And on this foundation, recordings of educational dialogs may be examined to understand the path of teacher and student locutions, from those illocutionary intentions to those and perlocutionary effects.

The force and influence of words (their acknowledged, accepted meaning and consequence in real situations among actual individuals) depends on these pragmatic

elements of discourse. That is, people develop and share rules of truth and appropriateness when defining and performing illocutionary acts together (Searle 1969). Those underlying preparatory, sincerity, and essential conditions (i.e., "Can we really do what you're saying? Do I believe you'll honor what you are saying? Do I truly understand what you mean?") determine the practical outcomes of language-in-use: the dis-synchrony or synchrony of personal views, interpersonal ties, and collective purposes.

This means, for example, that the growing interpersonal relationship between teachers and students in classroom situations fundamentally defines how they learn to interpret and respond to one another's words. This pragmatic foundation constantly builds through a shared history of interpersonal actions alongside the mutual trading of belief and value *assertions* (for which their stories provide evidence of practical *viability*); goal and strategy *promises* (for which their apparent character projects a practical *sincerity* of intention); and *apologies, forgivenesses,* and *acceptances* that individuals give to themselves and to one another (for which their word-choice signals an *essential meaning*, an ideal image of practice that they work toward through daily imperfect actions). In this light, focusing on the pragmatics of dialog in classrooms is a fitting way to narratively/rhetorically analyze teachers' and students' discourse about their educational exchanges.

*Narrative analysis* is founded on the acknowledgment that rhetorical figures like narrative and metaphor are social and cognitive tools; they are fundamental to our thinking and furthermore provide "one of the most observable ways we conceptualize experience and organize memory" (Eubanks 2004). The foundational unit in conducting narrative analysis is that of the *story*: two or more sequential events (i.e., what happened), out of which a *narrative* (i.e., the way 'what happened' is recounted) arises. The basic analysis process for narratives is to read texts repeatedly, identify the stories therein, make observational notes to

help discover storytelling patterns (ordering and re-ordering, descriptions and juxtapositions, themes and reasoning), and see how the stories relate to each other rhetorically: what subjective reality are they conveying, and toward what communicative aim?

Figurative structures that enter into and around narratives can work powerfully in service of that narrative's aim: for example, *metaphor* – creating an interactive connection between a literal referent and a figural term which emphasizes some similarities and ignores others, momentarily altering our idea of both – and *metonymy* – creating representative associations among related things which marks salience or noteworthiness. And these can be analyzed in similar fashion to the literal story, by noting prominent conceptual metaphors et al., examining the relationship among these figures, and taking into account their grammatical and argumentative function in that context.

In this way, narrative and argument are deeply interconnected: the pervasive narratives in a culture form the foundation of reasons and warrants that make common arguments—from proverbs to scientific texts—seem convincing or true-seeming (i.e., readily understood or familiar) to members of that culture. And similarly, the personal narratives that *individuals* construct from stories promote the the truth of *their* subjective perspectives. Narratives are a reflection of many speaker choices: modes that are more formal or personal; themes that focus the listener's attention on selective details; structures that cohere the text and give it direction; ways of representing subjects, happenings, and circumstances in more attractive or alienating lights. And such choices by the individual, in shaping story content's patterns and associations, thereby convey roles (e.g., a story's "I + circumstance" can be used alternately to convey a hero, victim, fool, professional, etc.), create definitions and conceptual associations for a situation (e.g., "this/that + descriptor" can alternately convey nice-new-warm or mean-dull-chill), and imply desired interpersonal

attitudes and intentions (e.g., "I hero = more of this nice-new-warm" may convey "please, I want you to like me") (Stillar 1998).

*Rhetorical analysis*, then, focuses on analyzing discrete arguments within the text itself, and on looking at those rhetorical acts as part of larger conversations (Selzer 2004). Analyzing the argument begins first from acknowledging the discourse's intended audience and overall type of argument: one oriented toward the past, debating guilt or innocence (i.e., forensic rhetoric); one oriented toward the future, planning courses of action (i.e., deliberative rhetoric); or one oriented in the present, reinforcing community values (i.e., epideictic rhetoric). Within that frame, it then examines the emotional appeals, supportively reasoned examples and details, and personal style such as word-choice and general tone that the speaker uses to make that argument attractive, comprehensible, and approachable for that audience. Beyond this, the analysis then looks at those rhetorical acts as part of larger conversations, within a specific rhetorical situation – i.e., the circumstances of subject, audience, occasion, and purpose.

Together, these types of analysis are particularly well-fitted to the exploration of teaching and learning discourses—because teachers shape educational interactions around a personalized story of subject-matter learning, which informs the way they compose narrative frameworks for student learning, interact rhetorically to persuade students toward engagement in those frameworks, and build pragmatic relationships to reach the educational aims of that course. This professional development of a teaching style that is personally fitting, persuasive, and effective, then, is permeated with interweaving stories and practical arguments: from re-assertions of present guiding values, to reflective justifications and critiques, to forward deliberations about future approaches with students. And students, conversely, assert their own narratives and values regarding that shared subject matter.

Between those two social presences, of teachers and students, the dialogic work of coordinating an educational exchange occurs.

The centrality of narratives in teaching and learning—connected as they are by nature of the educational enterprise to ideas of truth, power, morality, and agency (Rymes & Wortham 2011)—makes them rich sources of potential insight, especially about educators' personal-practical wisdom: that relationship between story-bound beliefs and ideal goals, and actual classroom practices (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd 1991; Richardson & Fallona 2001), that one may explore through transcripts of interview and observation.

A few points of practice, here, are important to emphasize. First is that selecting *which* stories to analyze—where participants' voices will be most useful in making sense of an educational exchange—requires some *phronesis* (some experience-based practical wisdom) on the part of the researcher. Stories are *artful* representations of peoples' lives, presented imaginatively and reflecting personal dispositions and characters; stories are always *told within dialogs*, responding to others whether present or imagined; and people use this story-telling to *show* their identities (their personal constancy/change, or sameness/difference with others, through actors, places, events), or to *present* themselves narratively (through imagery, description, thematic framing), or—both intentionally and unintentionally—to help them argue their points (by syllogisms, enthymemes, and oppositions) (Holstein & Gubrium 2012). In sum, narrative analysis is an embodied, experience-based, partly implicit, dialogical, social and intersubjective practice between the storyteller and the researcher. And this means that a researcher's  personal experiences with those story-tellers can and should inform their understandings of those subjects' words: looking at the social-relational context *surrounding* these storytelling events, taking into account the discursive *timing and placement* of statements within the larger flow of a

conversation, being aware of personal *connections and emotions* that arise during analysis, recognizing both the benefits and perils of *empathetic embodiment* as an interpretive tool[18], and realizing the unique base of situated experiences that color the *meaning* of words for each storytelling individual.

The second practical point is that deciding *how* to focus, and fortify, the analysis of selected stories—where to draw the beginning and end of a portion of narrative for analysis, through what operational filter or magnet to draw out the storyteller's arguments for examination—requires a clear sense of purpose. In the case of teacher and student educational discourse, specifically, stories can be used as a route to understanding individuals' current identities and goals, their underlying reasons and historical experiences, and their emergent changes and developments within ongoing educational exchanges. For example, within interviews and discussions, people use small stories (Bamberg 2011) to place themselves across time, with others, in the world, and toward some valued, moral good – making such stories a ripe site for exploring teachers' and students' situated educational identities in a classroom. Researchers can use subjects' own indications of which stories and memories are personally important or valued: e.g, via teachers' selection of "well-remembered events" (Gonzales & Carter 1996) or ordering and explanations of pre-selected elements a la the repertory grid method (Kan, Ponte & Verloop 2010; 2013). Such cooperative selection practices provide a means for examining participants' idiosyncratic thoughts and aims in the classroom.

Researchers can also use stimulated recall and concept-mapping to further draw out and organize subjects' stories (Meijer, Zanting & Verloop 2002), e.g., through exposure to

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18   (i.e., you are *not* your subject – empathy puts *you* in their place, so try to move beyond that and understand them in their place, as best you can)

recordings or artifacts and through writing/drawing or other visualization protocols. These exploratory supplements within researcher and participant discourses may encourage more explicitly grounded and cohesive elaborations on individuals' experiences and practical knowledge: seeing how they connect the ideas behind their words together and relate them to specific, practical situations. Along these lines, teachers' maxims in instruction (Richards 1996) have also been used for exploring teachers' implicit theories, rules, principles, and models. And teachers' metaphors (Munby & Russell 1990; Tobin & LaMaster 1995) have further helped to illustrate aspects of teacher professional knowledge/beliefs and practical dispositions, otherwise hard to elucidate through abstract terminology. This of course also applies for students, where metaphors have been used for exploring attitudes and associations candidly in concrete terms familiar to the speaker (Tobin 1989).

The third practical point is that deciding *where* to draw connections within and among individuals' discourses—how ideal plans, observable interactions, and subjective reflections among teachers and students can be most fairly and accurately presented as one same educational exchange—requires a humble recognition of the roughly approximate, motivatedly creative, and constantly revising characteristics of language in story-fying reality. From an anthropological view (Ochs 2012), language itself is an experience as well as a reflection of experiences, simultaneously phenomenological and narrative with regards to the moment:

> At the interface of linguistic and psychocultural anthropology lies the
> intellectual prospect of fathoming how members of communities experience
> meaning as it unfolds. … a personal and social creation, wherein, unlike a
> hand fan unfurling in a pre-determined array, significance is built through and

experienced in temporal bursts of sense-making, often in coordination with

others, often left hanging in realms of ambiguity. (Ochs 2012, p.152)

What happens in an interview or in a classroom interaction, whether as a re-told memory of a private mental dialog or as an actual emerging social interaction, is similarly (1) both premeditated and unexpected, (2) both grounded in experience from the bottom-up and shaping that experience from the top-down, (3) both emotionally responsive and rationally self-aware.

That is to say, by extension, that as interpersonal distance grows so too is the likely dis-synchrony among narrative accounts to grow. The more that thread of shared experience stretches and thins, the harder to coordinate that interpersonal synchrony of understandings. This fundamental correlation pattern has been documented both in educational exchanges, and in research studies of such educational environments. As Wubbels and Brekelmans (2005) found, in reviewing two decades of literature on teacher-student relationships: "with respect to student outcomes, appropriate teacher-student relationships are characterized by a rather high degree of teacher influence and proximity towards students." Specifically, they noted that experienced teachers—almost twice as much as student-teachers—exhibited behaviors that invited student eye contact, that signaling their "with-it-ness" or understanding of what's going on in the classroom, and that showed their complex attention to multiple issues simultaneously. But classrooms, though chasing these moments of synchrony, often fall short—leaving individuals' imaginations to creatively glue together the intersubjective space into sensible resolutions.

This reflective creativity is the reason that—in educational research—students' and teachers' and researchers' subjective perspectives of the classroom are needed to balance each other. Teachers' ideals influence self-reports of interpersonal behavior: for example,

mismatching students' perceptions, especially when outcomes are unsuccessful (Wubbels, Brekelmans & Hooymayers 1992). Likewise, the matching of researchers' perceptions and students' perceptions about a teacher's interpersonal style relies on the researcher having been there with that group "in the moment" to sense the atmosphere they are describing (Tartwijk, Brekelmans & Wubbels 1998). And teacher and student views of their interpersonal relations with one another do not always align: incongruities which comparing teacher narratives and student questionnaires, for example, may bring to light (Veldman, Tartwijk, Brekelmans & Wubbels 2013). This evident importance of interpersonal connection in getting teachers' and students' perceptions to align, this evident influence of participants' ideals and doubts on their perceptions of educational efficacy, and this evident limit of observers to simply see at a distance what classroom participants experience in each others' presence—all point to the researcher's need for having an intimate idea of teachers' intentions, of living classroom interactions, and of students' candid perceptions to gain a full sense of the educational encounter: that is, the need for triangulating perspectives.

Respective of this, the next step then becomes using data exploration and analysis in a coordinated manner: to form a unifying intersubjective account of what's been going on. For example, a researcher who elicits an individual's descriptions of their reasons for acting can also reconstruct—from this less formal practical reasoning—clearer and more formal practical arguments therein (Fenstermacher & Richardson 1993). Taken in the context of shared experiences, such sense-making frameworks can be connected by the participant to concrete situations that the researcher has observed. And the researcher can conversely use these grounded frameworks to make sense of ongoing observable interactions: interpreting and assessing them on participants' own moral, empirical, and logical grounds. This is the methodological notion that guided this current study's discourse analysis: beginning from

teachers' personal-practical dictionaries of teaching principles, and then tracing the social and academic progress of their educational dialogs with students, through a combination of recorded classroom dialogs and participant reflections.

**In this study: examining teacher/student beliefs and identities, stories and reenactments, to make sense of their actual interactions and progress in educational dialogs.**
This study's analytical goal was to trace coherently the rhetorical intentions, practical interactions, and educational outcomes of three distinct expert teachers with their students— and to do so in a flexible, responsive manner that respects their teaching approaches as intrinsically unique (personalized, practice-oriented, principle-framed), while also being structured enough to allow for comparisons of their development patterns (as teachers, of teaching practices, and through educational dialogs).

Toward that end, the analysis was divided into three phases: first, mapping out the teachers' individual visions of educational purpose and process in their subject of post-secondary writing; second, exploring the interpersonal dynamics of their current classroom; and third, tracing their actual educational progress with students, in that social environment and toward those learning aims, through discourse.

The first step entailed using variants of narrative and rhetorical discourse analysis (Holstein & Gubrium 2012) to explore teachers' biographies of personal-professional development, and consequentially their current experience-grounded philosophies of teaching: examining their self-conceptions and emotional orientations, practical aims and expectations, guiding values and beliefs as writing educators. The study was able to construct this historical, developmental image of individuals' teaching approaches by examining both the rhetorical style that these teachers described and exhibited in themselves,

and the narrative content of stories that they used to explain and justify those current personal methods—thus grounding their generalized conceptual frameworks in specific instances and archetypes of concrete experience collected over time.

The second step in the study then used narrative discourse analysis and textual analysis of interviews and surveys to explore comparatively the students' and teachers' educational experiences and take-away from classroom exchanges: how they perceived one another, their personal/academic relationship together in the classroom community, and their personal connection with that course subject-matter and with university education in general. Course-end panel interviews (Kleiber 2004) and individual stimulated-recall interviews using students' final graded papers (Mitchell & Marland 1989) were collected for this purpose, supplemented with mid-course surveys that explored more metaphorically (Lakoff & Johnson 1980) students' subjective sense of these teachers and the learning environments they composed.

Finally, the study utilized pragmatic discourse analysis (Cameron 2001; Clark 2004) to trace the development of educational dialogs between the teachers and students over the course of the term: following the evident progress in classroom dialogs about core course topics, with attention to both the academic content itself and to the social dynamics supporting that intellectual exchange. This pragmatic analysis drew its guiding support from the prior analytical steps described above, being informed by both teachers' and students' candid self-reports of illocutionary intent and perlocutionary reception. Furthermore, all these records (audio, select video, and field notes) were collected and analyzed by the same researcher, who was present in-class throughout the course term as an explicitly curious, non-judgmental observer (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw 1995; Peshkin 2001): this firsthand experience of the intersubjective space during educational dialogs provided a third direct

perspective for making unified sense of those idiosyncratically reported learning experiences.

These three phases in analyzing the pragmatic arc of educational dialogs—from the teacher's educational intentions, to the classroom's educational environment, to the course community's progressive discourse and reflective take-away—will be described in more detail below, as a transition into the study's main findings.

**First Point of Inquiry:**

**Mapping Out the Educational Frame – Teachers' Personal, Practical, Principled**

**Intentions**

Looking at the classroom from a rhetorical perspective—as an intentionally influential exchange among rhetorical agents (teachers and students), each working toward personally valued practical outcomes within a shared environment—first requires acknowledging that teachers do have explicit intentions regarding the impacts they want to have on their students' learning. These intentions are personal: extending from a moralized sense of individual identity and social purpose. These intentions are practical: using a well of amassed experiences and knowledge to envision the ideal implementation of these personalized purposes within real-life situations. And these intentions are principled: connecting and organizing these personal, practical approaches within value-based frameworks to justify and explain their goodness and/or efficacy (in essence, beyond the surface flaws and occasional slips in those embodied, enacted efforts).

Accordingly, analysis of the classroom's pragmatic arc begins with discerning, to some degree, the intentions of the teacher who has composed that course's educational

structure: toward some principled end, through some practical means, in some personal manner.

This first stage of this analysis began by fully transcribing the teachers' interviews: of all the data collected, these recorded discussions were the artifacts most explicit, comprehensive, and organized in describing the intended pedagogical goals and structures of the course. Thus, they would be crucial for contextualizing the rest of student and classroom data. The online surveys of students were interesting and gave a quick sense of student responses to their teachers, but did not have great return rates (e.g., only two students from M's class completed it). Classroom observation videos, audio files, and notes were comprehensive and rich, but overwhelming without some orientating insight to guide and focus their analysis. The student panel interviews, term-end writing samples and one-on-one interviews were candid and full of specific first-person reflections, but would be impossible to evaluate as evidence for/against the educational success of classroom interactions without constructing a touchstone-list of the teacher's educational values and goals. The teacher interviews, on the other hand, were finite, coordinated, and seeded with statements about the principles and intentions behind observed classroom interactions: insights which in turn would could be used to guide analytical focus through the rest of that aforementioned data— treated as the observable implementations and reported effects of those ideal educational aims.

I transcribed the teacher interviews almost like a musical score (Figure 7) to help maintain the complexity of what the were communicating during coding and analysis of that content: moments of marked excitement or somberness, introspection or reconsideration, playful levity or heavy emphasis. So I included the pauses between or the pressing together of words, elongations and stresses of syllables, volume changes and intonations, audible

inhales and exhales, laughter and space-fillers, and nonverbal actions like emphatic desk-

taps within these conversations.

Transcript

( ) = pauses, inflections.    (.) = 1 beat, ~ a second.    , = ½ a beat.    – = break.
/ = words pressed together.    : = elongation    ` = stress, emphasis    ^ = rising intonation
[ ] = nonverbal actions    < = audible inhale    > = audible exhale.    @ = laughter    {} = not clear

| 0:00 | That's fine. (.) `You're the one who's got to deal with it. |
| | That's right. I – I will be transcribing these |
| | A::llrigh' |
| | @you-you can see your words on paper though/ I hope you're not averse to that |
| | Oh no, I'm not averse to that at `A::ll. |
| | @@ |
| | Yeah – no, it's got nothing to do with `content – it's all delivery, @`@. `That's the problem. (<) |
| | Okay. This is just a set of questions. I did-I did this with, uh, with Randi and Macl too |
| | `Oh. Okay, `great. No ^problem [clap]. |
| | U:h – so we'll just start off with ^na:me, and the-the class I was observing. |

*Figure 7.* Key for first round of transcribing (preserving nonverbal cues to meaning).

On my next pass over the transcripts, I began noting each teacher's common themes

and phrases in their interviews. I noticed at these early stages that my presence in the

classrooms had provided common referents for the teachers to utilize in their explanations. I

also noticed that their explanations in conversation were more colorfully narrated than

polished written responses might have been: they were repeating ideas and drawing on

related stories in memory as they talked themselves toward more concise statements of their

points. These were the kind of experience-grounded reflections that would later help me to

understand personal meanings of words in teachers' vocabularies (a view of defining

experiences that might have been edited away in written responses). In fact, my audio

recorder cut out during the end of M's "21-terms" responses, and when I e-mailed him those

few remaining prompt-terms, his written responses were detailed, but much less colorful:

they contained polished explanations of his principles and specific examples about the

*curricular* content of the course (specific readings and writing assignments), but no narrative

reenactments of *interpersonal* classroom interactions that, in his mind, are tied to these

principles and to those course activities.

I then did some reflective memo-writing to distill the similarities and differences that

stood out to me among these teachers' interviews about their courses and methods. The

differences were—as expected—plentiful, which in the analysis helped in taking off the

table any temptation to conflate certain technical methods with *ipso-facto* "good teaching":

each of them structured their classroom strategies in ways that fit their distinct personalities,

and interacted with their students via accordingly idiosyncratic educational personas. The

similarities that I first began to note, then, were more about where these teachers focused

their professional attention within the educational environment: their interviews all notably

included dialogic reenactments, sympathetic projections of students' interior perspectives,

and references to their own nature (strengths, interests, values, personal history) as they

described the ideas and reasons informing their teaching style and/or their course structure.

Many of their ideas were similar, reflecting common lessons learned first-hand over

years of experience (see Example, below). But more basic than these lessons themselves, I

found the phenomenon of small stories and reenactments—which these teachers were all

using to explain their experienced perspectives—more directly relevant to my research

interests about how teachers translate their educational values and goals pragmatically within

educational exchanges. So I began coding for archetypal and specific scenes narrated within

the "21-terms" section of the interviews (the most  structured, and readily comparable,

section among the three interviews): noting where dialog was narratively described or

directly reenacted, as well as details like location (in or outside of the classroom), reality

(events that *do/should* happen versus contrastive realities that are *avoided/shouldn't* happen),

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and point-of-view being adopted (teacher's, student's, or other's). I also noted, in relation to

these stories and dialogs, where teachers would offer their own definitions of terms,

definitions of self, and statements of values regarding ideal educational interactions and

classroom environments.

*Example 1.*
Sample of observations common among these three experienced writing teachers.

1. That every class is improvisation

2. That having some pre-planned order and knowing the material well facilitates improvisational fluidity

3. That courses cyclically revisit their basic lessons

4. That teacher-student relationships build on-the-fly

5. That peer and generational influences on students effect those teacher-student relationships

6. That students have free will and so need to be encouraged in their course efforts

7. That false praise is quickly perceived as such by students and is educationally unproductive

8. That teachers should be relatable human beings but should not develop overly informal (and so emotionally manipulable) "friendships" within the bounds of an active teacher-student relationship

9. That such relationships may persist long after a course is over, and are rewarding to maintain.

Based on these coded transcripts, I then quantitatively charted within each teacher's

"21-terms" responses the comparative answer times, occurrences of laughter, and instances

of archetypal or specific narratives and dialogic reenactments for each term-response. I

looked for similarities and differences between their answers: for example, that the terms

"In-class Correction" and "Friendship" both received relatively lengthy responses, including

specific classroom stories, from all three teachers. But other than some basic patterns (e.g.,

that longer responses tended to include more narratives and reenactments), nothing jumped

out at me as particularly meaningful for my research within these quantitative comparisons. So I went back to exploring and organizing the qualitative details.

In side-by-side charts, I concisely paraphrased each teacher's definitions of the 21 terms, staying true to their use of language and explanation, but distilling out repetitions and narrative details tangent to clarifying meanings. I then distilled these paraphrases further into single-line value-judgments ("necessary," "I don't use it," et cetera) in another chart: through this, I was able to see clearly which of these notions each teacher perceived as valuable to their educational practices (by noting the terms described as "Fundamental," "Essential," "Necessary," "Important"). Also, by scanning over the longer paraphrases of their explanations for these terms, I began to see a lot of internal cohesion within each teacher's personal dictionary: re-visiting an anecdote when explaining a new term (a distant connection), using common descriptors between terms (a nearer connection), or making allusions to one term within another (a tight connection).

Finally, I began to make a third comparison chart where I compiled teachers' definitions of self, ideal classroom, students, and writing. Again, their ideas were generally comparable: e.g., they all expressed dedication to writing as an important subject, as well as care and respect for their students as growing individuals. But within those broad similarities, each foregrounded distinct aspects of the subject and described differently their primary educational objectives, as well as presenting unique images of themselves as teachers and of ideal classroom interactions, in ways that were clearly biographically informed and personally tailored.

At this early stage in the analysis, none of this information (essentially, evidence of the obvious fact that teachers were individuals) struck me as having important implications for better understanding educational exchanges in general. So I let it simmer in my mind and

went back to my own practical study: gaining experience as a teacher, and developing as an individual, in an interweaving process of maturation that I realized more every day was indivisible.

**Step One: the Person in Practice**

**Images of Experience-Grounded Growth in teachers' Self-Conceptions, Classroom Ideals, and Rhetorical Style**

I returned to my data for a second round of coding, this time letting go the desire to find patterns or construct juxtapositions *for* external others to see as meaningful. Instead, I tried merely to understand the internal states of the 3 teachers on their own terms. I revisited the introduction-sections of the interviews, where each had described their teaching approaches and how they had shaped the current course. These conversations were only semi-structured, with a few starting questions and then follow-ups, so I broke the transcripts into segments, using topic-shifts in the narrative as a guide. I then coded these segments simply for (A) "I am" statements of self-definition; (B) "I love, I hate" statements of emotional attitude; (C) "I try, I do" statements of emotional or behavioral self-regulation; and (D) "teaching is" statements of practical ideals. I also coded for types of dialog, which I had noticed filling much of the space between these teachers' definitions of self and classroom, specifying whether those dialogs were being reported as one-direction (one overt speaker, nonverbal responses), two-directions (explicit verbal conversation), or internal/imagined (e.g., teacher, student, and other outside voices like peers or family being creatively projected in the mind).

This streamlined coding scheme returned a sense of unity to the transcripts, making it look again like a conversation. At the same time, it drew out patterns regarding where

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narratives with dialog were occurring, and how teachers were incorporating these stories in service of defining their classrooms. The pattern I noticed again and again was that of teachers giving value-laden definitions of teaching and of learning environments (sometimes actual, sometimes ideal), then adding onto them—like fillings between slices of conceptual bread—narrations of interactions: stories that grounded those concepts, or forthcoming conceptual elaborations, in practical emotions, reflections, and self-adjustments.

To help me better understand how these image-rich stories were connected to (and were connecting together) these teachers' conceptual frameworks, I needed to represent them more concretely than as words. So in the margins of these coded introductory sections, I began to draw, illustrating how these teachers cohered their personal and professional ideas about education through narratives of classroom interaction (Figure 8). In these images, I could see more integrally the common elements around which all three interviews' introductions centered: personal character traits and formative histories, combined with educational goals and principles, being applied in classroom scenes where students' actual responses then triggered teacher emotional responses and internal dialogs, leading to future adjustments of practice.
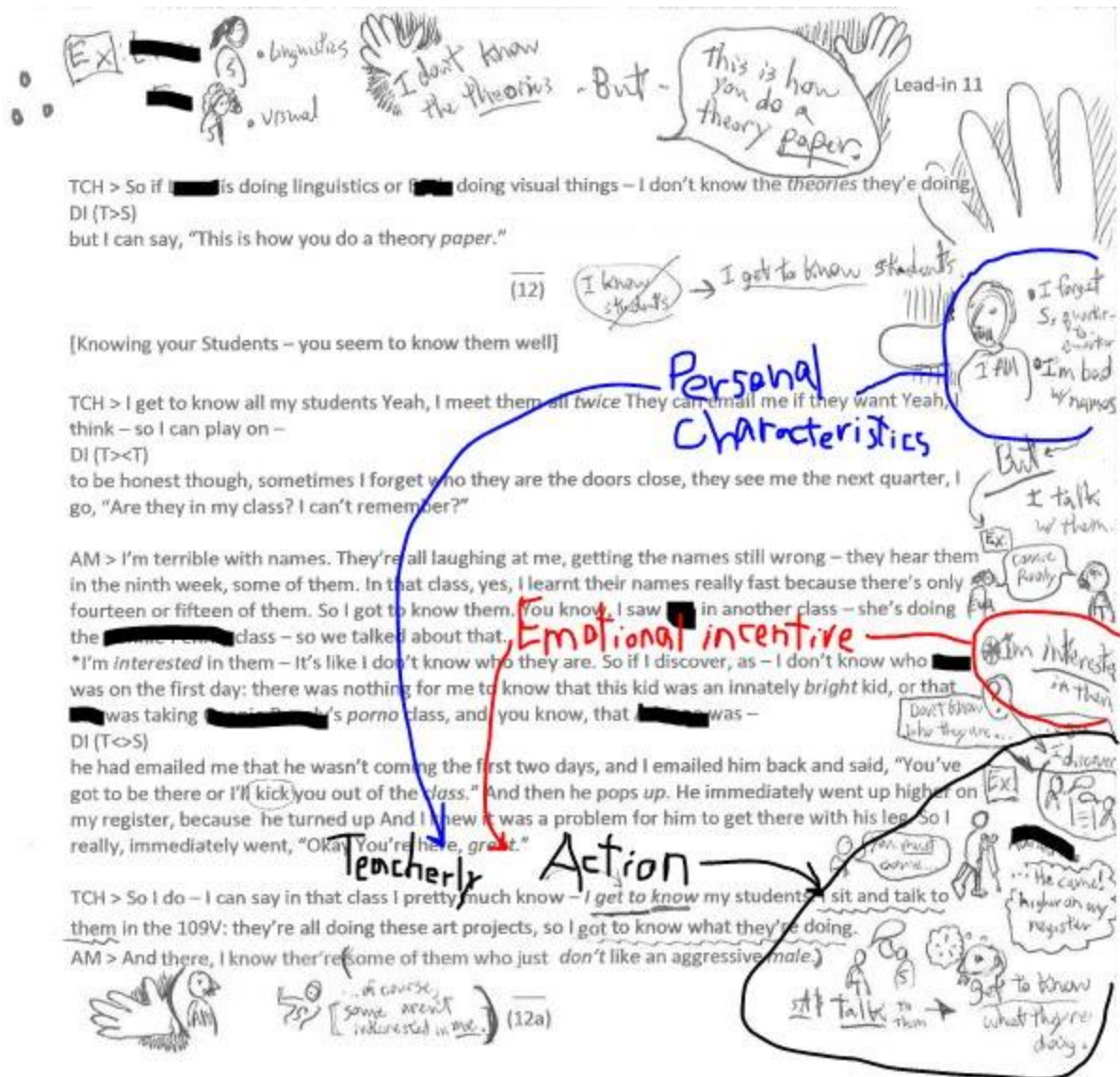
*Figure 8.* Illustration analysis of teacher M's interview (illuminating stories' coherence).

It was striking how much these cartoons of teachers discussing their practical philosophies—which I presumed would evoke a very technical and heady image—looked more like intimate and vulnerable cycles of classroom dialog, where the gap in practice between ideal expectations and actual experiences was spurring teacher's self-reflections, and leading slowly through trials-and-efforts toward more informed and stable revisions of self and classroom. These images conveyed a common story of practical classroom challenges helping teachers to refine their interpersonal practices and fortify their

professional philosophies together; of personal development and professional development occurring as an integrated process within educational work.

Seeing this as a valuable thread to trace for my research interests, I created "Style/Content" pages for each teacher, where grouped citations from the interview to create a sort of key for understanding each teacher's specific educational goals (i.e., the intended *content* or effect of their courses on students) and their personal manner in pursuing those goals (the rhetorical *style* they intend to use in educational exchanges with those students). The first part, teachers' intended content, I drew together by grouping (A) statements about education/course-related goals, beliefs, and emotions: collectively creating an image of what they hope to achieve, what notions of true and good inform those goals, and what feelings extend from or interfere with those motives. The second part, teachers' intended style, I drew together by grouping (B) statements explaining their teaching approaches, organized by method of argument and/or type of language used: creating a rough profile of their conversational voice, its recurring phrases and logic patterns.

In this way, I clarified for myself how each individual might be projecting into the classroom their sense of educational purpose and professional identity. Additionally—and just as importantly—I was beginning to see how all three teachers were using narratives and reenactments of dialog to ground those personalized notions in experience, and to communicate those to me in a concrete way.

Yet, at this point, I still did not see in what direction to extend this analysis to make it useful for other academics: to move it beyond an accurate summary of these three teachers' uniquely personalized approaches, and make a more generalizable observation about the process of developing practical wisdom in educational exchanges.

**Step Two: Seeing the Practical in the Personal**

**A Teacher's Perspective on Social Foundations of the Academic Exchange**

Then, fortuitously, my university's writing program offered me a position teaching an undergraduate course in academic writing. So I found myself, for the first time in several years, in the social role of a writing teacher: standing in front of students who expected me to teach and them about university-level composition and to assess their work. Importantly, this was also my first time teaching since I had observed and interviewed experienced writing teachers about their perspectives in such a role. With their voices behind me, I felt more free and more validated in using my own unique experiences as a learner to shape the course's educational activities, and using my characteristic abilities as an individual to support the work of the class.

For instance, one of our early classroom discussions—on cellphone texts and e-mails as a genre of writing—evolved into an in-depth debate about the most effective scenarios and least "creepy" ways in which to use a winky-face " ;) " emoticon. Myself and the students all had fresh experiences with emoticons from our various personal relationships (where the ";)" is used both playfully to diffuse tension, and suggestively to imply attraction, making its use acutely context-sensitive). The discussion evoked thoughtful, engaged arguments from the students, which in turn provided the class with a personally invested entry-point for understanding genre as an academic topic (those established conventions of form and usage in academic discourse communities that allow audiences to quickly infer meaning within a specific context). That dialog was relevant to them and useful for me, as a bridge to understanding the academic subject-matter. It was also engaging for them and informative for me, as a bridge toward our interpersonal understanding and social affiliation with one another. So it felt successful and genuine as an educational exchange.

I kept a teaching journal throughout this term, noting each day what I planned to do, what happened, and what lessons I had learned from that that I could apply to future teaching—much like the pattern I had seen in the three teachers' dialog-infused biographical summaries. What I realized in doing this was that, almost immediately, I shifted my reflection style from a series of discrete lesson plan objectives and technical descriptions of their successes-or-failures to more progressive, narrative re-tellings of classroom interactions, ending with ideas for improving future lessons or with maxim-like distillations of general teaching principles that these interactions had highlighted for me:

"I made a big, fancy lesson plan today, tying Elbow's first/second order thinking into a discussion of tropes … But the students were not fans of the Elbow piece (first 4 comments were 'super-redundant,' 'very pretentious,' 'an obvious fact,' and … So the conversation flagged for about 20 minutes before the last two points turned positive/useful" – (Teaching Journals: 17 January 2012)

"I wrapped up at the end by reiterating the central point of focus for this paper … and the importance of cohesive organization, then wished them luck and let them go off to write. Jake asked me how late he could call me if he had a question that came up. I said, 'Don't call me after midnight' (which ran contrary to the advice I had just given him on his paper: 'Speak *positively* – it's more solution-oriented and more specific than saying what was *not* done / should *not* be done.') Always [re]learning." – (Teaching Journals: 6 March 2012)

I found this manner of reflection much more intrinsically rewarding as a process (more like warm personal journaling or creative writing than cold technical summary), and also more

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useful: easier to read and reflect on practically when planning out future days of teaching. These notes were specific and grounded, but not myopic; they looked beyond step-by-step activity plans (which made days seem isolated, and unexpected turns seem overwhelming) toward what each day held in common with the next as an ongoing educational encounter (which helped me to see the class as a whole, and my practice as a long-term growing process).

I realized here that what I had done over the course of that term was a microcosm of the decades-long process of personalization that my 3 teacher subjects were involved in: creating personalized, experience-grounded, purpose-oriented understandings of teaching. As I was now beginning to do for myself, so too had these teachers been using their dialogic interactions with students throughout their careers to form practical understandings of what "good teaching" means for them, personally: as an iconoclastic funny man who loves rhetoric and playful conversation (V), or a gently nurturing and scientifically curious lifelong learner (B), or an orthodox and artful professional writer who loves intelligent arguing (M). This was a process that I could do for myself, as a physically focused and poetically inclined romantic pragmatist, learning how to be my best self as a teacher with and for my students— and that any teacher could do for themselves, likewise, by tracing their own educational dialogs. This realization helped me to see how my research findings could be of use to educational research and to teachers in general.

**Step Three: Tracing the Principles in Practice**

**Images of Pragmatic Values Frameworks in Teachers' Idiolects**

With the notion in mind that as teachers mature, they build up experience-grounded, personalized idea-frameworks to guide their classroom practices, I printed out the paraphrase

charts I'd made for the three teachers' 21-term explanations. I laid out in a row those six

pages so that all terms were simultaneously visible. Then I examined the definitions within

each teacher's idiolect for signs of internal coherence. I had noticed these types of links

earlier, but this time I charted them methodically, term-by-term: similar or same grounding

anecdotes between terms– a distant, circumstantial connection; similar descriptors and ideas

used in defining terms – a nearer, implicit connection; or allusions to one term within

another – a tight, explicit connection (Figure 9A). Then I put each term on a note-card and

began arranging them spatially in relation to one another, using these coded connections

between explanations to determine how closely and with what positive or negative pull each

word was related to the others: some were defined by their opposition, others by their

similarity; some in multiple ways, some only in one minor regard or by association with

another term (Figure 9B).



*Figure 9.* (A) coded semantic links in teachers' term-explanations, (B) note card arrangements of teachers' idiolect maps.

After working out the general spacing for these three teachers' idiolects, I hand-sketched those semantic maps with annotated connection-lines explaining each semantic link (Figure 10). This provided me with two useful tools in my continuing analysis. First, by using these 21 sample terms as fixed lexical reference points for the teachers to fill with their own semantic content, and then orienting those points spatially based on that content, I had constructed (1) a quick visual representation of how uniquely each expert teacher—even within the same discipline and the same institutional environment—structures their own internally cohesive network of experience-based meanings.

This reminder would help me to focus on teachers' *underlying development processes* in the classroom, rather than searching for surface similarities among their current practices. Second, by tracing the semantic links between words within these teachers' personal dictionaries, I had constructed (2) a more explicitly organized map of their ideas-and-values frameworks, to help myself (and others) understand specifically—practically—what types of intended situations, actions, and outcomes these teachers are referencing when they state more generalized beliefs, values, and goals related to educational encounters. These maps would help me to interpret both the *social and academic progress* of educational dialogs over the arc of a course: the idealized motives and intentions quietly acting as touchstones against in-the-moment feelings and impulses during teachers' observable actions and responses with students in the classroom.
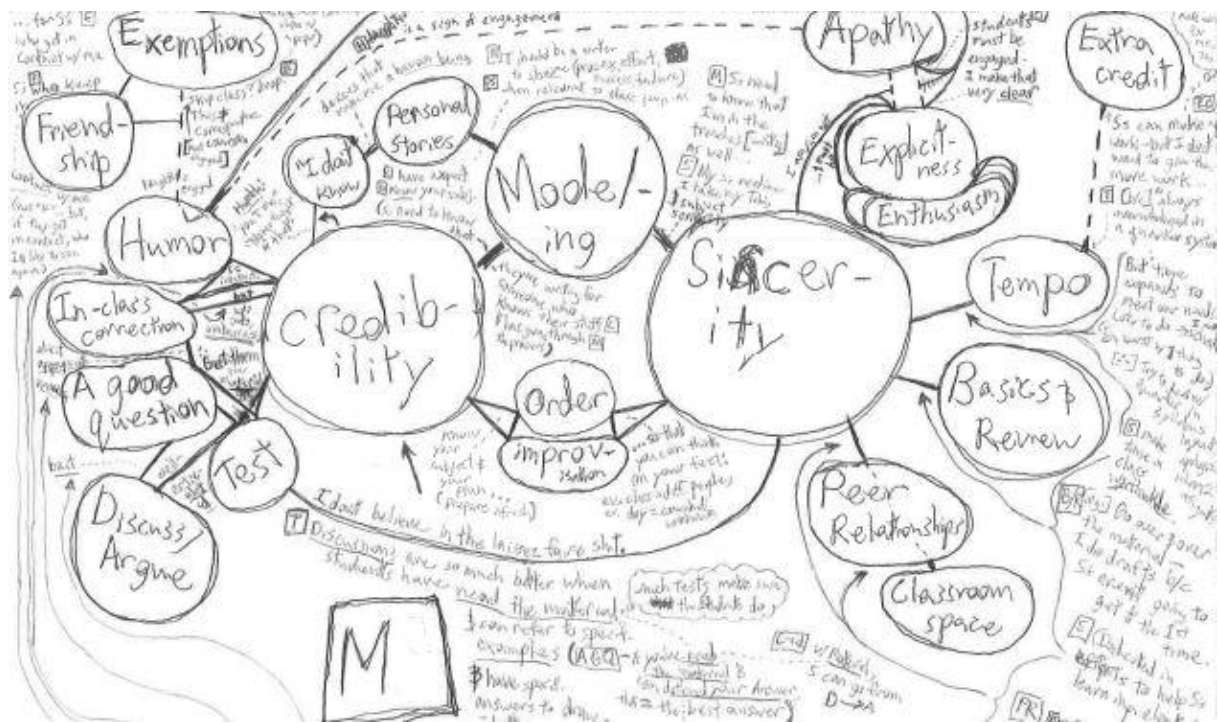
*Figure 10.* Idiolect map with annotated semantic links, showing differentiation between complimentary (——) and oppositional (- - - - -) connections.

The final phase of this idiolect analysis was then to examine the smaller stories and reenactments within these term-explanations, using the teacher's larger idea-and-value frameworks as an interpretive lens. The purpose in this exercise—using teachers' own conceptual word-webs to interpret their rhetorical aims and approaches in their stories of interaction and dialog—was to start seeing the line of principle that connects teachers' perfect ideals to their imperfect practices: their translation of intention into implementation (Ajzen & Fishbein 2005). Principles at work within actual classroom exchanges can be difficult to interpret, with teachers' practical aims overlapping and often conflicting (e.g., explore students' questions, but get through the day's material; stay intellectually engaging, but keep emotionally calm), and with practical approaches altering shape on-the-fly negotiating with others' motivated actions. Teachers' narrative reenactments of classroom exchanges bring these principles to surface: situating moments or patterns of dialogic

exchange within a larger framework of ideas, and therein either stating explicitly or demonstrating dramatically how they intend to translate those ideas into pedagogical goals and strategies.

This makes the content and style of narrative reenactments a valuable foundation for examining teachers' educational dialogs with students[19]. Reenacted dialogs, when analyzed within teachers' pedagogical frameworks, can provide maps for understanding their manners of teaching: simplified and edited, selected and framed within conversations, dialogic reenactments *show* the larger ideas and intentions being pursued through specific types of individual actions in observable moments of teaching. That is, by using teachers' word-webs to interpret their stories of common educational scenarios in their classrooms, I could begin attuning myself to how their unique words and behaviors were extending from their internal narratives about *principled* practice: actions, tied to plans, tied to ideas.

There were two stages in my analysis of teachers' reenactments: looking at the style and placement of those stories within the teacher's larger narrative of ideas and values, then looking at the content of those reenactments within the stories as demonstrations of those ideas and values within relevant rhetorical situations. The first step, that *narrative analysis* of stories as "grounding" elements within more general conversations about teaching, situates the teachers' smaller stories within their larger conceptual frameworks (as represented by their word-webs, above). The next step, that *rhetorical analysis* of goals and strategies embodied within such stories, connects those general ideas and values to specific intentions and approaches that are observably evident in the teachers' manners of discourse—as preparation for analyzing their actual classroom dialogs with students.

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19  (and vice versa, of course: students' reenactments of classroom exchanges are likewise important for understanding the pragmatic arc of educational dialogs. For this study, those voices will become more immediately relevant when choosing *which* classroom exchanges to focus on.)

It should be noted, by the way, that this focus on reenactments within teachers' idiolects was not planned: it was developed in response to a consistent pattern in the way these expert teachers in conversation talked out their understandings of general teaching terms. Practical descriptions of educational encounters arose, unprompted, within all three teachers' interviews as they formed their impromptu explanations for the 21 teaching terms—especially those terms which they felt were important to elaborate on (either for their crucial value or their perilous complexity in practice), but had difficulty explaining succinctly in the abstract. In such instances, each teacher used dialogic narratives and reenactments of classroom-related exchanges to clarify, justify, and situate their meanings.

While these storied presentations of archetypal events and specific memories were being used by the teachers to communicate particular ideas to me about teaching, they were simultaneously providing me with more general images of how these teachers interpreted and distilled their classroom learning experiences. Within teachers' small stories, concretely described activities (comparable to those I was observing in-person) were explicitly being given *narrative context* within larger themes (e.g., of emergent understandings, goals, identities) and being given *clear intentionality* through statements of explanation and justification. Thus, these stories provided a sort of subjective bridge toward analyzing actual classroom educational exchanges. These were not cold play-by-plays of interactions as they would be observed externally, but augmented re-creations of those interactions as they might be experienced by the teacher. These stories *combined* the principled language of intention with the descriptive language of implementation, making the link between ideals and actions more explicitly visible; calibrating my analytical perspective as I prepared to revisit the recordings of, and student responses to, each course's progressive dialog.

**Second Point of Inquiry:**

**Tracing the social foundations – teachers' and students' classroom relationships**

The next phase in analyzing the pragmatic arc of the these classrooms, after developing an understanding of the teachers' distinct rhetorical *intentions* for their courses, was to examine teachers' and students' actual educational *exchanges* together in the learning environment, and the *effects* of those exchanges. Before looking directly at classroom conversations, and examining their evident progress in coordinating core course content understandings, however, I first needed to develop some basic sense of the triadic relationship between the teachers and students sharing focus on that course's subject-matter.

The social-relational dynamics of classrooms are fundamental to the academic development occurring there: from interpersonal expectations of behavior that will support or undermine trust during intellectual risk-taking, to mutual assessments of character that will build or degrade respect during acts of intellectual engagement and persuasion, to dialogic interactions that will foster or hinder feelings of group affiliation during prolonged and demanding intellectual participation. These basic facets of a class group's habits, standards, and identities form the living culture (within the teacher's structural frame) wherefrom educational outcomes emerge. So before re-visiting the direct classroom interaction data I had recorded, I consulted the perspectives of the teachers and students in those educational exchanges, to more fully understand their personal relationships in working those academic dialogs forward.

Specifically, I wanted to better understand their social relations within that shared educational exchange at three levels. First, I wanted to explore their perceptions of one another's characters as individuals, in the roles of teacher and student, separate from the specific course topic and goals: a personal view of that shared learning environment. Then I

wanted to explore their perceptions of one another's relationships with the course subject-matter and course group learning activities: a practical view of that educational relationship within the learning environment. Finally, I wanted to compare their driving beliefs, values, and goals in relation to schooling in general and that course in particular: a principled view of their rhetorical motives in classroom exchanges, within that educational relationship, within the learning environment.

These sections of analysis regarding the classrooms' social foundations were less detailed than those regarding the teachers' pedagogical idiolects and intentions. Partially, this is because the teachers' explanations above provided a great deal of base insight about the learning environments-as-intended, so that this framework did not need to be parsed out again from scratch, merely applied to the teachers' stated views of the current classroom and compared to the students' views of those same classrooms. Also practically, in retrospect, I collected less data on these social aspects than I would have liked to: students' perceptions of teachers as individuals in learning, and vice versa, were one of those areas that social conventions of politeness and face-saving render somewhat opaque to the participants themselves. Neither ever looks the other in the face and says, "Honestly, this is what I presume about you and think about your manner as a teacher/student." Because of this, both seemed quite interested in learning from me what the other side *really* thought and felt—e.g., teachers asking questions during interviews about students' candid experiences; students fielding guesses during classroom asides about teachers' true personal opinions and identities.

While these responses from the participants helped me to realize in vain, as I collected the data, how *important* these social foundations are to the motives, attentions, and efforts of learners in the educational exchange (and thus how much more of that data I wish I

had prompted from those teachers and students), their responses also constructively helped to guide me, as I analyzed the data, back toward these segments that I *did* collect—survey rankings and assessment grids, panel reflections and private asides, student and teacher philosophy statements—where the participants described  themselves, their counterparts, and their subject-matter as interconnected.

These subjective individual perceptions of the "I-environment" relationship during educational exchanges are invisible to other participants, and remain largely unspoken and tactfully hidden as those exchanges progress. Nonetheless, teachers and students alike actively study one another, and desire to know about the influence they have on one another: how they are characterized as members within the group, whether their presence and work is appreciated there, and to what extent they have accurately understood and consequentially impacted (vis-a-vis their own aims) that community's emergent intersubjective experiences.

So it was these subjective, social perspectives of the educational exchange—comparatively, between teachers and students—that I sought out as a supportive bridge in tracing the link between teachers' idealized images of classroom interaction, as they had described it, and my recordings of complexly intersubjective dialogs, as I had observed it. These data were my compass between the teachers' and the students' minds.


**Step One: the Persons in Practice**

**Teachers' and Students' Subjective Perceptions of One Another as Individuals and Social Influences in the Learning Environment**

Within both the teachers' interviews and students' surveys and panel interviews, I included questions which either directly evoked or allowed for each party to present their perceptions of one another as individuals in the social space of the classroom. In analysis, I

felt it was important to distinguish participants' conceptions of others' personalities or ethos from their assessments of these others' academic or professional performance because conflating the two—the social and the academic self—would have obscured the relationship between that base of human interactions and the academic learning progress extending therefrom. So I disciplined myself to begin simply, with this base: who were they learning with in the classroom, from their perspective?

On the teacher's side, I had two main sources of data through which to explore how they perceived their students as people: the cursory overviews they gave of the current course group (during interviews), and the descriptive asides they offered when storytelling— about specific students, the group as a whole, or Students in general as reflected with this current group (during interviews, and sometimes during my classroom recordings). On the student's side, my main sources of data about how they perceived their teacher as a person were drawn out from them more methodically: first their initial descriptions and rankings of the teacher as a social presence (prompted by questions on the student survey), and later their more detailed stories, explaining and comparing personal perceptions of the teacher's manner and its influence on them (during panel discussions, and also individual interviews). In each case, the teachers and students provided both concrete descriptions and emotional/metaphorical imagery—which together helped me form a basic intersubjective lens for interpreting the course's social interactions: which teacher and student behaviors were most noted and remembered by others, and to what private internal consequence, within the course group as social relations progressed.

After using these data to create this rough image of teachers' and students' comparative senses of one another, personally, I could then look with a more informed eye at videos I had taken of classroom interactions. Their narrative re-tellings of one another's

characteristic manners, fortified with figurative and emotionally overt language, gave me specific images and descriptors around which to sort  first-hand observations of that evident teacher-student dynamic: what made one teacher a "T-rex … intimidating, enlightening, understanding," versus a "Mother hen … personal, pleasant, genuine," versus an "Easily distracted dog … relaxed, lenient, conversational" in the eyes of their students; which words and tones, gestures and postures, actions and reactions were contributing to this social base of the educational exchange?

While both sides of the student-teacher feedback loop are equally important in understanding an educational exchange's social foundations (and both were examined here, at the personal level, in this first step), the teacher has a clear *leadership* role in the classroom: assuming powers and responsibilities regarding the way that social and interpersonal dynamics will be negotiated in service of learning. So in revisiting the classroom videos, informed by participant commentaries, I focused my attention and interpretations here: on connecting the teacher's personal manner (as observable) to its social influence (as subjectively reported). Using mainly the students' voices as touchstones for this analysis, I looked for observable verbal and nonverbal behaviors like those they had described as marked or important details contributing to the classroom's underlying social reality.

This operationally grounded personal profile of the teacher-among-students, then, served as a transition point into looking, at the practical level, at each classroom's educational exchanges: as interpersonal relationships progressing in *service* of shared academic learning aims.

**Step Two: the Practical in the Personal**

**Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of One Another's Relationships to Subject-Matter and Course Group, with Regards to Educational Aims**

The second step in examining the social-relational foundations of these classrooms, after gathering a phenomenological sense of each course's participants simply as people relating together, was to gather likewise a sense of how they saw one another relating to the subject matter: how teachers saw their students, as learners in the course, connecting personally with the discipline's orientations, knowledge, and practices as presented; how students saw their teachers, as facilitators of the course learning experience, embodying that person-with-discipline relationship in their manner of teaching. It is at this practical (learning-oriented, pedagogical) level that participants' social-relational experiences begin to show direct relevance to, and operational inseparability from, academic outcomes within and beyond the educational exchange.

To understand the students' and teachers' perspectives of one another's connections with the course subject-matter, I turned again to both parties' interviews—this time with a focus on practice/learning-centered (rather than person/character-centered) statements about one another—but also to two additional pieces of data. For the teachers, I had included an "Attachment Style and Performance Level" grid as an addendum at the end of each of their interviews. In this activity, I had each teacher go through their roster of students and place each name on a grid intersecting general attitude toward the course (strongly "aligning" to strongly "challenging") with general performance in the course ("high" to "problematic"). Watching them complete this activity—not just write down names, but question and negotiate the structure of the activity, reflect and reconsider where they wanted to see their students on this grid—provided me with a sense of their eyes toward students-in-learning: not where students *truly* were in their relationships with the course and subject-matter, but

*how* the teachers looked at them as learners in those classroom interactions. Likewise, I included on the student surveys three sections of Likert-scale 5-point rankings: of the teacher's pedagogical energy (e.g., clear/puzzling, scripted/fluid, easy/challenging), delivery (e.g., enjoys the subjects, explains persuasively, acknowledges alternative ideas), and thoughts about them as students (e.g., approves of my opinions, is interested in my ideas, believes in my abilities). I also left open-ended sections for them to comment on the teacher's teaching style,  beliefs/values, and what they most want students to learn from their course. Together, these provided me again with a sense of how students were seeing, hearing, perceiving the teacher's relationship to the discipline and to the social work of propagating that discipline.

These insights into teachers' and students' practical views of one another's *individual* relations to the group's *shared* subject-matter—and shared academic learning processes— provided me with a phenomenological sense of their mutual influence: how each side's public behaviors were influencing the other's educational experience within that course. This intersubjective context, then, provided me with a platform for examining the internal *motives*—the scholastic beliefs, values, and goals—driving teachers' and students' public behaviors, and in turn shaping their social learning exchange.

**Step Three: the Principles in Practice**

**Teachers' and Students' Comparative Scholastic Beliefs, Values, and Goals in the Educational Exchange**

The final step in examining the social-relational foundations of these classrooms, after securing a basic  sense of the personal (intersubjective) and practical (learning-oriented) dynamic between teachers and students, was to explore their rhetorical intentions as

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participants in these courses: each party's ideal influence on one another and ideal outcomes for themselves within their classroom community. Understanding the similarities existing, and differences negotiated, between their intentions provides a crucial final piece of interpersonal context for examining—pragmatically—the progress of educational exchanges.

Importantly, these rhetorical intentions held by teachers and students are principled (ideas- and values-based) on both sides: they are motivated plans of action that reflect the distinct academic experiences, beliefs, desires and goals of these participants as individuals—playing out hierarchically imbalanced but collaborative institutional roles within the university. By-and-large, teachers and students are members of different generations, cultures, communities, and life-stages; charged with complimentary powers over, and responsibilities toward, one another by their institution; and navigating and negotiating within these conventional frameworks to fulfill their own current goals. Classroom exchanges, and the learning that results, revolve around this dialog of intentions—from the structure of teachers' assignments and grading, to the level and manner of students' participation, to the term-end exchange of official evaluations. By college, in upper-division writing courses such as those in this study, both teachers and students enter into the classroom well aware of these structural conventions, and prepared in their own ways for assessing and managing that genre of rhetorical situation.

To examine and compare these principled intentions of teachers and students within the classroom, I turned again to specific sets of questions included within their interviews. For the teachers, I could look to the interview questions that I had included after that 21-terms section to elicit more direct statements about their principles in general, and their pedagogical intentions specifically: questions such as "How have you come to see the role of the teacher / the role of college writing instruction?" "What development do you expect to

see over the course of the term in students' writing / have there been any particular issues in need of attention this term?" and "How do you intend that the students see you?" The 21-terms section itself also offered some limited additional support here: though it focused more on teachers' implementation intentions (how they would *achieve* their goals), it also inevitably alluded to those end-intentions (the principled goals themselves; the ideal outcomes from those means). For the students, I could look to a parallel set of questions that I had included in the panel interviews, about the students' own principled intentions and expectations as learners in the university: "What makes a good teacher / your reasons for taking the course?" "What is the purpose of school / is college writing useful?" and "How could your teacher better help you to learn from this course – what could change?"

Unfortunately, in B's course, timing did not permit for a full-class interview during the term, so I had to slip these questions about students' goals into individual interviews with her students. This meant that I did not get to hear the way that course reacted to and built on one another's views of school and the course as they saw it relating to their larger life trajectories. Yet fortunately, in reviewing the data, I found that hearing the two classes discuss their goals was, in itself, sufficient to construct a basic image of student motives across these courses. Just as with teachers, students' goals were both uniquely personalized and generally comparable. So for this final step, I looked at teachers and students each as conglomerates: the defining spirit of one's and the other's—the course composer's and the learning agent's—motivating aims, within that familiar (for both sides) rhetorical setting of a scholastic educational exchange.

By placing in juxtaposition students' and teachers' pragmatic philosophical perspectives—on schooling writ large, on the learning of writing within that environment, and on one another's specific roles/purposes together within that disciplinary  learning

process—I could see more clearly the driving reasons, behind their practical goals, as individuals, that they were carrying into classroom conversations. Where the first two steps in this inquiry generally established *who* was involved in these courses' educational exchanges, and *how* they were working together toward academic ends, this step explicated *why* each was generally willing to invest this time and effort with the other: the distinct value of successfully navigating this discourse, in terms of self-efficacy and enrichment, of belonging and social standing, of cultural contribution and life fulfillment.

With this final piece of the classroom dialog's social-emotional foundations illuminated, I then felt adequately prepared to examine pragmatically the progress of that educational exchange among the teachers and students in these three courses: their principled pursuit of mutual persuasion and influence (i.e., toward being trusted, valued, and positively assessed), within a practical learning-centered community framework (i.e., of academic writing in a given university), as personal embodiments of culture and nature (i.e., with complexly unique identities and needs) in dialog.

**Third Point of Inquiry:**

**Tracing the academic progress – teacher's and students' learning-centered exchanges.**

The final phase of this research was then to re-visit original recordings of teacher-student discourse and trace the progressive arc of each classroom's educational dialogs from course beginning to end. Having analyzed each teachers' course framework (their personally tailored, practically grounded, principle oriented manner of teaching their discipline) in the first phase, and each classroom's actual learning environment as it emerged between teachers and students (their intersubjective, academically focused, purposefully driven relationship together) in the second phase, provided the basic circumstantial awareness needed for this

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third phase; for tracing each group's pragmatic development of shared understandings (their

experience-based, scholastically focused, willfully propagated synchrony of individual

attentions, interpretations, and actions during-and-beyond course activities).

To examine this progress, my main sources of data were my fieldnotes and audio-

recordings from the class sessions in which I was a direct observer—essentially every

session from the second week through the end of the term. The notes served as an important

guide, firstly because they provided a coherent visual overview of the flow of activities and

discourse within a given session, and secondly because they described aspects of the

intersubjective learning environment—subtle nuances of tone and expression, thus variances

in apparent attitudes and intentions—that might be easy to forget and to overlook in re-

visiting these recordings from an objective distance, making these notes crucial touchstones

during analysis (Figure 11). The recordings themselves, conversely, served as a check on

these notes, ensuring that details of interactions could be accurately heard and fully

transcribed where needed, during particularly rich moments of classroom dialog.



*Figure 11.* Excerpts of discourse-focused fieldnotes from course observations – M's class (catching the mood, social dynamics, and educational content of course dialogs).

Which moments of course interaction to focus on was determined first by looking at the arc of course interactions as a whole: noting which topics, terms, and techniques were revisited most regularly—and so which notions, orientations, and processes could be reasonably construed as the "core" content of the course, vis-à-vis teachers' and students' interactions. From there, course sessions were selected from the beginning, middle, and end portions of the school term wherein this core content arose prominently in classroom discourse. Moments from across these sessions could then be compared—with similar moments of *objective* interpersonal discourse, with students' and teachers' *experiential* reenactments of similar classroom scenarios, and with their *personalized* reflections about the intended/actual outcomes of this community's educational dialogs—as a means of explaining each learning group's actual, pragmatic progress with their course's content: in terms of shared understandings, as evidenced through their discourse.

Like the first two phases of this inquiry, this third part was separated into three steps, each emphasizing in turn the personal, practical, and principled facets of each course's educational dialogs. Importantly, this is *not* meant to imply that the classroom discourse progresses through distinct "seasons" of personal, then practical, then principled development in sequence (these aspects are observably integrated in the classrooms' educational dialogs, at all stages of their maturation). Rather, this *isometric* examination is meant to give each aspect of the dialog its due, proportionally: to adequately acknowledge the crucial contributions of those social-emotional, intellectual-technical, and moral-motivational elements *together* toward the pragmatic learning outcomes of those educational exchanges –which, as mentioned in the literature-review, are complexly polycontextual (Henry 1963), polyphasic (Tuomi-Grohn, Engestrom & Young 2003), and ecologically

consequential for both the learning environment and for the individual who learns therein (Beach 1999).

These three integrated aspects of the classrooms' educational dialogs are described briefly in more detail below, along with the specific pieces of data that were utilized to bring focus on these respective aspects—the personal, practical, and principled elements that contribute to the progressive maturing of discourse between teachers and students.

**Step One: the Persons in Practice**

**Defining an Educational Environment – Learning One Another through Shared Relation to a Subject**

The first facet being examined in the pragmatic arc of these courses' classroom dialogs is the social-emotional: the apparent progress that teachers and students are making in learning one another through relation to a shared subject—i.e., the learning environment broadly; and therein, whatever individual / event / object / idea the group's attention focuses around moment-by-moment specifically. Here, being foregrounded is the way individuals are presenting identities and displaying emotions, and the way the group is recognizing and managing these aspects. Being traced is progress of that dialog toward social-emotional synchrony: a growing shared awareness of individuals' roles, attitudes, and behaviors—and a habituating expectation of the classroom's interpersonal atmosphere—within the group's educational exchange.

To analyze this aspect of progress in the classroom's discourse, I focused specifically on those moments in the course dialog where teachers invoked their own stories of learning and growth (either first-hand personal experiences or those collected from past students, etc.) or elicited / made space for exploring students' learning experiences (in the past or

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currently). In these moments, teachers and students make public their identity as learners, and so their role (e.g., expert/novice, autonomous/dependent, agreeable/resistant, outspoken/private, invested/disinterested, etc.) in affiliation with the course group. In addition, I looked at moments of digression and play, surrounding discussions of learning, where teachers and students humanized themselves (e.g., in acts of trust like divulging personal feelings, beliefs, and attitudes) or tested and attuned to one another as individuals (e.g., by sharing jokes or fielding laughs and other social signals for in-group members to reciprocate).

This social-emotional progress in the dialogs could then be used to understand better the intellectual-technical progress in these dialogs.

**Step Two: the Practical in the Personal**

**Building an Educational Exchange – Using Personal Affiliation to Support and Extend Subject-Matter Learning**

The second facet being examined in the arc of these courses' dialogs is the intellectual-technical: the apparent progress that teachers and students are making in learning the course's core content through their shared environment—i.e., the growing complexity, specificity, and nuance of academic discussion topics; and thereunder the growing foundation of shared referents supporting that group understanding. Here, being foregrounded is the way individuals are using personal affiliation to support and extend subject-matter learning, drawing on established social foundations to accomplish agreed-upon course goals. Being traced is progress in that dialog toward intellectual-technical synchrony: a growing shared awareness of the field's academic notions, orientations, and processes as embodied in course community activities—and a habituating fluency with

interpreting and accomplishing specific goal-directed tasks together—within the course's educational exchange.

To analyze this aspect of progress in the classroom's discourse, I focused specifically on moments in the course dialog where teachers explained and discussed core content topics with students (building up coordinated vocabularies of facts, values, and practical applications) or teased out and challenged students' personal translations of course knowledge (testing and developing those personal perceptions, whether officially through collected assignments or casually through discussions). In these moments, teachers and students make public their perspectives on abstract concepts and their comfort levels with concrete practices, and so their academic position (e.g., areas of struggle where they need practical support; areas of realization where they can be assets supporting others' course goal achievements)  within the group. In addition, I looked at moments of miscommunication repair and negotiations, surrounding core content and task discussions, where teachers and students relied on one another technically (e.g., seeking directive feedback, looking for guiding reassurance, responding and adjusting thereto) or countered and pressured one another productively as disciplinary community members (e.g., by questioning claims' reasons and evidence, challenging activities' usefulness of doable-ness, asserting  standards and shifting plans to move the group forward sustainably).

This intellectual-technical progress in the dialogs could then be used to understand better the moral-motivational progress in these dialogs.


**Step Three: the Principles in Practice**

**Seeking Synchrony – Developing a Progressively More Coordinated Educational Dialog**

The final facet being examined in the arc of these courses' dialogs is the moral-motivational: the apparent progress that teachers and students are making in regard to their own educational/life goals through that course together—i.e., the ecological changes that they are contributing to and experiencing through the course's communal, dialogic work; and thereby, the sense of personal growth and learning that each carries away from that educational exchange (whether positive or negative on their idiosyncratic scale of values and goals). Here, being foregrounded is the way individuals are (boldly or subtly) publicly asserting and pursuing common-or-personal interests, and the way the group is negotiating with (or not) and evolving to meet (or not) these diverse needs and motives. Being traced is progress of that dialog toward moral-motivational synchrony: a growing shared sense of community purpose and of individuals' various stakes therein—and a habituating readiness for the particular standards and manner used in pursuing internal goals together—within the group's educational exchange.

To analyze this aspect of progress in the classroom's discourse, I first turned back to teachers' and students' experiential reflections and evaluative take-away from the educational exchange, at various points: teachers' asides after classes, and persisting questions or ongoing thoughts in their offices; students' candid perceptions in group classroom interviews, and course appraisals after the end of the term. These descriptions and judgments made explicit how teachers and students saw the course—themselves included—meeting, or falling short of, their internal desires; that is, their general life motives and specific academic goals (e.g., the teachers' ideal pedagogical impact on students and intended outcomes for that group, the students' ideal self-benefit from taking the course and intended impression on their teacher). Using this guidance from their voices, I then looked specifically in the course dialog at moments of intersection between personal-and-professional or personal-and-

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academic connections to the discipline: where teachers and students conveyed their own particular subjective link with aspects of core content (e.g., in displays of knowledge personalization like defining their passionate interest, defending their reasoned perspective, or justifying their labored investment) or compared with and built on one another's analogous connections to course subject-matter (e.g., by raising alternate potential viewpoints, or offering up additional areas and topics, for others to further explore and learn from).

Tracing pragmatically this moral-motivational progress in classroom discourses (extending from intellectual-technical progress, supported by social-emotional progress) created an integrated image of how teachers and students—together as learning individuals—develop healthy educational dialogs: enjoyable, influential, and sustainable. None of these classrooms was perfect, by the metric of their teacher's ideals nor their students' diverse desires, but they all made progress toward synchrony; toward and educational experience that was enjoyable, memorable, and useful for its participants (teacher and student alike). And that progress is evident through the dialogic exchanges and reflective voices of those participants.

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In the following chapters, I will present the main findings of this exploratory study, followed by a discussion of some useful notions regarding pedagogical practice: these extending from the observation and analysis, plus efforts by the researcher to apply these insights consequentially to my own course environments and interactions.

PART III


A PERSONAL, PRACTICAL, PRINCIPLED STUDY

OF TEACHING AND LEARNING:

Exploring the pragmatic arc from value-based frameworks, through social foundations,

toward academic progress in three expert teachers' classrooms



"What is now proved was once only imagined."

– William Blake (English poet/engraver), *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, c.1793


"If you want money more than anything, you'll be bought and sold. If you have a greed for

food, you'll be a loaf of bread. This is a subtle truth: whatever you love, you are."

– Rumi (Persian poet/scholar), 1207-1273 (translated by Coleman Barks)

CHAPTER 5


EDUCATIONAL DIALOGS: STUDY OVERVIEW


**The Organization of This Chapter**

In the beginning of the previous chapter, I presented three questions—three lines of

inquiry—guiding this study: How do "good" teachers describe and frame (historically,

ideally) their personal pedagogical practices, based in first-hand educational experiences?

What are the social foundations of these academic learning environments like

(intersubjectively, rhetorically) in reality, built by the trading motives and actions of teachers

and students together in a classroom relationship? And how do their educational dialogs

progress (socially, academically) over the arc of that course, as their mutual interpretations

and responses build in that learning community, toward some educational take-away?

Together, these foci are intended to connect the dots across teachers' educational dialogs

with their students; exchanges that are ideally planned, imperfectly realized, and sometimes

synchronous.

The data I collected to address these lines of inquiry are rich and somewhat

overwhelming: a combination of classroom audio/video/field-note recordings full of

complex social interactions; interviews and written questionnaires filled with teacher and

student identity presentations, educational philosophies, emotional memories, and rational

sense-making in regards to those learning exchanges; and my own personal analyses,

transcriptions, neo-organizations, and distillations of these artifacts, to make them a tool for my own and others' learning as educators.

So, in the interest of readers' time and my own timeliness (as this has already become, hereto, a 6-year project), I am presenting here only a sample of the data, which will hopefully illuminate for the reader in a clear, convincing, and useful way the phenomena in this study that seemed to matter most for teachers and students; that they emphasized as important in coordinating their course progress together, toward more synchronous educational exchanges—dialogs which both sides wanted to experience as healthy in the moment, generative over time, and useful into the future. I am presenting this selected data in a manner which will hopefully foreground the definite (though seldom fully verbally explicit) and continuous (though seldom simply experientially linear) bridge linking imagined ideals and principled intentions to imperfect actions and human responses in the work of teaching and learning.

Accordingly, this study's artifacts and analysis will be explored and interconnected in the following order.

## The Course Frame: A Teacher's Personal Approach, Professional Style and Manner, and Principled Educational Aims

The first step needed for understanding classrooms' learning-centered discourses, pragmatically, is an explication of the educational frameworks around which courses' leaders attempt to coordinate individuals' personal feelings, thoughts, and actions in those environments. These guiding frameworks—of values (i.e., moral standards of good/right/appropriate attitudes and behaviors), notions (i.e., conceptual relations of words/other symbols with their meanings or referents), and methods (i.e., concrete practices

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and processes associated with common tasks and protocols)—are essential in shaping teachers' practices, and so providing a lattice for students' experiences, negotiations, and acts of agency as the course community's exchange progresses. In the schooling structure of a public United States Research-1 university, students and society at large expect professional teachers to take on this leadership role in the classroom. So this study's analysis will begin here, with three teachers' learning-environment observations, pedagogical values, and educational intentions: their personal dictionaries of what is important and desired, true and possible, sustainable and productive regarding their selves as unique teachers/leaders and their writing courses as unique student learning environments.

**The Classroom Foundations: Teachers' and Students' Schooling Relationships**

The second step, after gaining a sense of these experienced teachers' unique principled frameworks, is to examine those ideals translated into practice. Pragmatically, while the teachers' ultimate goals may be purely educational (in a spiritual sense—sharing knowledge and nurturing a more universal understanding—which transcends the clouded subjectivity of individuals, and the passing immediacy of concrete classroom experience), the *means* to those ends are grounded in human relationships regarding shared objects within common environments. So this study's analysis will transition from ideal to actual educational exchanges by examining those social foundations: the teachers' and students' specific, subjective views of one another, of their triadic I-You-It relationship with the shared subject-matter, and of their personal goals as juxtaposed within that rhetorical situation of teacher-teaching and student-studying in a prestigious and competitive higher-learning institution.

**The Social and Academic Progress: a Course Community's Educational Dialogs**

The third step, after developing some base of understanding about the individuals' perspectives and motives in these classroom exchanges, is then to trace the educational dialogs of those individuals across the course of their term together at university. Knowing roughly the teacher intentions that are framing each course, and knowing generally the student motives and perspectives that are filling those frameworks with actual learning experiences, allows for a fuller pragmatic analysis of these dialogs between them—one which is personal, practical, and principled; one wherein progress may be defined in terms of participants' unique conglomerate of motives and experiences, and traced from teachers' core aims and archetypal expectations, to students' ever-novel well of specific interests and experiences, to the final words and reflections that each side has about their mutual exchanges: what was experienced and remembered, what was extrapolated and concluded, what was valued and personalized as a lesson from that education. So this study's analysis will conclude here, with an informed look at the social and academic outcomes of three course's unique educational dialogs: their moments of distance and intimacy, confusion and clarity, dis-synchrony and synchrony on a shared path toward deeper learning about academic writing.

**Tracing the Arcs of 3 Educational Dialogs**

The three teachers I selected for this study of educational dialogs were notable for their comparable levels of content knowledge, pedagogical experience, and success both by the metrics of their students and their professional peers; likewise notable for their distinct approaches for structuring activities and providing leadership within educational environments. It was this combination of *comparable* academic situations and outcomes,

with apparent *difference* in manner and philosophy, which I hoped would help me to understand the path toward expertise and "good" teaching—in a way that could apply to *any* individual's professional growth as educator. In my observations, I began noticing patterns of personalization, practical connection, and principled awareness in these teachers' classroom interactions and reflections; in my analysis of that data over the months and years following our time together, I labeled and traced those patterns together to simplify and organizationally align the deeper underlying similarities among these overtly unique experts—into frameworks that any educator could use to view their own approaches. But as I tour though those artificial maps I've created, it is important to remember the complex and organic subjects from which they are distilled: three individuals (V, B, and M), uniquely embodying their dedication to one subject (the process of writing), and working to share essential elements of that valued disciplinary connection with a classroom of individual learners.

I will introduce briefly those three teachers and their respective writing courses. then I will expand in turn on the personal, practical, and principled aspects of their teaching expertise—as observable in their ways of talking about (i.e., contextualizing and explaining, describing and enacting, defining and justifying) their approaches to educational dialogs.

**V: Teaching Writing through Film Criticism**

V is a middle-aged male with a background in classical rhetoric and film. He has been teaching undergraduate writing at the university for 10 years; this particular writing course, "Cameras and Criticism," for 6-7 years—one of his two most frequently taught courses. While it began as a broader course of Hollywood film history, with a heavy emphasis on theory in students' writing, he has since pared down that canon to focus on

films to which students respond best (i.e., cutting out most all foreign/independent cinema) and moved away from the intimidating language of theory (i.e., assigning one analysis paper in place of a separate critical and theoretical paper) to facilitate students' comfort with critical film viewing and analysis. His teaching methods center around a "See one, do one" philosophy, and are goal-directed by the notion that rhetoric and writing's tools are "an end in themselves" that can be applied to many disciplines and life situations—film is just an approachable way in, for modern-day students.

So he teaches his course largely by way of providing copious examples of films, and students' analytical writings thereon, and then discussing what works in these examples and why—always in an intentionally humorous, iconoclastic and conversational way. He is particularly attentive to interpersonal dynamics with students, owing to his own experiences with strict and disengaging classroom environments (e.g., with nuns in Catholic school), and later with positively stimulating college environments that made his interactions with course topics enjoyable and memorable. Accordingly, he works at making his classroom environments productively enticing: "Why are you telling someone a story? Either you want to make them 'feel intense,' or you want to make them laugh, or—it's like 'to persuade, to teach, to inform'; they're all connected together to me." Overtly aware of his authorial teacher status, and intent on breaking down "I-though" barriers in class, he often speaks of himself in self-deprecating terms, while emphasizing his students' strengths as assets to work with in pursuing course goals (e.g., global awareness): "What they tend to do when they look at film is look more at individual shots, and individual characters and individual...Because they're great at finding the little things." From this affirming platform, he uses questions and comments to encourage students beyond looking at isolated details in films, toward perceiving more wholistic bodies of themes and techniques working together, as toward

communicating that analysis effectively in writing: "I like to push them toward, 'What is the greater argument that's going on here … Can you look at this and now say something about the way this is shot that reflects the entire film, or even the entire genre' … Getting them to think bigger: that's sort of my angle."

**B: Teaching Writing though Social Science Research**

B is a middle aged female with a background in education. She has taught across age-ranges for many years, and teaches various writing courses at the university; this current course, "Society and Surveys," she has taught for 5 years. In this course, she focuses on making students aware of Theory of Writing (e.g., Peter Elbow's notion of first- and second-order thinking) and advanced issues in the Craft of writing (via Joseph M. William's lesson book on style) though a social science lens. She comes from an education background, carrying the philosophy that she is teaching whole persons, not simply instructing in subject matter: "I recognize that they [students] come with a complexity of issues—ideas, readiness, predispositions … learning styles, past successes, past failures—and all of that comes with them into the classroom. It doesn't get left outside that door." So she actively gives students opportunities to try out a *range* of tools for thinking and writing, and makes them aware of *why*—based on research—these tools could be valuable for their personal thinking and functioning, and worth testing out. This includes explaining activities which students may have practiced before, but with no clear awareness of their purpose (e.g., freewriting). For her, constructing a writing course and giving feedback is not just about helping students to produce good texts, but to grow in thinking : "I feel like [this course] is successful when I see them learning to think as social scientists; when I see them moving out of the model of, 'I have a thesis, I'm gonna collect information to prove my thesis' … when they start asking

real questions, and when they have hypotheses that can produce new knowledge … and they start working with the data, and they have to start coming up with original ideas. Then I start seeing things start clicking. … and I like that."

So she teaches her course in an inclusive and explicit manner, making an effort to provide experiences (e.g., drawing, talking out, highlighting, board-writing) that will click with students' various learning styles (the visual, oral/aural, kinesthetic, etc.) and peppering those activities with side-note clarifications, concessions, and reassurances: "Sometimes they feel more anxious about what they're being asked to do—they don't know why, it doesn't make sense to them. So if they have a little bit of theory, a little bit of the big picture—why you're doing what you're doing, even if it doesn't connect with them—then they can, I think, relax, and be a little more tolerant of something that doesn't [necessarily work for] them." She sees her natural manner—her gentle, calming presence—as an asset in modeling and fostering "a way to relate with interest, respect, curiosity, support" among individuals in the classroom. To support this constructive academic environment, she also emphasizes strongly the need for formative feedback from students, to get "in tune" with individuals' thoughts and needs and to feel the "pulse" of the class as it matures. She uses this information to address their doubts and questions directly, and to make changes in her curriculum. Largely, such changes have been responses to an academic culture that "expects less" of students: she sees where she can cut requirements to limit complaints and resistance (e.g., halving the number of social science and literature review readings; focusing on clarity of actions and characters rather than the whole book on writing-craft), without sacrificing any core components of the course (background reading, annotated bibliography, literature review, prospectus, survey/research-instrument report) that help students toward a firmer grasp on doing original research and of thinking through problems like a social scientist.

**M: Teaching Writing through Contemporary War History**

M is a late middle-aged male with a traditional European background in English and education. He has been teaching writing courses at this university for 30 years; the current iteration of this topical writing course, "Bombs and Bullets," for 10-12 years. Originally, the course extended out of another on good and evil, which included the film Apocalypse Now, and from there became a course focused on research and opinions surrounding Vietnam. His goals for the course are, first, to have his students see *real* research as a process which involves critical analysis (i.e., if "you look at somebody and you write down what they say … I tell them first 'That was *copying;* that's not research'"); second, to have them write in ways that recognize opposing viewpoints, a living audience beyond themselves, and the complexity and multiplicity of truths / right-answers in real life (e.g., "this whole idea of *soldiers are bad people and that all wars are bad* is something I want to wean them away from"); third, to have them internalize the attitude that all opinions are not equally valid, but rather earn their place in a conversation through deliberate reasoning and careful support; and fourth, to have them utilize their full arsenal of intellect and factual/theoretical knowledge when they enter those "real life" discussions.

So he teaches the course with a "last stop before the desert" mentality, treating his students as serious thinkers—channeling his experiences in professional writing and orthodox religion to prepare them for the rigors of real-world scenarios: "some of that [ritual, particularity] has secularized in my head into, 'There's a way to do this, and you have to do it this way,' … I myself am very loose on the rules now, at least in religion, but not in terms of writing—that's become my new religion." Like both V and B, M originally filled his course with much more content, but has refined it down over the years to a base of 6 or 7

assigned articles. He selects these main works based on the opportunities they provide for fruitful classroom discussions; for explicitly illustrating how the course's core ideas (mentioned above) *matter* when creating works that will effectively sway an audience ("[I] keep repeating it and show how it's done...if it's William Broils talking about something, 'What is he doing? Humanizing intro; he's talking about his friend, why is he doing that? … opposition[al view] is "War is ugly"; yes, he acknowledges that … And they *like* that article; I go, 'Why do you like that article?'"). He cites his formative experiences in European traditions of education in explaining his attitude toward university education, which is that his students are there to learn techniques they will need, and to develop them to the point where they can use them in their lives. Toward that end, he provides rules and structure and feedback, and expects in return students' effort at intellectual engagement—which he also sees as a central joy of the course, sparring with students' various ideas as they hone their abilities and find their voice as authors: "I don't mind if a student disagrees with me; it's *wonderful*...as opposed to, 'Yeah, oh…' wishy-washy people, who are *boring*. ...at the back of my mind is: I come into a class, I'm hoping these students are bright, I'm hoping these students have something to bring to the table, I'm hoping that they will have very intelligent discussions."

## Overview of Patterns Found in Experts' Reflections about their Ways of Teaching

While my first exposures to V, B, and M's ways of teaching were direct and unmediated— observations of them each at work in their respective classrooms—this rich font of data left me more with a sense of curiosity than understanding. Seeing what they were accomplishing socially and academically with their students, and how uniquely each went about that educational work of interpersonal affiliation and purposeful persuasion in

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their course, showed me how underprepared I was—from that outside perspective, merely watching their conversations build—to explain what they were doing experientially for those students (whom I was not), let alone all the subtleties of practically how and ideally why in their mind's eye (which I could not see).

So those were the parts that I focused on when I coded the transcripts of my interviews with them: statements of personal self-definition and educational role-definition ("I am" and "teaching is"), of intended behaviors and guiding attitudes ("I try, I do" and "I love, I hate"), and of types of dialog in the classroom (one-way or two-way, internal/perceived or explicit, in the current classroom or beyond its walls/participants). Breaking their interviews' semi-structured introductions into segments at every topic shift, I began to see a pattern in the construction of their responses as we talked about their biographical backgrounds—how they had come to teach the course I was currently observing, in its present iteration.

Namely, that pattern was one of stated claims (about self, students, and teaching) then extending into small stories (narratively elaborating those statements) often filled with reenactments of dialogs, and finally sometimes closing with a reassertion of that original point (giving it more clarity or conviction). As I drew out these stories in the margins to visualize them, I began to see how teachers' educational dialogs—as students themselves, as teachers just beginning, and now as educators refining their situated awareness of self— shaped their sense of what was possible, effective, and rewarding for them as teachers: **The Personal**. Then, as I built for myself a key of each teacher's style in explaining their ways, I began to see how these smaller stories cohered within larger themes of values and associated practices—rational explanations and figurative descriptions that they used to make quick sense of recurring patterns and fitting responses in classroom interactions—largely

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warranted by direct experiences: **The Practical**. Finally, as I delved into their unique responses to my prompts of 21 basic teaching-related terms, I began seeing how these teachers used reflection-distilled memories, so often of specific or archetypal dialogs with students, to glue together their complex frameworks for ideal teaching practice—grounding multiple pedagogical concepts within single, familiar, resonant images of experience—as a values-rich base for organizing priorities and actions, when planning and observing and adjusting for incoming educational exchanges: **The Principled**.

I will illustrate these three points in more concrete detail, respectively, in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 6


A LEARNER BECOMES A TEACHER:

FROM FORMATIVE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES TO

PERSONALIZED COURSE APPROACHES


**Three teachers' ways in academic writing: V, B, and M.** When these expert teachers discussed their ways of teaching with me, in their offices, about a month into the term, they referenced our common experience together—myself observing and themselves leading progressive classroom exchanges with students—and upon that shared foundation tried to explain, extemporaneously, all those factors that I could not see undergirding their practices: their motives, their intentions, their experiences in their role as teachers; why they shape the course and conduct themselves they way they do, what ideally they hope those actions will accomplish in their classes, and how they manage the uncertain space between their projected ultimate expectations and each course's real unfolding situations.

They had no preparation for these interviews, and so as they wrestled freshly with my prompting questions and probing responses, I was privileged to witness and record their rhetorical constructions: the thought-filled pauses and half-sentences, re-wordings and reconsiderations, general statements and small associated stories that they used to work themselves toward expressing, more clearly and persuasively, the ideas that they wanted me

to understand. In these exchanges, I felt (distinct from my role in their classrooms) like I was the student: the intended target-mind for their educational self-expressions.

When I re-visited these interviews to transcribe and code them, then, I looked at both the style or manner of their explanations as well as the content: the foundational experiences and the motives, beliefs, self-conceptions, ideals and goals emerging organizationally therefrom; and also the recurring patterns of reasoning and imagery that they used to channel these messages effectively from their mind into mine, in that dialog.

### The Personal (Approach): "I Am" in Dialog.

What I noticed first, and will examine below, was the explicit continuity from these teachers' unique personal lives as learners (communities that they grew through, identities that they developed there in themselves) to their professional approaches as educators (emotions and beliefs propelling their classroom structures, ideas of personal strengths and tendencies informing their ways of being with their students). That is, these teachers' personal experiences in learning seem to inform, directly and fundamentally, their professional approaches in influencing others' learning experiences. I will illustrate those connections briefly, though a selection of excerpts from the teachers' interviews[20]— specifically where they describe their specific courses in the introduction, and where they describe their own learning experiences in the final biographical context section at the end.

I coded the teachers' self/course introductions with a simple key, dividing the transcripts into areas where they directly explained their teaching approaches ("TCH") and

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[20] All the following transcript excerpts have been polished, to improve readability: false-starts, self-corrections, and vocalized pauses ("um, uh, you know") have been largely removed, except where they seem to enrich or clarify the speaker's message; punctuation has been inserted primarily to reflect speakers' timing and intonation, but also occasionally to clarify the speakers' idea organization—which is less apparent in transcripts than in the original context of that interpersonal dialog.

areas where they described and/or enacted dialogic interactions related to teaching ("DI"). I did this because, after breaking the the transcripts into segments by conversation topic (e.g., marking a new segment every time I asked a new question or they shifted topics, a new sub-section every time I asked a follow-up or they added a connected point), I noticed that these segments were further divisible into areas of general explanation and areas of descriptive illustration. Further, I noticed that these tended to follow a pattern, with teachers' responses to new topics—or additions of sub-topics—beginning more generally or conceptually, then moving into more concrete dialogs that clarified and specified what the teachers meant, and then reiterating the general idea or moving to a new topic. This coding scheme is outlined in Table 1 below, with "TCH" and "DI" differentiated as describe above. The dialog areas are further qualified according to who the participants are in that dialog – teacher, student, or another individual beyond the classroom group ("T"/"S"/"O"); and which way communication is flowing in the segment being enacted – one way, both ways, or imagined-internal (">"/"<>"/"-internal").

Table 1

*Transcription key for analyzing teachers' reenacted dialogs.*

| Transcription Key: | | |
|---|---|---|
| "TCH" = Direct explanations of teaching motives, intentions, reasons. | | |
| "DI" = Illustrative retellings / reenactments of teaching-related exchanges. | | |
| " > " = Orientation of dialog-segment ({intentional communicator} > {recipient of external expression}). | | |
| "T" = Teacher. | "S" = Student. | "O" = other / classroom outsider. |

**V's Course / Self Summary: "See one, do one."**

*See one, do one: a teaching approach.* When V talks about his course in the interview's introduction-section, his descriptions center around students' comfort in the classroom: with the presented material, the assigned work, and the interpersonal atmosphere. In the three selections below, he explains the changes he has made to his course content over time, the motive behind these changes, and the types of writing he currently focuses on with students, each time through a dialogic retelling: he presents, students reply, he learns from this and adjusts his approach accordingly. In these reenacted dialogs, a pattern emerges: V attending keenly to students' interactions with subject-materials and assignments, and adjusting actively to make those experiences (respectively) attractive, evocative, and unintimidating.

In this first segment, I had just asked V what kind of changes he'd made to the class since he first started teaching it, to which he replies:

TCH >

Very definitely I have moved almost entirely away from anything

foreign, or independent; they can't handle it—there's maybe one out

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of 10 students that will, can appreciate it. And the rest just go shark-

eyes.

DI (T-internal)

So I just said, "Okay that's it. Nothing earlier than –,"

From here, V further elaborates on the types of films that he now includes in the mix,

including the few foreign and independent pieces that he still sneaks in, but we see here the

beginning of a pattern of watching students' faces as a direct gauge of the material he has

chosen. In fact, he defends his inclusion of a short surrealist piece by again making reference

to their faces, and how he loves when students look at him with a "kind of quizzical look." A

bit later, he begins explaining what exactly he is looking for in students' responses:

TCH >

So it's moving from—on the one side it's all about keeping a

conversation going, trying to get people talking about things and

pointing out things that they wouldn't, and then there's the other side

of it, where it's like,

DI (T>S)

"Okay, you're focused on this. Let's uh—is there anything you

missed, anything we can cover; is there anything that I can add, that –

"

TCH >

That was the point of the presentations for me, is that I let them do,

find as much as they can, because I really believe that—I'm really

kind of old-school in terms of "watch one and do one." That's sort of

my approach,

DI (T>S)

> it's sort of like, "We'll watch a couple clips, talk about them, and now
>
> you guys do that and see if you can apply that to your writing – and
>
> draw it out that way."

Here again V moves into a pattern of direct explanations, paired with illustrative pieces of dialog, as a means of clarifying his teaching approach in this course. In the previous segment, he uses dialog to show us how his observations of students' faces stimulate his internal dialog; in this segment, dialog is used to show us how he capitalizes on students' interest by vocally coaxing them to expand their observations.

First, he makes an unclear general statement about the two sides of "keeping a conversation going," but in reenacting his teacher-voice with students, he makes clear what these two sides are: validation ("you're focused on this") and positive encouragement forward ("is there anything that I can add"). Next, he draws a general thread from these specific acts to his general see-one-do-one teaching philosophy, and then cements it again clearly into his practice through dialog: he watches and listens to his students observing and talking about a film as a group, provides them with constructive guidance there, and then sends them out to do that same observing and analyzing work independently—to draw out their abilities and develop those core course-related skills.

Later in our interview, V points out that this conversational momentum with students extends into their writing as well, when he talks about the way he writes marginal- and end-comments on their analysis papers: "if they read them, they'll realize that a lot of it's just me dialoging with them, saying, 'Okay, well that's an interesting idea. What about—.'" And in this next segment, he  yet again returns to the theme of describing how he works actively to make students' experiences with this course's 'conversation' a pleasantly approachable one:

TCH >

> I've pulled away from [theory] and I focus more on analysis. I used to
> do a critical and a theoretical paper, and now I realize the line is so
> mushy between those two, that I just do an analytical paper. That
> can—obviously there are going to be elements of criticism, there are
> gonna be elements of analysis and theoretical analysis. And I just let
> the student do their comfort level thing, rather than try to force them
> into theory.

DI (S<>T)

> 'Cause that was another thing – is like half the class would come to
> me and be like, "Well I'm not sure what's the name of the theory."
> Well it's like, "It's not really much to it. It's not that mysterious." But
> for some reason putting that name ['theory'] on it was all freaky to
> them – even though they all write from theoretical perspectives.

For a third time here, we see V introducing a general topic and clarifying it through a
dialogic narrative. This time, the topic is those core writing elements that he focuses on in
this course currently, and specifically his efforts to keeping students comfortable with the
seemingly novel challenge of theoretical analysis. He then illustrates his approach, more
specifically and concretely, by narrating an archetypal dialog between himself and his
students. In this segment, he portrays students' worries as an unsureness about the proper use
of theoretical terms, and his response is to downplay the complexity and emphasize the
ordinariness of writing from a theoretical perspective.

*The take-away: generalized notions, personalized foundations.* So in these
excerpts, we see the basic tenor of V's educational approach: pay attention to students' faces,

make them comfy, validate and encourage, keep the conversation going. We also see the beginning of a pattern of explanation common across all three of these expert teachers: unpacking *their* versions of generalized ideas about teaching—the implicit (and unique) details of how *they* apply those notions in practice—by consistently alluding to, narratively describing, and/or reenacting educational dialogs.

What I next noticed, in revisiting the various sections of my interview with V, was the coherence between his normative descriptions of an ideal-or-right teaching approach and his biographical descriptions of formative learning experiences as a child, an adult learner, and developing teacher.

## V's Educational / Individual Background: Learning to Value an Inviting Classroom

*See one, Do one: personal foundations.* When V goes more deeply into the motives behind his approaches, stories of his formative educational experiences begin to surface— even before I ask about them. There is a positive moment within the introduction where he ties together his own approach to learning and his approach to helping students learn through the thread of ancient rhetoric, for which he has great affinity. There is another connective moment, a bit after this, where he ties the conversational process of writing to his philosophy for teaching writing through the thread of Hollywood film history, which he has studied and admires. And there is a third, negative moment midway through the interview, where he suddenly and boldly defines his teaching philosophy by its general opposition to force and authority, antitheses to the rhetorical persuasion and personable conversation that he loves.

The first connective moment comes when I asked him directly, from a students' theoretical perspective, what he wanted from them and how they were supposed to show him that. Rather than list monolithic deliverables, he implies that what he really wants is for

students to recognize what writing they most admired, and then develop their own writing accordingly. This sentiment, his See-one-do-one philosophy, he ties directly to his admiration for the ancient Greek approaches that he had learned of in school, and which he has adopted into his personal approach to life in general:

TCH >

> I take my cues from ancient rhetoric—that's where I'm most comfortable, and that's where it all made sense. And they're approach to writing was

DI (T>S)

> to sort of off-the-bat say, "Look I can't teach you to write. What I can do though, is I can show you great examples of it. I can show you a range of things."

TCH >

> You know, things like Copiousness: writing huge amounts, taking someone who you admire, and—the ancient Greeks loved to take someone they admired and then make a regiment based upon, or a different argument entirely in the style of that person that you admire. So it's—just do that.

DI (T>S)

> You know, it's like, "See one. Now you try it. Now you do one."

TCH >

> That's always been my approach. I mean, that's pretty much my approach to everything, I guess. It's like, I built my own house: I watched somebody build one and then I built mine. You know, it

seemed like the thing to do. So yeah, I guess just showing people the

possibilities is the easiest way to draw their own—their own stuff.

The two reenactments of dialog in this section emphasize the same central notion of

observing and then personalizing, first in the context of the ancient Greeks and then

transitioning into his own voice as extending that tradition. And the teaching statements that

follow each dialog segment likewise parallel one another: the first describes the Greek

notion of copiousness and of learning by doing, as a goal for the classroom; the next

describes V applying that same notion in his own life, and approaching his classroom as an

extension of that experience for his students.

The next connective moment comes when I ask V to summarize his teaching

philosophy, which evokes from him an aside about the cross-disciplinary value of skills and

knowledge taught within rhetoric and composition—particularly their fluid and generative

process. Rather than broadly claim that writing cannot be taught in a set, contextually

unresponsive way, he draws an illustrative connection between Hollywood scriptwriting and

the way any other genre emerges, and thus the way film writing should be taught as a

situated instance of a common writing process:

TCH >

In terms of the philosophy, that's the biggest thing, is to realize that

what you're really doing—I don't even know if it's teaching so much

as coaching—it's closer to coaching in a way. There are no formulas,

it's just, that's the way. It's kind of like Hollywood has—you can sit

down and you can page-by-page minute-by-minute break down a

script and show that across a series of genre, similarities are there.

That's just the way it's worked out.

DI (O<>O)

> Very few people ever—well, certainly at the beginning—ever sat
>
> down and said, "Okay, this is the way it's going to be done." It's just
>
> like, "Oh, That worked – let's do that." It's kind of like the genre
>
> cycles—it's like, "Well everybody seems to like this Western thing –
>
> let's keep doing that."

TCH >

> And I think that that describes writing, very much. You know, film is
>
> a little bit tricky because it is a discipline. But at the same time, what
>
> we're trying to do in class is not talk about the discipline of film so
>
> much as

DI (T>S)

> to say, "This is one of many disciplines that the tools of writing and
>
> rhetoric can be applied to."

Here, V is invoking his specific interest and knowledge in film history to bring specific

meaning to his pedagogical notions about rhetoric and composition. As in the prior example,

a parallel structure emerges here, where V channel early Hollywood scriptwriters in

conversation to illustrate how author-audience cycles naturally give rise to conventional

writing forms generally, then transitions to his own teacher voice within the classroom

explaining this notion to students.

A third connective moment arises in V's interview, suddenly and markedly, when I

prompt him to discuss the notion of extra credit. Whereas the other teachers treat this term as

a somewhat straightforward and technical grading matter—whether or not to offer additional

credited assignments that students can complete to "make up" their grade deficits—V

attaches much more philosophical weight to the term by placing it on the reward-and-punish

spectrum, as a proverbial motivating carrot in contrast to the striking switch:

TCH >

> You know, I think my teaching philosophy is probably directly a
>
> result of my disgust with my educational experience as a small kid, as
>
> a small town school – this is a while ago now; given the remoteness of
>
> the place you add another fifty years on to it for that – but I was taught
>
> by retired nuns and little old ladies, and 'Spare the rod, spoil the child'
>
> kind of thing. So, my education has been completely a reaction to that.
>
> I realize that, you know.

DI (T>S)

> But, so it's like, "Whatever, sure – uh, extra credit."

TCH >

> I just don't think the classroom is a good place to set up a Fascist
>
> regime. I just don't believe that. I think it's a place to try to set up
>
> something closer to the way—you know, a symposium, or something
>
> that, that gets everybody—you know, I just don't think that it's a—the
>
> whip in the hand kind of thing, that's not my approach.

The flood of stories and imagery that V produces in defense of this pedagogical detail belies

the emotional depth of his commitment to supporting and enticing his students—and,

perhaps more so, *away* from using any tool (grades included) in a way that can be perceived

as punishing. His response begins, for a third time, outside of the classroom: with a personal

anecdote about his childhood schooling experience under the oppressive hand of

punishment-oriented educators, and the visceral "disgust" that he now associates with that

approach to teaching. His endorsement of the actual practice of extra credit is not at all a glowing one; it is a line of reenacted dialog alluding to a common scenario (which he and I discuss at other points) where students request "extra credit," and his response is essentially, "Sure, if you want to do more work for this course, I will accept it!" But his final reasoned analysis is much more committed: a classroom should be a welcoming symposium, that encourages all contributions of effort and interest; that is what the allowance of extra credit represents. The opposite approach is a "whip," a "Fascist regime"; that is not, in V's mind, what a classroom should be.

So in these three examples we begin to see how V's personal learning experiences, unique combination of interests and knowledge bases, and formative schooling interactions work together to form his professional approach to teaching his course: its structure, its content, and its manner.

***Biographical context and identity-based motivation.*** Later in the interview, when I ask more explicitly about his personal context as a learner, these issues all re-surface again, making plain the emotional resonance behind his rationally reasoned approach to teaching: whereas force drove V away from schooling, or the dictatorial version of education he had experienced as a boy, his university experiences as an older non-normative student were of genuine intellectual curiosity and passion being met by teachers who supported and kindled that academic drive.

When I ask V about the teachers he had borrowed from or been influenced by, he begins by contextualizing his perspective as a non-normative student: an individual who had always wanted to go to school, who liked academic learning, and only later in life finally got that opportunity to experience a quality educational environment. In this way, he saw

himself recognizing and appreciating the gift of higher education much more so than his peers did:

> Going back and realizing that the vehicle they [my pre-university educators] were trying to present to me was crap, but the education itself was stuff that I've always wanted to—I always wanted to go back to school; [it was] a big thing to me. So then to get in to school and see … that was a big deal. And I think part of that probably came from the fact that I was a mature student at the time, so I was already six or eight years on top of my other students. And being back there was, like such a blessing to me that, all I wanted to do was just get in there and relish in all that stuff.
>
> It's like, "I'll be down in the sub-basement in the microfiche," you know? It's like, "Yahoo..."

Within this context, as an intrinsically motivated older student, he describes two attributes that he associates with positively influential teachers: first, an apparent and active personal interest in the subject; next, an inviting and respectful regard toward the students—as course contributors, but also foremost as individuals. V returns to this second point again, to emphasize that a person's humanity, and valid adult perspective, supersede their assigned social role; that acknowledging this is fundamental to "good" education, and that the opposite is poisonous:

> Any professor who would come in and just be into doing what he's doing, and if you'd like to come along for the ride, "cool, great" – those were always the ones that hit me the most. And frankly, the one's who treated you like what you had to say was worth hearing. … Definitely, there's one or two professors that really made the difference for me. And it was always the ones

who were more into treating you as, a person and a human and an adult first

[emphatic tap]. And then student, only because that's what this situation is.

But the professors who walked in going, "I'm a professor, you're students,

here's the information, ba-a-a" All of [that] Paulo Freire, banking concept, in-

out kind of stuff. That's poisonous to good education. To me, well.

When I then ask V about what type of student he was, he extends this dichotomy in teaching

approaches—between a person-oppressing and a human-inviting manner of educating—to

the split student identities he formed in response to each respective environment. He

describes his irreverence in boyhood as a way of handling the uninspiring and overwhelming

classroom; likewise, his driven enthusiasm in adulthood as a co-production between himself

and the advisors who provided that academic life-blood:

I have to split it again: anything before I went to university, I would say, I was

the kid who always did really well in school, but I was always a little bored,

too. And so that always manifested in terms of … I don't even know if class

clown is the right word—that's not the right word, but—again, meeting what

I saw as an unreasonable influx of information with irreverence, was my way

to sort of handle it.

University? Did everything on-time usually before-time. Bam, did a little

more, always did extra, always wanted to push it so. most of my professors

just loved me, because, again I think it was the age difference was a big thing.

I was back in graduate school—how old was I when I went back? Probably

around thirty. And so I think they recognized the reason I was there was not

because, "Oh, my parents were paying for it" … but it was like someone

being out in the world professionally for ten years and then coming back and

going to school. I think they sort of picked up on that. Yeah. Good student,

good—good advisors, though. I had great advisors. You know, that is the life

blood of academia to me.

Unreasonable influx, irreverent student; good student, great advisors: the story of V's learner identity, as he tells it, is one defined by the manner of his classrooms' conversations. As a sum, these personal experiences made clear the motives behind V's professional approach, in a way that all the prior exhaustive pedagogical questions did not, and could not, uncover on their own. His keen attention to students' faces and comfort, his iconoclastic drive to break down the separating "I-thou" walls that other teachers set up; he presented these, his professional traits, as products of his personal academic rebirth and the intellectual passion he found there, his youthful traumas and the reactionary determination he forged there.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Like V, when B and M discuss their courses and their teacher-personas, and later on their  personal learning experiences and learner identities, the consequential link between these experts' professional approaches and their personal contexts emerges dependably: those aspects of the educational environment that each prioritizes, and the ways they elect to create and sustain those elements for their students, extend from the aspects of their own education which they most valued when present (or most acutely desired when absent).

**B's Course / Self summary: "Reading students as their thinking grows."**

***Reading students as their thinking grows: a teaching approach.*** When B talks about her course in the beginning of the interview, the topic she returns to time-and-again is her formative assessments: anonymous mid-term evaluations of the group and twice-quarterly individual meetings with students, by which she educates herself about students'

private thoughts and feelings. For her, classroom observations alone do not provide a sufficiently full picture of a group's progress: "Sometimes you can't tell," she explains, "One person's quiet, and you think, 'Oh, not interested, checking out'—really enthusiastic. Another person's quiet and—checked out.You just don't know until you ask, so I ask." Like V's keen attention to faces, B's emphasis on assessments is driven by an explicit desire to better "read" her students as she establishes the classroom environment and therein builds a conversation. Specifically, she places importance on getting "in-tune" with individuals' attitudes and thinking early—as they emerge and mature—so that she can directly and accurately address all the quiet-corners' and rebellious-sides' viewpoints, to nurture a well-connected learning community in each classroom.

As she explains below, she developed formative assessments in response to an experiencing confusion, a disconnect with her students' mindsets, and so sensing a need for understanding: the first time she taught this course, she received only summative feedback, and her students' puzzling range of responses drove her to seek more information, earlier, about their perspectives. He retelling in this excerpt elegantly summarizes the cycles of dialog between B and her students, leading to the way she currently views and uses assessments.

TCH >

My first year I didn't [do mid-quarter evaluations], and I found that when the student evals came in at the end of the quarter, I was confused. I didn't know how to read them. If I got a range of evaluations, I didn't know what that meant.

DI (T-internal)

So I thought, "I need more information. I need it earlier so I

understand, kind of, where we're headed and if there's anything I can

do to address their needs."

TCH >

So I think for the past four years I've done them consistently –

they're just for me. Nobody else sees them. They're formative. But it

helps me. … And also gives me a chance to talk with them about it,

and maybe get more information.

DI (T>S)

And then sometimes I can come back, at the end of the quarter and

say, "Alright. I remember at mid-quarter somebody said this."

First, students' course-end statements point to a gap in her understanding, which stimulates

an internal dialog in her. This then leads her to create formative assessments, which she uses

to evoke dialog in the classroom to explicitly address these students' ideas. From here, she

continues (below) by reenacting a specific classroom dialog that illustrates how these

assessment-driven dialogs allow her not only to explore students' concerns, but to follow

along the patterns of their growth in understanding her course.

DI (T<>S)

That happened last quarter particularly. Somebody said, "I wish we

had more creativity. I wish we had more creative writing

assignments."And so at the end I came back to that and just said,

"Somebody mentioned this last time. Tell me your perspective on it

now." And the person said, "Oh, that was me, I take it back." You

know, "All these pieces so fit into where we were going that I understand it now."

TCH >

So I know that they have incomplete information when they're giving the information at mid-quarter, but I'd still rather have it.

DI (T<>S)

And then if there's something that we need to address together we can – If there's something I don't understand I can ask them more questions. And it becomes very important for me.

TCH >

I take them seriously, but they're part of my education, part of my understanding their vocabulary, and what I'm not seeing externally.

From written responses, to internal conversations, live discussions, and finally a more mutual understanding: this excerpt shows how B's dialogs with her students—and with assessments being a fundamental tool for that dialog—support the gradual development of the course structure and her approach.

She makes clear that the goal of this approach, of her proactive self-"education" about students' vocabularies and attitudes, extends beyond her understanding students; that awareness is supports her larger goal of nurturing a productive classroom community: "It's not just about their communication with me. Or their mask, in front of me as their teacher, you know?" She sees this course as successful when students start to think like social scientists, and recognizes that creating that intellectual atmosphere is collective work: a community growing process that is better driven forward when students "interact, support,

[share] more knowledge, … laugh with each other … talk openly," because "more comes out."

In another excerpt, the story of a resistant philosophy major, her approach in reenacted dialogs clearly illustrates the socially inclusive and purpose-coordinated community she is working to frame and foster through her leadership:

TCH >

It's in some ways a more difficult class, in terms of the personalities.

We have, one person in there who none of the other writing teachers

would allow in their classes. … He was rude, he was—he's a

philosophy major.

DI (T<>S)

And he has that stereotypical arrogance, and he wants everything to be

about an argument, and he couldn't see beyond, "Philosophy is right.

Everything else is wrong and stupid." …

but I said, "alright, I'll take you," He needs [this course] to graduate. I

said, "But this is a social science writing class, and you have to learn

to think as a social scientist can you do that?"

"Yeah, I can do that."

I said, "It's gonna mean a stretch. Can you do that, are you willing to

– "

TCH >

So I made him kind of agree upfront,

DI (T>S)

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and so now I'm coming back to him consistently saying, "You're

thinking like a philosopher now, I need you to make this shift," you

know, "Here's what you're doing here, a social scientist would

approach it differently."

Here, we see her drawing an explicit social contract with this student, accepting him in and

getting him to accept the personal challenge that this community will present for him, so that

she can then hold him to his one promise: to become a supportive member of that

intellectual community. As the story continues (below), B shows how the classroom

community that she has framed then becomes an asset in its own self-regulation—beyond

what she would be able to control on her own:

TCH >

And he wants to argue with me, and he's trying to keep it under

control. And we're going over grammar – you saw the lesson today –

DI (T<>S)

And he wants to have a philosophical conversation about who decides

rules, and how stupid grammar is, and all of that – I'm going, "I don't

have enough time for that," you know?

I'm in the middle of answering somebody's question, and his hand

goes up and he said, "How would you punctuate this sentence?" And

it's some convoluted sentence that came from a philosophy class.

And I said, "Wait, I'm answering this question."

So when he finally gets a chance to say it, the rest of the class is

going, "What? That's stupid," you know, they're all over him.

Given the collaborative environment that B has nurtured in the room, and the facilitative role she has taken on—consistently, publicly seeking and serving the expressed needs of her students—she is able to leave this difficult student's behavioral regulation to himself ("he's trying to keep it under control") and failing that, to the class ("they're all over him"), while she herself remains in an educationally supportive role ("I don't have enough time for that … Wait, I'm answering this question"). Rather than this dialog unfolding as a battle of force between the teacher's authority and the student's resistance, it plays out as a reaffirmation of the group's interconnection and purpose as a learning community.

In this light, the course evaluations that B receives from students provide her with—again—a base of honest feedback to help her fine-tune her community understanding, so that she can better serve all the individuals within that group, as they grow in their ways of thinking and writing. This last pair of excerpts show that continuity well. In the first, an aside where B describes the recognizable style of the philosophy student on the mid-term evals, we see evidence of her conscious effort to maintain this forum's integrity as a safe place for students' true voices. In the second, we witness B using the information from that evaluative feedback to make sense of how a student is struggling—not merely knowing that the philosophy student is at the edge on the "range" of community experiences, but better understanding what his struggle is, and so how it might be addressed in service of the course's goals:

DI (T<S)

> He's one who thinks – Oh gosh, I could recognize his student mid-
> quarter evaluation, because it was very much him – philosopher
> intonation, "What does excellent really mean?"

TCH >

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But he said something about, that I was being too rigid, and,

infringing on academic freedom. He doesn't know what Academic

Freedom really means, but because I'm not supposed to know who

they are, I don't directly address that. But he's rubbing up against the

edges, and he's getting mad. … the mid-quarter evals were pretty

positive. It was just that one, really, who was having trouble. And I

think he's the same one – I think it's a he, I think I know who it is, but

I don't know that for sure. I could be misreading it entirely.

In this aside, B begins by stating that she knows clearly which mid-term course evaluation

belonged to the resistant student. But as she begins to take issue with this one evaluation out

loud, she then tempers that response with a principle ("I'm not supposed to know who they

are") and application ("[so] I don't directly address that [with him]"). Clearly, she knows it's

him, but she scales back her response to the point where the response is safely part of the

anonymous mass response ("evals were pretty positive. It was just that one … don't know

[who it is] for sure"). By learning from what students share while asserting an agnostic

stance about which individuals wrote them, she protects the integrity of the safe space she

has created for candid student feedback.

How this information is then used to benefit the course and its students, B explains

eloquently in the excerpt below. Wrapped in two general statements about her educational

approach and intention, respectively, she evokes the image of the resistant philosophy

student one final time: here, expressing with clear awareness the personal root of his

academic trouble with the course—and how that alters his interpretation of her message to

him and his classmates:

TCH >

part of my job in constructing a course, and in the feedback I give, is

helping them learn to think, as social scientists, in order to write as a

social scientist. So, I try to give them practice at reading, talking,

engaging in the work of a social scientist – asking them to look at

their work as a social scientist might.

And that's partially why this philosophy major's having such a hard

time – because he doesn't want to quite do that.

DI (T>S)

And so he interprets that as, tightly constraining him, when in fact I'm

saying, "Enter this discourse community," you know, "Make this leap

out of this other area." …

TCH >

Whatever I'm teaching, I'm conscious that there's always that

component of thinking and writing – that writing isn't just … about

producing good texts. Those are the vehicles that I get to work with in

order to help someone grow. And growing in their thinking is part of

it; gaining self-knowledge is another: learning something about the

voice they have to use, and the diversity of voices they have to use,

thinking about other people and the reader with consideration.

Using evaluations, B develops her insights about students as individuals, and from there

charts a trajectory of questions and conversations, activities and dialogs: possible ways

forward, past group-discussed impediments (e.g., contemporary school expectations, time

constraints, or an obstinate individual personality), from students' current mindsets toward

the course's intended educational ends.

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***The take-away: generalized notions, personalized foundations.*** In thinking about

the way B delivers and uses formative assessments, it is useful to imagine all the stages-of-

task at which that general approach—collecting anonymous, unofficial mid-term course

evaluations from students—is shaped by B's unique experiences and attributes as a teacher.

She first implemented the practice in response to a perceived perceived need, shaped the

questions on that evaluation form to address those specific issues, parsed that feedback with

her specific course goals in mind, and followed up in classroom conversations that reflect

her specific character and relationship with her students. The next selection of excerpts will

illustrate in more detail how B's formative educational experiences and sense of identity

channel directly into the way she approaches the details of her classroom, such as the

evaluations just described.

**B's Educational / Individual Background: Learning to Value Person before Content**

      ***Reading students as their thinking grows: personal foundations.*** When B begins to

elaborate  about teaching her students as whole persons, and to talk about her personal

growth trajectory, it becomes clear that this person-over-content approach to the classroom

extends from her own formative experiences with school, its value and its influence. School,

as she describes it in her life, was an environment for self-discovery: not just—nor

primarily—about the classrooms and teachers, but about the larger community and peer

relationships that helped her to explore and define who she was and wanted to be in life.

School, for her, was at its best and most lastingly influential where it contributed to personal

thinking and development; at its least enjoyable and most forgettable where it fell into

corralling her individual energy along pre-defined paths of thought, that were conventionally

"correct" rather than genuine.

In this first selection, B explicitly ties back her approach with university writing to her prior teaching experiences: first, her years of practice in an institution that emphasized character education—i.e., creating environments that support students in developing positive personal attributes (confidence, honesty)—then, her beginnings as an elementary teacher, where she entered the profession because she cared about students' personal growth—and saw the subject as a tool serving that end.

> TCH >
>
>> Where I used to teach – it was a small private college – and they
>> thought in terms of character education, and so I carry that with me –
>> and then years of teaching it.
>>
>> So I think that opportunities to help them grow in character: to be
>> fearless in their writing, to be honest, about it.
>>
>> You know, and I think of educating the person – I started out as an
>> elementary school teacher. One of the reasons I chose elementary
>> school was, I cared about teaching the person … the subject wasn't
>> the thing that drove me to education, it was the individual. And I
>> loved elementary school because of the interdisciplinary nature, and
>> how you could connect that – but all the time, those subjects, were
>> helping the individual grow.
>>
>> So in all my classes, I'm trying to help that individual grow as a
>> writer, as a thinker, as a learner – as fast and as far as they can go – in
>> the time I have.

I've broken the excerpt above to highlight the structure of her statement: professionally formative experience, current approach (character development opportunities); initial

professional motivation, current goal (personal growth). B then continues to expound on this essential intention, of using writing as a subject to cultivate individuals, by describing two aspects of this professional approach that have been personally challenging for her.

The first difficulty, she explains below, is learning to accept being part of a larger educational growing process across these students' lifespan, where much of her influence on students cannot be seen, and much of their positive growth during her course cannot be owned as her own work. Here, she uses the metaphor of a flower blooming to create an image of that privately interred growth and its eventual public expression:

TCH >

But I also recognize that I don't control the rate of that growth.

And so some people – I get them, maybe after several other teachers

had them – and the root system was growing but nothing showed on

top. I get them and suddenly, they're blooming, and I recognize that's

been developing over time and I get to see that: that blooming, part.

I'm also aware that I may be one of those teachers cultivating the

roots and I won't see that.

And maybe they don't even bloom terribly, until after college. But I'm

convinced it will happen, and that each of us sort of cultivates that

ground, and helps the person grow as far and as fast as they can grow,

given everything else going on in their lives, at this moment.

And that's okay with me. I don't have to see it, to know that work has

been done.

After describing how she makes peace with students' varied rates of visible progress, through her belief about human learning patterns (and her related mnemonic image), she then

describes her second personal difficulty: limiting herself to only one defined subject as her tool for building up students as wholes. She begins by reasserting that educational motive, and explains consequently the complex awareness about students—as historical, biographical wholes—that she maintains in her mind as she learns about them personally and works with them educationally. This awareness, she explains, makes it hard for her to limit her teaching within the bounds of that academic writing curriculum:

TCH >

> Because I think about teaching the whole person, and not just the subject matter, I recognize that they come with a complexity of issues, ideas, readiness, predispositions – all of that. And learning styles, past successes, past failures – and all of that – comes with them into the classroom. It doesn't get left outside that door.
>
> And so I try to read them, I try to understand them as individuals, as well as a class. And it's also why I try a diversity of methods. And come at assignments in a lot of different ways. … I care about them developing as writers, not just about [them as] academic writers. And it's hard for me sometimes just to stick to the curriculum I've been given. But I've learned to do that.

What we see in this passage, in its three parts, is a coherent thread linking her personal motives and formative teaching experiences (first segment) to her professional beliefs and the way she uses them to manage philosophically her experience of emotionally resonant classroom realities (second segment), and finally to her professional self awareness of internal tensions between her personal ideals and current practical boundaries (third

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segment)—all of which together are defining her particular way of practice, within the institutional structure that surrounds her classroom.

*Biographical context and identity-based motivation.* As B goes into more detail about her educational experiences growing up, the motivational drives behind her approaches begin to show deeper roots. Key aspects of her approach—her interest in gathering and addressing students' real questions, her conception of whole-person development as an educational priority that subsumes whatever is the classroom's given subject-matter, and her desire to empower students as individual thinkers by introducing a range of tools that might fit their unique personalities—are commonly informed by her experiences as a student who was creative, was shaped by her connection to a larger liberal revolutionary generation, and wanted to change the way things were done in education: she experienced for herself how inauthentic searches for "right answers" disengaged her, how real-world conversations and contexts of self-discovery shaped her, and how her generation empowered her with the sense that she could and should create learning environments that grew people rather than pushing content.

When I ask her about her formative school experiences, and the teachers who influenced her, she  describes (similarly to V, also a non-traditional graduate student) a generally negative relationship with early childhood school environments, and conversely a deep appreciation later on for teachers who demonstrated both a personal connection with their subject and a respectful affiliation with their students as fellow learners; the negative experiences motivating her to get involved in education as an agent of change, the positive experiences giving her a sense of how to embody that change:

Ououh, I didn't like school. I think part of the reason I went into education

was I didn't like it, and it wasn't engaging, and it wasn't creative. And I

wanted to do it better.

So I don't have a lot of positive role models, from my earlier education …

But graduate school … teachers who had an inquiry based approach [rather

than a content orientation]. … Teachers who were genuinely curious.

Teachers who wanted to learn, along with students. Those were the ones who

influenced me.

B elaborates more on this relationship, between the student learning experiences she had and

the student learning experiences that she wants to foster, when I ask her what type of student

she was. She summarizes two stages in her development: a latent stage where, now in

retrospect, she can see her personal potential (her creativity, her growing base of meaningful

experiences) waiting to blossom; a stage in college where, as her students are now, she was

defining herself within the context of her peers and her world. This self-summary mirrors

closely the way she describes her students' patterns of growth (three excerpts back) as

analogously delayed between the time when learning starts and when its developmental

products become evident. And she continues here by describing a second connection

between her self-awareness and her awareness of students in their learning: that like herself,

she has witnessed her students forgetting much of the content they learn from one course to

the next in college, but hanging on to the things they discover about themselves.

It is this kind of personal growth-related learning, therefore, that she sees as

particularly "helpful" for her students, and works to evoke in her courses; she concludes this

segment by reenacting a student's response which, for her, evidences them experiencing that

kind of learning through her course:

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My teachers would have said, growing up, "Creative. How do we get her to do what we want her to do?" … I would say that it was more personally meaningful than scholastically exemplary. You know, I can look back on how I did in school and know exactly how I was growing as a person. And I think a lot of my time in elementary and high school [was] sort of biding time. … Undergraduate was figuring out who I was, in a time of great social and political revolution. And long nights of conversation with people wondering whether they should go to Canada instead of being drafted, you know, and those are the things I associate with.

… and having taught college now, for many years, to know how little of my classes they'll actually remember. But if they've discovered something important about themselves – that's what'll stay with them. Not that they learned comma rules. But that they learned something about what they're capable of.

And in the mid-quarter evals, I was reading some of that – which was very gratifying – was, "I didn't know I could produce this kind of writing. I've never been able to do this before. I haven't—I didn't know—I'm better than I thought I was." So those [are] the things that are really helpful.

Finally, in these last two juxtaposed excerpts, B gives us insight into her approach for stimulating the above kind of personal-growth learning—or more specifically, how she came to perceive the *need* for that approach, through its conspicuous absence in her own early education, and how she came to see herself as an agent for filling that need. She describes, at various points in the interview preceding these excerpts, her specific means for making classroom problems and educational discussions genuine: from guiding students through the

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creative thinking process of deciding on and researching their own social science projects, to generally making sure that she explains things only once students have expressed the need or desire to have those points explained. Here, she reenacts her college English classes as the opposite to this approach, explaining that their disingenuous tell-me-what-I-want-to-hear pattern of education turned her away from the subject—despite her love of writing. This was in response to the question, "In school, what was your favorite subject?":

> Um , music, certainly … I liked a lot of things in college – women's studies, theater, music, art, those were my major classes. I didn't like English classes, because they were so much of, "Guess the right answer that I think, it ought to be." So that's why I didn't major in English. You know, when it wasn't a true, creative analysis – it was a, … you know, "Why am I spending time thinking it through, if I have to guess the right answer?" So I disengaged from English – but I loved writing.

So we see here the continuity of her childhood interest in subjects that encourage her creativity and genuine expression, and disinterest in classrooms where those motivating drives are forcibly or artificially corralled. Then, when I ask her to describe her self-conception, as it evolved back then, she presents an image centered on her channeling that creative energy—for herself, in graduate school—toward changing educational environments into something tacitly more open and genuine (away from those constrictive and prescriptive approaches above). She contextualizes this personal drive within her larger generational zeitgeist, defined by notions of resistance, social liberation, and individual empowerment:

> I came from a very conservative family. And I was not conservative anymore. And it was such a time of change: there were issues of the war, there was the women's movement, there were just so many things that were questioned and

turned upside down – that it was hard to try and find my bearings, during that time. … As a graduate student going for education, it was, again, about changing the world. So I felt empowered. I felt that I needed to challenge things – I wanted to do it differently. Why else would I go into education? I didn't want to replicate what I had had.

So in these excerpts from B's interview, we see again a pattern of networked influence extending from her personal learning experiences to the way she professionally understands and approaches her students' learning experiences. Though B's biography and resulting motives in teaching are distinct from V's in their details, still some persistent general similarities stand out. On an emotional/sensory level, the viscerally empathetic character of their described practices (e.g., the common mentions of "reading" and wanting to better understand students' faces and underlying attitudes) is similar. At a conceptual/heuristic level, the dialog-grounded structure of their pedagogical knowledge-bases (note how often generalities about teaching practice transition into conversational reenactments, compared with generalities about personal history and character) is comparable. And at a motivational/dispositional level, the personal resonance of their professional goals (note how clearly lines can be drawn between their historical relationships with classrooms and their current ideals of classroom practice) is striking.

The third teacher we will look at in this study, M, has had a distinctly different educational experience from B and V: he was educated outside the U.S., in a more strict European tradition that he carries with him into his professional approach. He was not an "average-performing" nor "non-traditional" student, and stayed close to his orthodox roots as opposed to V and B's personal-professional rebellions. And yet, in delving into his descriptions of himself and his classroom, these same patterns arise in his idiosyncratic

teaching approach—of empathetic sensitivity, dialog-grounded expertise, and personally projective beliefs and goals about educating his students: that is, pedagogical intentions that begin by being aware of what experiences supported his *own* learning, and using that internal sense to interpret students' needs and to create analogous learning opportunities for them.

### M's Course / Self Summary: "Toeing the line of intellectual accountability."

***Toeing the line of intellectual accountability: a teaching approach.*** When M talks about his course in the interview's introduction, the aspect of his approach that he explains and returns to most is pressing students to take accountability for their ideas—not just to accurately read and report on course content, but to actively incorporate their knowledge from other courses and personal contexts to say something *interesting* and *challenging* about the material they are engaged with. He concedes that this approach is often difficult for students to acclimate to, in a schooling culture where many teachers enable weak student thinking and writing: by accepting half-hearted, pro forma work from students; by providing feedback that offers little constructive criticism and so demands little reflection or effort. Still he is dedicated to obstinately opposing this sedative tide of complacency: he sees his role as a reviving jolt to students' innate abilities; a "last stop before the desert" where they can "get their heads on their shoulders" and learn to take criticism not as a personal attack but as an opportunity for rising to their fuller potential.

The excerpts that follow will highlight a few recurring themes in M's description of his course and teaching style; his particular approach for moving students to apply their pre-existing knowledge intelligently onto new topics, and convey their insights responsibly like professional adult writers. The first theme is his acute attention to students' interests and knowledge, and their dispositions—either to give effort, or to resist, behind a wall of naive

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self-confidence—in practicing and taking criticism about way they use that knowledge to support their ideas. The next theme is his tireless repetition about how *important* this hard work is for them: how valuable in the real-world is a critical eye for detail and a receptive mindset in the face of hard criticism. And the final theme is his own role in this work: as a model of the experienced writer who has taken and learned from hard professional criticism, and as a knowing critic who is encouraging and driving for serious students who can see the compliment in an occasionally ruthless "No—that's not the way."

In this first set of excerpts, we see M explain very succinctly his approach with his students, by contrasting it against the loose and lenient style that he perceives going on in other classrooms (much the way V contrasted his against punitive classroom environments, and B against prescriptive and uncreative environments). He begins by describing what his style is: specifically, holding discussions wherein students are held accountable for the quality and feasibility of their arguments, in a way that reflects "real life." He then offers up two pieces of dialog that illustrate what that quality thinking looks like and how he structures the classroom to compel students' accountability for the ideas they contribute:

TCH >

The discussions are important. I mean I really want them – I mean you joke about this, and I know that it's sort of my *style* – I really want them to know that it's not an "Anything goes, I can say anything I like and it's going to be accepted" I don't think that's *true* in real life. And I really feel they have to be held accountable for their ideas. It doesn't have to be something I *agree* with –

DI (S>T)

so as opposed to "I agree with so-and-so," which I hate,

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DI (T<>S)

> that's why I have them write it *down*, and "It's your *Idea*, you have to
>
> read that paragraph."

TCH >

> I want them to have looked in-depth at things. And it *takes* them a
>
> while; they're not English majors. I have no idea what goes on in
>
> other classes. Sometimes I wonder, "What are they *teaching* them?"

He begins by making clear that the quality of student thinking has nothing to do with it's similarity to his thinking—this transitions him into the first piece of dialog, where he shows that he actively *dislikes* that kind of mindless agreement. Then, in the second piece of dialog, he describes having students write out their ideas before-hand, and then reenacts himself calling on the students to re-read their contributions—an example of how he structures the course to give students practice at taking accountability for their own thoughts and expression.

He follows this up by explaining more directly that imposed structure's purpose or goal, the kind of thinking he *is* after: namely, having students look more deeply into what they think and how they say it. And he immediately acknowledges how long and difficult this unfamiliar process can be for them: an unpreparedness that he ascribes to their other classroom learning experiences. He then continues, below, by describing the teacher-student exchange that he imagines in those other courses, and contrasts it with the way that he views his students—as knowledgeable people with something worth saying:

> You know, they write these papers, they get these little terdy
>
> comments on them, they're taking notes, and it seems like it's in one
>
> ear and out the other.

DI (T>S)

> There's no [clap], "Let's think about this for a change Let's relate
> what you've learned to what we're learning in here."

TCH >

> That's why *Stan* is so—he brings in his Poli Sci theories, and he has
> that, or Laura doing Linguistics. They're trying to bring in—I *want*
> them to bring in that world. Or AJ comes from *Europe* – he's *gonna*
> have a different perspective, you know? Mr Biscuits was extremely
> well-read, and he may not always be articulate, but

M's unabashedly critical description of the Anything-goes classroom projects a visceral disapproval of it's pointless artificiality: general papers, insignificant "terdy" comments, myopic note-taking. He then illustrates with dialog what is missing from these exchanges: a connected, integrated sense of what students already know and how that is relevant to what they're currently learning. From here, he begins a long stream of discussing—specifically, encyclopediacly—his current students and the knowledge-bases they bring into his classroom, and the rich learning exchanges that arise as they make personal intellectual connections with the course's subject-matter.

At this point, by M's contrast of images, we see a clear vision forming of his intended educational relationship with students: against the sedative tide of 'whatever,' toward a more serious investment in students' ideas as—admittedly rough, but nonetheless—informed, interesting, valid, and worth pushing into a more polished form. As M continues describing his teacherly relations with specific students, he returns dependably to emphasize a few poignant details about his respectfully demanding classroom dynamic.

First, he returns often to the point that he *recognizes* students' latent abilities—their substantive interests, intellectual proneness, and interesting ideas—where they show briefly or subtly on the surface of students' yet nascent, timid, or undisciplined classroom contributions. More than seeing it, he *compels* it: trusting it to come in time (as does B, in a more patient way), and being a "hardass" with them to spark their energy and effort and growth up to surface (as does V, through a more conciliatory persuasion). We see this exemplified as M continues, from the excerpt above, describing Mr Biscuits: a well-read and intelligent but also quiet and often unprepared student, who M has been pushing steadily into daylight, through their classroom exchanges.

> Mr Biscuits was extremely well-read, and he may not always be
> articulate, but I know him from before. H*e'd failed two other classes,*
> *and then he was passed to me –* me of all people; you know, mister
> hardass –

DI (O>T)

> And what happened is, the other teacher said "He never speaks."

DI (T>S)

> Well I just—you know me: "Speak Or I'm gonna pull a lever and
> you're gonna go to hell," you know.

DI (S>T)

> And he spoke,

DI (T-internal)

> and I went "Wait a minute, this kid is not a dumb."

DI (T<>S)

He said—I went around the class the first day and I asked, "What are

you reading." He said, "*Ulysses.*" I go, " James Joyce's *Ulysses*?" like,

'Are you having me *on*?' And then he was reading *Portrait of the*

*Artist.* So he knew the names, so then I asked—he was a bright boy.

He has real problems with getting his act together You know, that's

why [in the class you sat in on] it was, "Hi there. What a surprise, Mr

Biscuits, no draft." You know, "I've had you for years." But with me

he'll do *very* well.

TCH >

You know, even though I *presume* I come across as really hard  and

adamant and domineering and everything else, if I see someone like a

Mr Biscuits who I *know* is innately bright, I'm not gonna get on his

case. I think he'll get his act together.

Here we see M introducing the student Mr Biscuits as one who other teachers have been

unsuccessful with—and M's first reenactment of dialog (Mr Biscuits's previous teacher

describing Mr Biscuits to M) points to the crux of that problem: Mr Biscuits doesn't speak in

class. M then reenacts his standard ("you know me") response to such a student: he compels

Mr Biscuits to speak. And as their dialog builds, M extends his understanding of Mr

Biscuits's strengths and challenges far beyond the "he's dumb" assessment implied by his

other teachers: he reads ambitiously and comprehends well, but has trouble with meeting

deadlines. So M presses Mr Biscuits where he needs to be pressed ("Speak or...you're gonna

go to hell") and eases off where he thinks Mr Biscuits needs time to work on himself ("What

a surprise, Mr Biscuits. No draft … I'm not going to get on his case. I think he'll get his act

together"). By the end of this small story, M has turned this student into an archetype—

"when I see *a* Mr Biscuits"—of the students he serves best: those with sharp minds who need a disciplined push to get themselves aligned and involved; who need someone to recognize and compel their potential.

M makes sure to note that not only the reserved students, but also outspoken ones, respond well to this direct academic approach—following Mr Biscuits's story with a briefer Narrative about Mil:

> And Mil, he's *fun*. I've had Mil before.

DI (S<>T)

> Mil was always speaking out in class, totally out there. In the first
> quarter that I had him he was really much more [of an] in-my-face
> kind of person? And then we got along.

TCH >

> And I actually ended up using one of his pieces in my course packet
> … so I've had these kids before. And they know I'm going to be
> tough, but for some reason they [like it] –  and then some of them
> *don't like* it. What a surprise.

M doesn't delve too deeply into this story, simply narrating the dynamic of his dialog with Mil rather than reenacting elements of that exchange, en route to his point about how his "tough" teacher-student exchanges can mature. As Mr Biscuits's story illustrates the manner of this process, so Mil's story illustrates the gradual outcome: Mil is always speaking out in class; was initially rather contentious in exchanges with M; and that dialog has matured over time, to the point where they both get along, Mil is "fun" to work with, and M has included some of his exemplary writing in the course packet.That dialogic description, then, reemphasizes and extends the point M made within Mr Biscuits's story: students learn to

expect, and often come to openly appreciate, his tough approach because it communicates respect for the students and their ideas.

Both male students' cases illustrate a general progression of M's educational exchanges from intentionally fostered clashes ("Speak!" "in-my-face") to mutual and productive understandings ("with *me* he'll do very well" "I actually ended up using one of his pieces"): the success of this process, each time, relying on M *recognizing* students' interests and abilities, then pushing them in ways that will gradually bring out their best.

The next pair of students that M describes, after Mr Biscuits and Mil, are two females: Jessica and Seena-Day. By juxtaposing his dialogic exchanges with these two, M clarifies a second point that he returns to often (see, e.g., the last sentence of the previous excerpt): some students do not respond positively to his firm and direct approach, but he is aware of this, and does make an effort to keep them all integrated in the ongoing course dialog.

Jessica was a notable anomaly in the class I was observing: outspokenly critical of and resistant to M's method and manner, in a way that fellow students would wrinkle their faces at and sometimes verbally counter. Seena, on the other hand, was quiet and reserved until later in the quarter, when she began contributing now-and-again to class discussions. They were both back-of-the-room students, choosing seats out of the spotlight and participating infrequently. But as M narrates his dialogs with each of them, and his internal thought-stream within those exchanges, he makes clear how he distinguishes an educationally allowable student silence from an unacceptable one: by attending closely—in those special occasions when they do speak out—to the attitudes and ideas churning inside those students.

TCH >

What really annoyed me about *her* [Jessica] was her paper had every

single error that I said to avoid … she had no argument. It was just

basically all this repeated facts.

DI (T-internal)

So I'm going, "Here am I, spending three weeks  four weeks before

this paper's due and all you're gonna give me back is –" It's like,

"Where is your head?" And then her argument is I speak too fast.

"Well, you're the only one who's *having* that problem" And then she

never *spoke*. And when she spoke, she said cli*chés*. So there was

nothing. …

DI (T<>S)

 I called on [her once]—and I tell you what … we were doing *The

Wall*, and the [author] said, "This looks like a tribute to Jane Fonda."

…

DI (T-internal)

So I said, "Ooh! I'll call her. She wrote her paper on Jane Fonda. I'll

call on her to say, '*Why* did he make this allusion?'" thinking she'd

say, "Because it's a left-wing article and—"...

DI (S>T)

so [she replied] "I don't know I wasn't paying attention."

In this excerpt, we see—through reenactments of internal dialog—M actively seeking some

external sign of reciprocal effort and growth from Jessica ("So I'm going... And then... And

then... And when... So there was nothing") and positively making an effort to stimulate her

thinking and participation ("Ooh! I'll call on her. She wrote a paper on..."). And he describes

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his frustration with her not as personal, but as academic ("every single error... no argument... repeated facts"), while implicitly interpreting her complaints about his manner (i.e., "speaking too fast") as likewise more academic than personal: a thin surface argument covering a deeper issue of her avoiding thoughtful engagement with course content and discussions ("I don't know I wasn't paying attention").

On the other hand, M describes himself as very pleased with Seena's effort to think and share about course content, even though it comes late in the term and imperfectly:

TCH >

I usually don't *have* that reaction [that I did with Jessica].

DI (T-internal)

You know, let's say Seena, who hadn't spoken all quarter – "*fine*"

You know – and then sudden*ly*, when she spoke she was talking about

*privilege*, and she was talking about all these interesting concepts, and

actually she *wrote* very well. she got A's on her last two responses.

DI (T-internal)

So suddenly I went, "Well *This* is nice." …

DI (T<>S)

So there is a student, though, who did speak and spoke well. And

maybe it was a little muddled, maybe it wasn't perfect, but she was –

you saw that – She was eng*aged* that day. She spoke.

TCH >

So that's a student [Seena], again, who I wish – if that had happened,

say, week five – I would certainly make sure to contact and

encourage. But this other student [Jessica], … she never seemed to *get* anything out of it.

Here—again, through reenactments of internal dialog—we see M accepting Seena's initial reservations about participating ("'Fine' You know..."), and being excited when she finally shows signs of her private engagement and growth with the course ("Well this is nice" "interesting concepts... she wrote very well... she was *engaged* that day"). Academically, he expresses no displeasure with Seena's slow-build or rough-edged presentation, and personally, his only disappointment seems to be with himself, for not having seen signs of her internal drive and pushed on it earlier ("I wish—if that had happened [earlier]... contact and encourage").

The point M is illustrating though these two female students is that his tough approach is actually quite caring and responsive in its details. His general manner is not motivated by personal power and ego, but is focused on students' academic development—he emphasizes this immediately after finishing the above stories by bringing up Sam, one of the students he is most chummy with in the class I'm observing: "You know, if Sam wrote a bad paper? He'd *get a D*. I'll have no [problem]." More specifically, his challenges in discussions with students are not punitive, but educational: they place nuanced pressure on individual learners, based on careful observations of their dispositions and ideas, and are meant firstly to encourage that individual's thinking forward.

M follows the theoretical Sam-scenario by reenacting an actual dialog with a past student, to drive home this idea:

TCH >

I had a student, I gave him an F on his first paper.

DI (T<>S)

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I said, "You're *far* better than this crap. This is garbage."

He *blew* up at me And the next day he came back and said, "Okay.

What do I need to make this paper an A."

I said, "You need to do this, this this, this, and this." He did.

TCH>

He got his A. He got his A in the class. *And* I wrote him a letter of

recommendation  for a job in Japan.

TCH >

So I think, Josh, it's because I get to know the students. They're not

seven hundred in [a lecture] hall, my TAs are not grading the paper.

There is this connection.

In this story, M harshly criticizes the student's writing, on the grounds of that individual's ability, and then rides the momentum of that student's dissatisfaction to get him committed to doing his best work. And when the student rises to the occasion, M is there to support him with a top grade and a letter of recommendation: as with Mr Biscuits and Mil, and more subtly with Jessica and Seena, M's hardest language and kindest gestures all channel into a unified continuum of individualized support for his students' learning; a support based in social connection.

M consistently makes asides that *acknowledge* some students do not like his firm, direct approach. But he he frames this as unsurprising, perhaps inevitable, in accomplishing what he does: he takes students—especially those who have been intellectually quiet, reserved, disconnected, or unmoved for far too long—and shakes them compassionately into action. His challenges are meant to startle students awake, to stimulate their attention, and to align their desires (what these individuals *want* to be) with their efforts (what they must be

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able to do and deliver). While not every student is disposed to appreciate this approach, he notes that a surprisingly large number respond positively to it. And those few special, tight-shelled cases seem to prize deeply—and for years to come—that vivid educational experience:

DI (T<>S)

> There can be a negative reaction. But I'm still getting emails from students 10 years ago. I just got one from a student: "remember me?" He tells me what class he's in. … I'm still in touch with students from my very first teaching in 1971. I still call him my student, even though he's 55.

TCH >

> So there *are* some students who *like* that, and there're some students who don't like that. That's the way I am. And that's what my feeling is – and *I don't know* if she [Jessica]—don't tell me anything she said, but—you know, maybe she doesn't like it, but I think that someone has to tell her,

DI (T>S)

> "This is not enough. It's not enough to say, 'I'm a leftwing liberal,' and [think that] somehow because I am too, I'm going to like you."

TCH >

> No, I love the rightwing republicans who can speak their mind and show me that they've got a real interest in the world around them. They're much better for me than some *wuss* who is doing whatever they're doing.

Here, M describes his teaching style as an extension of his no-nonsense character ("That's the way I am" "I love [students] who can speak their mind") and the lasting role he sees himself playing in students' lives ("I still call him my student, even though he's 55"). Then, as he transitions from acknowledging the general archetypes of students who do-or-don't like his approach (the excerpt's first half), to interacting with one specific student-of-concern (second half), he illustrates how his biographical self-perception guides his manner. He wants students to participate in substantive and energized classroom exchanges—making real arguments, with genuine passion and intellectual investment—to engrain important course lessons in their minds, hearts, and habits for the future. His blunt tone in the dialog above, where he enacts his core message to Jessica ("someone has to tell her, 'This is not enough.'") reflects this compassionate concern; to move her away from that tragic fate of the ambling "wuss," toward rising up and owning her identity as the "leftwing liberal" she wants to be.

In this last selection of excerpts, M expounds more on the educational need that he sees himself addressing for university students. First, he explains the real-world importance for students of learning to willfully recognize shortcomings in their work and utilize criticism to improve what they do. Then he explains his educational role—as an experienced writer, and recipient of criticism—in driving that learning. In each instance, he re-emphasizes that these educational exchanges are not about battling for his power or ego, but about building up students' awareness and accountability; and in each he transitions into reenactments of dialog that illustrate how he embodies these goals and intentions.

Below, M describes the real-life importance of seeing little errors in writing—and marks in an aside that his own awareness, and worry, about such mistakes in his *own* writing

may motivate him to repeat this message as persistently as he does with students. He then reenacts himself using a metaphor and an analogy to drive that point home with students:

TCH >

I think they need to know at some point: they think they're not getting the job because they need more women or they need more blacks or they need more minorities, and they're getting—No! It's because you didn't spell the words right, it's because you've got too many passive-voice constructions.

You know, maybe because I'm like that for myself – I *do* make those mistakes, and I'm kind of aware that it's very easy to make those mistakes. And sometimes you wonder if you're going to get or not get a job because you've –

DI (T>S)

but if nobody *tells* them—and I don't know if I used that metaphor in class "This is the last stop before the desert. This is where you'll fill up on the gas."

DI (T<>S)

What was the one, the other one they told me off for using too much: [it] was the gymnast one. They said, "You've told us that three times." I said "If I'm looking at the Olympics and I see the gymnasts and they get a 100 and somebody else gets a 98, they all look perfect to me. I can't tell the difference. But the *judges*, *they* know the difference between what is a 98 and a 100. Those people who read your letters or

read your essays, *they* know the difference between adequate, good,

and excellent."

So I used that one like four times in the other class. "You *told* us that

already."

His first reenactment presents, generally, the language he uses (the metaphor of a final gas

station) to emphasize the importance of his lessons to students. His second, more specific

reenactment, then invokes the voices of his current students *responding*, with some evident

irritation, to his manner of delivery; how persistently (and repetitively) he *re*-emphasizes this

point. A bit later, below, M returns to explain why he so heavily (even overbearingly) drives

home this point, through a story of past students who did *not* understand or accept this point

about the importance of details in composing—and the frictions in his educational

exchanges with them that resulted:

TCH >

One class I taught a year ago – I was so disappointed – I came in, it

was an advanced writing class, and the kids couldn't write. They

didn't *read*, they couldn't write, but they had these *pretentions* about

themselves that they *were* all writers.

DI (T<>S)

And so I'd be pointing out passive voices and I'd be pointing out

dangling modifiers and I'd be pointing out  misspelling and I'd be

pointing out a weak vocabulary, word repetitions.

And they'd get pissed *off at me*; I was "killing there style."

I go "What style? I don't *see* a style." You know, I say, "I wrote for

the bodybuilding magazine  and I can write for academic journals I

can do both. You just *write*. There's no sense of your own *voice*, and

who you are."

This dialog presents a fairly contentious interaction, as M works to mitigate students' egos as

writers (which are leading them to take his corrections personally, rather than learning from

and improving by them) and asserting his own strengths a writer to illustrate the stylistic

control that they *imagine* they have, but have not yet developed. Clearly, this is not the kind

of interaction with students that he has described as his ideal aim—but it is part of his style:

to be direct and honest in preparing his students for the demands of the real world. He

immediately balances this by describing again the other side of his style: to be encouraging

and supportive to those students who have the will and interest, but not perhaps the self-

confidence or awareness, to apply their potential.

TCH >

At the same time, as I said before – as with Mr Biscuits, like a *Sam* –

come on: this kid needs to be encouraged. He needs to be told  that

he's *wise*, that he can put together diverse ideas, he speaks

wonderfully well. A student like that needs to be en*couraged*. And

last [term], in Writing 1, I had a student go from a D to an A. I

*knew*—he spoke in class, again—*bright*. Couldn't write, but he *read*,

and he *knew*. So I encouraged that student.

But if I see a slacker, … I mean, I give them the *time*, but I feel like

what I'm looking for in the room are to encourage those students—to

at *least* let them know that somewhere in the world there *are* people

who *do* think this way … people who have ideas, and that they need

to engage in. That's their *job* at the university

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DI (T>S)

> "That's your job; to engage." It doesn't mean you have to sit around
>
> here and *study* all day long and you can't party – I partied when I was
>
> an undergrad – it's that, "Put your head on your shoulders."

Here, in the second paragraph, we see M transition from the student needs he is trying to

meet through his personal style, to the learning environment he is trying to create around that

style in the classroom: a space where students can experience intellectually rigorous

exchanges (and so come to know that such communities *exist* in the world out there, for

them). With this, he falls again into a direct dialog with his students—the students who need

encouragement, and the ones who are not investing in the course learning experience yet,

together—telling them what their responsibility is, understandingly (based in his own

experience: "I partied when I was an undergrad") but firmly ("That's your job; to

engage...Put your head on your shoulders"), to set that exchange on the right path.

Finally, M describes his awareness of who he is—physically, socially,

institutionally—in these learning environments, and so the way he adjusts his manner with

students to maintain that ideal balance of being firm and encouraging for them. This

explanation comes after M makes a side-statement about sometimes wanting to call out

some students on their unfettered self-sureness in challenging his methods ("Sometimes I

want to turn to them and say, 'Who has the PhD in this room? That you know more than I do,

or that you know more than William Broils,' you know?"), which prompts me to ask whether

that might be an issue of conflicting egos. He proceeds to clarify—again, using archetypal

and specific dialogs—that his concern has nothing to do with them adopting his personal

opinions, and all to do with them accepting that he carries something worth learning to share

with them:

TCH >

It's not ego in the sense of "Agree with me." It's ego in the sense of "I

think I've got something to teach you."

DI (S>T)

And they're coming in and going, "I don't want to learn what he has

to teach me." It's not so much, "I think that war is bad and he thinks

war is good," and we're arguing over *that*. …

TCH >

I like an intellectual argument. I don't like what Oscar Wilde calls

'hitting below the intellectual belt': you know, let's turn this into a

petty squabble over, "you're not being nice to me." And that's how

you'll respond to an article: "Well that's your opinion." If we're

sitting in a coffee shop, sure. But if we're in a class*room* – the

demands are different.

After using reenactments of student voices—above—to clarify the kind of personal offenses

("You're not being nice" "I don't want to learn...") that get in the way of educationally useful

classroom arguments (e.g., exploring differing intellectual perspectives on War's intrinsic

moral character), M then starts listing off all the attributes in *himself*—below—that he must

take into account when teaching a topic, in order to be intellectually challenging without

being personally offensive to his students:

TCH >

I think the fact that I stand up, they sit down that makes a dynamic.

The fact that I'm a *male*, not a *female*; I think that makes a new

dynamic. How would that class be with a woman teacher? Saying

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exactly the same things that I'm saying … I've got three guys, the rest

of the class is all women. And I'm *different*. I have to be different. I

know the women are going to look at—

It's like when I went to teach an all-black class and I was the white

guy? I knew intrinsically I'm "the Man"? I'm the *white guy authority*?

And I have to work against that.

There was a day when I taught Malcom X, and I taught him all wrong;

I taught him as a radical  revolutionary. I almost got slaughtered by

the class – and *that* was a wake-up moment.

DI (T-internal)

I went, "Ooh Maybe I don't know – "

TCH >

*And I'm happy* to learn new things. So if Laura is doing linguistics or

Eva's doing visual things – I don't know the *theories* they're doing,

DI (T>S)

but I can say, "This is how you do a theory *paper.*"

Here, he narrates the dialogic response from a specific student group—black American

youths, for whom M's white male identity became markedly salient as he taught about a

black American civil rights leader—to illustrate the lessons he has learned from students

over time ("Ooh maybe I don't know..."), about the bounds on his authorial expertise and his

firm-handed manner when leading a class. And then he adds to this a second instance of

dialog—with a female student from his current class—to illustrate the balance he has found:

to be eagerly, openly learn from the students where they know better ("I don't know the

*theories* they're doing...") to lay the social foundation for when he comes back reciprocally

with what he brings to teach them (..."This is how you do a theory *paper*").

A few minutes later, M returns one last time to clarify the point about ego, noting

that his authority is not born of personal superiority, but merely of experience: he has been

there, ahead of these students, learning to take criticism—including criticism from them. It is

this experience, he contends, that makes him an apt leader and example in the classroom:

though whose first-hand stories and intentionally designed activities, students can envision

and then experience the process of using criticism to reflect on and improve their writing.

M begins reiterating this final point when I mention—as a Devil's advocate for the

students—that it's emotionally challenging for people to not take criticisms personally. He

responds that it's also difficult for him to receive criticism, even now, for example when he

receives his course-end evaluations: "You think *I* don't take things personally? I mean I'm

*devastated* sometimes when I read some of these notes from students." This moves me to

mention a related story; that during my panel interview with his class, one of his students

had re-told M's anecdote about a negative comment that he once received from a publisher

who rejected his writing:

> [The editor's note that] I'm overly-sensitive? "You're as self-pitying as your
>
> [prose]" – They remember that? You know, it's a*mazing* what—it's
>
> interesting that you say that, because I'm never sure what they remember of
>
> what I said. So he remembered that?

I tell him that they thought it was hilarious, and helped them to remember that they're

writing for a real audience.

> *Good* Oh, I'm—you never know what they will remember. … but it
>
> was important that they hear—

DI (T>S)

like I said, the very first day, where I said to them "What's the worst

that can happen to you if I say 'No'? Does the ground open under you

and you go to hell? No, you're embarrassed for 5 minutes. That's the

end of it"

TCH >

That's why I – I'm *ruthless* I mean, I think I am kind of ruthless, you

know:

DI (T>S)

"No That's not the way – that's not a good topic sentence"

TCH >

Why not? They'll get some crazy boss who will be absolutely insane,

and they'll *do* what *that* boss says. But why, at the university, are they

not allowing the teacher to say, "I've been around the block. I've been

pub[lished]"

That's why I tell them I've been published. It has nothing to do with

ego.

His intonation denotes clear excitement and surprise, as he explains twice-over that he is

consciously agnostic about what students actually take *away* from his classroom stories, and

that this is a rare instance where he can actually know what/how students are remembering.

He then goes on to illustrate—using a pair of reenacted statements to students—the way he

intends his criticisms of students to resonate, and the reason why he recounts those personal

anecdotes in between: he wants students to know that all the challenges he presents them

with ("I'm ruthless...'That's not the way'") are intended to give them experience, and thicken

their skin ("What's the worst that can happen...you're embarrassed for five minutes. That's the end of it"), so that they can be resilient in the way that the real world will demand of them ("Why not? They'll get some crazy boss..."). And he wants them to know his reason for putting them through this stress: because he understands, as only a published writer can, how important is that readiness to catch criticism from an oppositional reader and respond with determination.

*The take-away: generalized notions, personalized foundations.* The pedagogical values and educational intentions that M espouses in these passages, above, are generalizable beyond his classroom contexts and his teaching practices. Many of his explanations, for example, center around the same notions that V and B focused on: caring for, learning about, and connecting with students; encouraging efforts, challenging ideas, and fostering genuine conversations. But his operational approach—as he describes and enacts it—is drastically different from the methods that V and B describe for themselves: when I fielded the term "Laissez Faire" with V, describing his approach with students describing films, he replies "For the most part I try to be...to bite my tongue and let them go," while M's response to that term is "that laissez faire? – is something that students like *least*. They need—they want to know what are the rules"; when I mention testing to B, she says "discussion is not discussion when it's just the teacher asking the question and the students answering … [I do] encourage students to test their own and test others' ideas … but I don't give tests," while M's response is "I want to make sure they've read the material … How much better the discussion is when they have read the material and they can refer to it … I got wonderful answers, much better than when they were articulating … so the tests, yes, very important I don't believe in this laissez faire shit."

In a literal sense, M's statements above seem to contradict B's and V's—the way he reacts to the terms 'laissez faire' and 'test' are almost opposite to theirs—despite the fact that these three all share general beliefs and intentions: they teach the same discipline and see similar value in it for students, work together in one department and even collaborate with and borrow from one another pedagogically. So the distinct (even polar) ways that they understand and use certain teaching-related terms brings to surface the markedly personalized structure of teachers' practices, even down to the word-level: shaped by the individual's unique experiences and attributes.

In M's specific case, being fated or predisposed to be a strong, assertive, dominant, white, male presence in his classrooms has afforded him a history of experiences with managing student resistance: both learning how to sensitize his forceful manner appropriately for particular student groups, and refining the way he targets that compelling directness to stimulate and encourage reluctant individuals. And these experiences remain in M's memory, shaping his language, infusing his words with private meaning, and emerging in layers of narratives and dialogs as he describes what his course and classroom have become, and why. M shares many essential motives, beliefs, and attitudes with B and V (e.g., wanting to build students' real-world thinking abilities, believing this can be done though genuine written/spoken exchanges, and seeing concrete examples and modeling as crucial to this process). But he translates that general spirit—into a specific, embodied understanding of students and of teaching—through his own lens of experiences as a classroom learner and leader; this, the visceral base on which his beliefs rest, and from which his practices continue to grow.

M's introduction illustrates, yet again, that expert teachers' practices are not set—at least, not as these three teachers describe their ongoing professional process: current students

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continue to influence each teacher's inner dialog, casting doubts or offering insights, raising questions or reaffirming hopes, and so providing the teachers grist for reflection and stimulus for development. M displays this pattern most elaborately among the three teachers, with his detailed off-hand list of specific students from the current term, each described on a trajectory of growth that M synchronizes with gradually—collecting clues about their inner-minds and calibrating his approach to help them develop, learning at each interaction—adding them into a compendium of archetypes that he carries, in refining his teaching practice.

These archetypes within M's teacherly knowledge-base are clear, in the excerpts above, because of his argument-ready style of communicating: noting specific examples (of students, classroom exchanges, learner responses, personal feelings, etc.) as points within larger recognized patterns (recurring student-types, relational-dynamics, external signs of internal states, characteristics of self-as-teacher, etc.) that support his pedagogical reasoning. But such archetypes are common in B's and V's narratives, as well: discrete experiences distilled and combined into recognizable patterns in educational environments, to which they calibrate their personal awareness as they engage with those environments.

As M's response in the last excerpt shows, refining that expert-awareness includes building an ever-sharper sense of what he as a teacher does *not* know about his students, and alongside that an ever-brighter interest in learning what's going on in their minds within his course. M, like the other two expert teachers, wants to know whether students are seeing for themselves the value of ideas he shares with them, skills he practices with them, and orientations he promotes among them; lessons that he himself has learned and seen the value in: to demonstrate respect for opposing views and pre-existing conventional structures, to return serious willful effort when someone gives you serious critical attention, and to see

your own intellectual perspective as worth developing and worth contributing into society's ongoing tussle of thoughts.

In the next section, M shares several personal experiences (beyond and before this course and its teaching), which help to illuminate why he feels so driven to help students find their intellectual agency and voice, and why he has committed to developing a firm-handed approach to help students get there.

### *M's Educational / Individual Background: Learning to Value the Encouraging Critique*

*Toeing the line of intellectual accountability: personal foundations.* When M goes deeper in exploring the likely reasons behind his firm and structured approaches, he returns time and again to the topic of orthodoxy: his formative experiences with institutions and individuals who made clear distinctions between right/successful and wrong/perilous approaches, his personalized high regard for that structure, and his disposition to create such structure in educational environments with students. In M's classroom, this expresses itself in giving unambiguously exact guidelines; reliably repeating ideas and forms; and maintaining respectfully adult-level, professional expectations.

M first breaches this topic, of his disposition toward asserting rules and structure, when I ask him how this particular class is going. He responds instead by making a statement about students' general reactions to his course method. He points out first that "once in a while" a class group won't like his firm structure for writing papers, as opposed to the more flexible approaches they're used to in other classrooms.

TCH >

Some classes, once in a while, they won't like what's going on.

DI (T>S)

They won't like my demanding and my, "This is the way we're going

to do,"

DI (S>T)

and you get that in the evals, "He had only one way, and that was the

only way you could do it. I don't like writing papers like that."

This dialogic reenactment of M's own demanding voice and certain student's overt

communication of displeasure in written evaluations illustrates his awareness of their

potential emotional resistance. But immediately following this acknowledgement of

opposition, he expresses his own emotional resistance to the type of classroom environment

that those students are expressing a desire for: a structure-lacking "free-for-all" that he sees

as antithetical to university learning and useful life preparation—that is fun, but at the

expense of helping students to develop. And he connects this belief about the value of

structure in academic culture directly to his European schooling background:

TCH >

And I see other peoples' evals where they say, "Oh, I like it because

he let me choose whatever I wanted to write on." That makes me

squirm. When I *read* that in somebody else's evals, I go, "What was

going on there? Was it a free-for-all?" That is *not* the university.

Maybe because I come from a European tradition, my belief is, "No,

you're here to *learn* and to develop techniques that you will *need*.

This is not summer camp." You know, this is not, "I'm going to enjoy

myself" –

DI (T>S)

Like I said to them, I think, once in class, "Twenty thousand dollars is

an expensive party you know, if you want to goof off and get your 5-

dollar-an-hour job at the GAP, don't be *here*. This is *not here*."

DI (S-internal)

And I think there are certain kinds of students who warm to that, who

like the idea of, "I'm learning something that I can use." And there're

certain students who resent it because, "He's telling me what to do

and I don't want to be told what to do." …

In this narrative set-up, he characterizes the positive reviews that other teachers receive—for

their laissez faire approach—as feedback that he would feel quite uncomfortable receiving

("That makes me squirm") because, for him, school is first and foremost about giving

students "something [they] can use" in their lives; not about providing them an enjoyable

distraction. He then dialogically reenacts himself, speaking to students in this current class,

drilling home that point with some evocative imagery for what their choices are in the

university (i.e., waste money and work a floor-level position at a retail clothing store, or be

here and be serious about learning the techniques you'll need to move beyond that position);

then his students' two general ways of responding at that call-to-action (i.e., appreciating the

opportunity to learn, or taking personal offense at someone imposing structure on their

lives).

M then wraps up this response by going further into the students' minds, alluding to

research affirming that students do in fact appreciate and seek clear guidelines in their

classrooms, and then balancing that with an insight into his own mind; that *he* likes when

students claim their own agency within the structures he provides—that is, that his rules are

(as aforementioned) not about confining individuals' freedoms, but about channeling their

intellectual efforts in a productive direction, educationally. He then narrates the story of his interaction with a past student who held distinctly opposite political views, but who was a pleasure to interact with ("wonderful" "fun") because he took the learning seriously.

TCH >

> And I think it's been shown that, in Educational things, that laissez faire? is something that students like *least*. They *want* to know what are the rules. … I don't mind if a student disagrees with me – it's *wonderful*. They don't have to be on the same wavelength as me. I had a student who was really to the right of the right, and he was *wonderful*; he was well-read, he understood the issues *far* better than anybody else in the class. And we would go at it with each other. And it was *fun*, because I was talking with somebody who – okay, he was 17 or 18 years old, but – he was *good*. He was good at it, as opposed to, "Yeah, oh…" wishy-washy people, who are *boring*.

Such high-caliber exchanges as this, M's classroom anecdote above implies, illustrate the potential of the orthodox approach—firstly to be useful, but also to be non-constrictive and even fun. Where the conversations that come out of "free-for-all" classrooms, that enable people's "wishy-washy" "Yeah, oh" opinions, are "*boring*," the prepared and informed perspectives of individuals in structured learning environments are stimulating and purposeful.

Toward the end of our interview, after discussing his life as leading up to the teacher he has become (detailed in the next section), M returns to this idea of orthodoxy, emphasizing how much of an influence it continues to have on his approach. The fact that he actively makes space for this end-note in our conversation conveys that he thinks it is

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important for my project; for understanding how he teaches. And the way he describes his academic carry-over of orthodox dispositions, below—as a private internal voice, transferred from a religious context where he has softened on rules, to secular field where he has built and refined his own structure—communicates that he sees this thread of influence as perhaps unseen (never voiced aloud) or unseeable (anachronistic, analocational parallels) by myself and the students in his everyday teaching, but clear inside himself.

TCH >

The last thing I wanted to mention was this idea of of orthodoxy. That, I was raised in a very very orthodox family. And when you're orthodox, you're told that there are certain things you've got to do and you've got to do it this way. As at any religion, the ritual is very important, and you do it this way, and you don't mess around with it and so on so forth.

DI (T-internal)

And I think some of that has secularized in my head into, "There's a way to do this, and you have to do it this way, and this is a very righteous way to do it, and if you do it this way, you'll be saved"—I don't say that to the kids.

TCH >

But I did notice one year, why was I getting worked up over things that are—important to me that it should be done a certain way. I mean, everybody shares that … But I think in my case, it come from the idea that there is a right way to do things. And if you do it the right way then you're guaranteed success. And if you do it the wrong way it

shows no respect for the particular subject or the area that you've

taken on. And I think that comes from that mentality.

In this segment, M draws a clear line between the importance placed on foundational rituals—the distilling of old wisdom into forms of practice—in his family, and in his classrooms. The internal dialog he then enacts, shows how that engrained attitude has "secularized" and stays with him, in his own mind, in his manner of teaching. He sees that orthodoxy's presence underlying his emotional reactions to certain minor details of form ("it should be done a certain way...then you're guaranteed success"), and to his rational interpretation of students' adherence to or departure from those foundations ("the wrong way...shows no respect for the particular subject or the area that you've taken on"). And as M describes below, it even took himself decades to realize this connection, in reflection—that he has taken on the subject of writing as his own form of worship and human service:

It only occurred to me a few years ago that that's what I was thinking and

why I was so particular about things. So I wanted to add that into the mix,

because I think it might be interesting, as I said coming from a very, very,

very orthodox, devout family. Even though I myself am very loose on the

rules now – at least in religion, but – not in terms of writing. That's become

my new religion.

So here we see the beginnings of M's biographical experiences leading into his personal motivations for his style of operating a classroom and his manner of interacting with students: a disposition toward orthodoxy, secularized. But in exploring further his formative experiences, as a young brother and a sharp but confidence-poor student, even more parallels between his personal growth and his professional approach present themselves; between the

educational experiences that benefitted him, and the analogous types of support that he endeavors to provide for his students.

***Biographical context and identity-based motivation.*** Three central attributes of M's current approach are illuminated by his descriptions of the teachers who influenced him, and the kind of student he was. Those three attributes are, namely: that he tries to evoke stimulating classroom conversations with students; tries to encourage the quiet ones' senses of connection, belonging, and self-efficacy in the course; and tries to make clear, rigorous distinctions in his classroom between high and poor quality work, so that when he or student peers call someone's work "Good," they will see that as meaningful—as a genuine sign of their achievement and progress. And the personal significance of these attributes, beyond merely professional responsibility, surfaces as M describes his inner life as a student: appreciating teachers who made the effort to engage him rigorously in learning material, remembering moments where teachers drew him from being a shy classroom sideliner to an active and worthy member of the community, and being disappointed with teachers who—in retrospect—chose to be less invested and connected with their students' learning by making classes less interactive and demanding.

When I ask M which teachers he borrowed from, he begins by telling the story of a single ninety-minute learning experience with a visiting guest-teacher, in Ireland, who could have given him minimal attention but instead took the time to listen to, challenge, and correct him. And M describes experiencing this rigorous, critical attention as a true gift in his education:

> They said to us one day a famous actor was going to come and if you want to
> work with the actor on – reading poetry or something – come to the session.
> So I came to the session, and I was the only one there. … and I thought he'd

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blow me off. And he didn't. He stayed with me for the entire hour and a half

– and it was one of the best experiences. … he taught me how to read poetry

out loud, and what to do and what not to do. And I've always remembered

that sort of the graciousness of him.

'Cause he could have said "I'll do twenty minutes with the kid and I'm gone."

And he stayed with me and I was declaiming and he said, "No, no, no, that's

not how to do it," and he said, "This is how—" and he gave me Chinese

poetry, which you can't declaim because Chinese poetry is very gentle, and he

got me to a place—and I've never forgotten it. And that was a long time ago.

In this story, M emphasizes why he sees this actor's attention as "graciousness"; because the actor was within his rights, conventionally, to take the seminar's lack of attendance as a slight and make only nominal effort, but instead channeled all his expertise into challenging M in ways that helped add nuance to his style of delivery—and that stayed with him as a formative learning event.

In the next two excerpts, he expands more on this dichotomous choice that teachers have, between interacting with students in ways that draw out their intellectual engagement, or merely presenting subject-materials and leaving the onus on the students to connect with it; between forming an educational relationship with students, or merely monologically instructing them. In these first passages, M introduces a favorite university English teacher of his in Ireland, contrasting his inviting manner with the alienating manner of an earlier grade-school English teacher—pointing out the influence that interpersonal relationship has on a student's academic relationship with the subject-matter:

Em, other teachers: … There was Brendan Canelli in Ireland who was my

first great teacher at the university. He was a lively, exciting guy; he was

young and full of vibrant ideas and interacted with us. And then my high

school English teacher; he got me to be an English major. And he loved

Shelly and Keats and the Romantics, which I've never forgotten … In high

school I had an English teacher before Mister Walsh – Mister Walsh was my

grade teacher, who hated me, and – constantly – was on my case. And I don't

think I would have been an English major if he had stayed on in the school.

Which would have been a pity – I presume.

In these next passages, M explains the teaching lessons he internalized through interactions

with these and other teachers: not only that energized engagement with students and

enthusiasm for the subject-matter (above) made learning enjoyable and memorable, but

importantly that being a likable person and presenting subject-matter clearly (below) was not

enough to make "good" a teacher—an educational relationship with them, nor a learning

experience from them:

So I would say that I liked, I suppose, the people who got me enthusiastic

about something. I didn't like—I had a lot of professors at university who

read from their notes. I think I wrote an article about it once, I said, "It looks

like they're reading from papyrus," because the essays were so old, there was

no relationship to us at all. … I had a lot of bad teachers. I had teachers who I

thought were good but then in retrospect were pretty awful. I had a teacher

who read from notes but we liked him so much that we forgave him. He got

me into history, but all the whiles was "1, a, b, c, d, e. 1, dot, 2, dot," and it

was like we were taking notes all the time. So I didn't have the most exciting,

vibrant teachers. But – I was eager to learn.

So it seems the saving grace for M, in these accounts of early and lesser-quality educational exchanges, was his eagerness to learn. The *difficulty* he encountered was with his confidence in his own abilities, and his willingness to assert his voice as a member within classroom environments. This, then, was where his best teachers seemed to play an active and important role in his development as a learner.

When I ask M what kind of student he was, he begins by telling a story that illustrates and explains his underlying meek self-concept—which to me had not been at all evident, in observing his teacher persona.

> To be honest … I never thought I was a good student. … [I had] a brother who was a genius. … [My memory] was of him making sure that we never felt that we were very clever – because he was the clever one. …
>
> In my first year at university, we're ranked according to your academic grade, and they're posted outside. None of this, privacy issues. And I was so convinced that I was a terrible student, that I came to look at—the list was up—and I was sure that I was bad, so I was at the bottom. So, I'm going up the list, and I don't see my name and I'm half way through the class, and I go "I'm so bad, that I'm not even on this list." Well where was I; I was fourth from the top.
>
> That's what I was in my head. That's the mentality: I never knew I was bright.
>
> And I talked to my students about this—I don't know if you were there that day—I said, "Do you think it's me standing up here being, pontificating blah-blah-blah." I said, "I was the quiet guy in the corner who didn't say a word."

He foregrounds the central story, of looking at a posted grade-sheet, by describing his relationship with his brother, and the detrimental influence that had on his sense of personal intelligence. The story itself makes clear the extent of that disjunction between his actual abilities and his perceived self-efficacy. And the follow-up, where he shares this story now with his students, shows how important he thinks it is—with himself as a model—that students inwardly recognize and outwardly realize their abilities.

M then continues with another story that shows the formative role teachers can play in bringing forth such realizations in students, through classroom interactions. In this passage, he portrays himself as a cultural and economic outsider/lower-classman, as well as an arrogant and uninformed individual in the subject-matter. Nonetheless, he takes the risk of airing his naive interpretation publicly to his English class (drawn out by a teacher he likes), and the teacher's response clearly changes M's view of himself in relation to those student peers and to that course:

> True story. So I'm an English major. And I'm in this class with people from
> Eaton & Harrow, Lord so-and-so, Sir so-and-so, and I'm [a] little Jewish boy
> from Dublin. So Brendon, the teacher who I liked, says to five of us …
> "Okay, next week, five of you will talk about the poetic diction in this poem"
> …And I look at the poem: I couldn't figure out what poetic diction was, I
> didn't see any in the poem, I thought the poem was – horrendous. So I
> worked up this wonderful piece which I still have at home of how I hated this
> poem; I thought the poem was – garbage. Typical young arrogance kind of
> thing.
> So I come to class the following week, and – lookit, I'm one of those people
> who must write everything out … So the other four people stand up, and they

all praise the poem to the *skies*, it's the best thing they've ever read, it's a

brilliant piece of work – this, that, and the other. And I'm going, "Shit." You

know? … In my head I'm going, "Well, I've got a number of options here: I

can say I didn't do the work. Or I can say I did it and it's wrong." And then I

don't know why, I had this epiphany moment. I said, " I spent a week on this!

Damn it, I'm going to read what I have to say." So I did.

I look back on it now and I'm still wrong. And, glory be to Brendon, he says,

"That's a most interesting reading of this poem," and he starts going on about

how I think, and then he says, "Okay, we'll call on you again, Bernstein"—

suddenly I was there. I was in; in the class. And I'd gone from being the kid

who *no* one knew, sitting in the back – little notes all the time because I was

scared – to suddenly getting this promotion, so-to-speak.

The protagonist in this story is clearly the teacher ("glory be to Brendan") who, despite the

technical "wrong"ness of M's response, publicly recognizes the quality of his effort and the

character of his thinking: using that moment purposely to bring M into the fold of that

learning community. As an epilogue to this, M continues on to explain how he pays forward

this moment  with his own students, both by telling them sympathetically the stories of his

own shyness and self-doubt, and by structuring his class so that students will know—really,

genuinely perceive; not just in lip-service—that they are intelligent and capable, that he sees

it, and that it is of value.

And I said to the class, "It's even worse. Now I'm up there in the front all the

time I can't hide." So those moments, I still think of them as like, I didn't

even know I had a *brain* in my head, and I'm wandering around thinking I

failed. And there I turn out to have written—some of the exams were pretty *good*, actually.

And I was thinking I still suffer from that in a way – that you're just never sure. So when I see students – let's say like Sam, who may or may not know that he's really good, or even Mr Biscuits, who I know is not a 'writer,' and he has troubles – I try my best to make them know that I—at least if they think of me in any positive way, that they have something to offer and they should not hide it away. That someone has to tell them that they really have skills and talents. … the kids need to know; someone needs to say to them, "This is good."

Part of letting students know the worth of their work, he immediately explains, is training their intellectual palates to distinguish—in his class, through a progression of activities and discussions—what makes pieces of writing better or worse (whether their own, their peers', or seasoned professionals' writing). He sets aside time to make sure students understand that this is his intention, when he pushes them so hard, by playing a brief scene from a movie—where a strict but loving father forces his son to repeatedly re-write an essay until it is good, and then has the boy throw away the finished product:

What we have a lot is the opposite, which is they're told they're good and they're not. And I think … I do that scene from A River Runs Through It where the kid writes, and his father says, "Okay, good, now cut it in half." Then he writes it and he [says], "half as long," again. And then he gives it to his father and his father says, "Good, now throw it *away*." And I go to the class and I say, "Why do you throw that away? Why doesn't he say, 'Stick it up on the door – on the fridge door with a star on it.'" Why does the kid throw

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it away, after he's worked on it so hard. And they get it: they get that it's

process, that it's not—if you stick everything you write and everything you do

is wonderful, then it all loses its meaning. And you've got to get to a place

where you can say, "This is good and this is not so good."

It is poignant that M juxtaposes these stories; publicly telling students about his own struggles with self-confidence, internally focusing his effort on helping students to overcome similar intellectual hurdles in their own lives, and then asking them to think about why someone who cares would make someone else discard their own work. M's point is that he doesn't want to make his students feel good superficially, in the moment, by praising them unconditionally; he wants them to feel self-confident, in a way that stays with them for years, by showing them what they are capable of doing when someone calls for their best—by pushing them see, for themselves, how good they are. And that, M implies in through stories, is the sign of a teacher's true care for his students: not ancient, easy lesson plans and half-hearted praise, but fresh, vibrant challenges and "No, that's not the way."

In closing, M offers one final story that drives home the link between his sometimes-"ruthless" criticism and care, and the note he often repeats, that these challenges are "not about ego." Here, he juxtaposes the story of his own fate, gradually coming to confidence as he matured, with that of his brilliant older brother, who peaked early with his success and was inundated with praise in his youth. While M's trajectory of growth, as "basically, a student who didn't know [his own abilities]," set him up to be the experienced educator he is now (and while his younger brother, following a similar trajectory, also became "very successful"), his older brother actually ended up suffering, for having never had anyone early on ground his ego and temper his natural arrogance in youth:

So your question was what kind of student was I … I got my PhD before I

was thirty, and I [thought] "Okay. Doesn't everybody do that?" And then I

discover: No. "Isn't everybody fourth in their year?" … My younger brother

came first in his year too, in economics. My older brother, unfortunately, I

think his narcissism killed him. He got very *vain.* And very pompous, and

then … when that didn't work for him anymore, he just literally. Curled up

and died. At fifty-four. …

So, as I said: the picture that you see is not always the person, in his own head

– and I think we all have that.

M approaches his students with a firm, but caring, disposition. The deeper I go into his

personal life as a learner, the more this opaque-seeming incongruity—of a teacher who sees

ruthlessness as an act of educational compassion—dissolves into a clear and unified whole:

M wants his students to succeed, and sees their pretensions of greatness, their resistance to

guidance and structure, as dangerous impediments to their growth and flourishing beyond his

reach, in the real world.

## From Personal Experiences to Practical Operations

A similar internal integrity was evident for all three teachers whose stories I

explored: tracing the lines from their personal experiences (the foundations for their beliefs,

goals, emotional understandings and values) to their professional operations (the way they

plan, interact, interpret and reflect) highlighted the coherence within their professional styles

and manners. While all of the teachers in this study (myself included), are post-secondary

teachers with backgrounds in writing, who use similar language to discuss educational

exchanges, each teacher showed me—through their stories of interactions and their

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reenactments of dialogs—that our lexicons were structured very differently; that they had to be, in fact, to allow for each individual's expertise to develop.

While I was just a beginner, no more than three years into the profession, with a teaching vocabulary defined and organized largely by other people's educational theories (and illustrated by a handful of my past teachers, whose classroom abilities still seemed like magic to me), these three experts had personal dictionaries that were being defined and organized primarily through their *own* teaching experiences and refections, illustrated by resonant classroom dialogs and archetypal scenarios, and practically prioritized through their own framework of values.

Accordingly, my next step was to continue tracing this thread. As I had begun here examining the link from these teachers' experiences of learning / teaching to their operational approaches toward course style and classroom manner (i.e., the "personal"), I wanted next to examine how these operational structures were being organized in terms of their educational beliefs and goals (i.e., the "practical"): how does each teacher justify their unique educational style, in terms of students educational outcomes?

The teachers' narratives—most obviously M's, with its forensic-caliber arguments—already displayed the *presence* of these internal explanatory structures. But I wanted to take the time to explicate those links between the teachers' social-emotional means and their academic ends, because my next step would be to examine their actual educational exchanges—and I wanted to make sure that I would be looking at those interactions not through my own lens of pedagogical values and intentions, but through theirs.

CHAPTER 7

A TEACHER BECOMES AN EXPERT:

FROM MOTIVATED EXCHANGES WITH STUDENTS TO

INTENTIONAL PRACTICES IN CLASS DIALOGS

**The Practical (method):**

**Rhetorical Style and Pragmatic Manner, in Storied Explanations and Dialogic**

**Reenactments**

Next, to begin organizing my understanding of these teachers' approaches on a more

practical level— their motives in teaching, and their intentional educational strategies toward

those ends—I created a central interpretive "key" from the language used in their interviews'

self/course introductions, consisting of two parts: their explicit statements of teaching-

related beliefs, goals, and emotions; and their recurring patterns of argument, evidence, and

emotional appeals. By doing so, I hoped to see in a more focused light (1) their subjective

interpretations of basic reality and ideal possibility within educational exchanges, and (2)

their rational/emotional style of justifying according teacher practices within those

exchanges.

Again, the idea behind the first part—looking at their explicit beliefs, goals, and

emotions in the classroom—was to form a clearer understanding of their motivations: what

they believe is educationally *possible* with students; how far they want to *go*, practically, to

feel satisfied within that realm of student learning possibility; and what *feelings* they experience, positively and negatively, that influence their actions as leaders during that social-academic classroom progress. Statements of "This is true...," "This I hope to achieve...," and "This I feel..." provide direct insights into those foundational drives in each teacher, professionally.

The idea behind the second—looking at each teacher's recurring justifications for their style and manner, at a logical and emotional level—was to form a clearer understanding of their intentions: how each individual rationalizes their specific protocols for structuring and navigating courses, in terms of scholastic practicality; in terms of making educational exchanges sustainable, productive, and rewarding for themselves and positive, comprehensible, and useful for their students. Patterns of repeated logical frameworks (e.g., core definitions of teacherly-self and duty in the classroom), recurring supportive details (e.g., topical themes in describing how they work to fulfill their educational duties), and emphasized emotional appeals (e.g., figurative language associated with classrooms at their best/worst) provide direct insights into those idealized images of practice for each teacher— implementation intentions which help to guide decisions, enforce habits, or spur change in their professional approaches.

Below, I will parse out interview selections from each teacher's self/course introduction section, organizing them by the topics and patterns mentioned above, to foreground how and to what extent these teachers' educational motives (their ideal/desired educational exchanges) align with the language they use to discuss pedagogical intentions (their rationally / emotionally warranted teaching operations) in the classroom—as apparent in their course reflections. Then, I will examine interview selections from each teacher's "21-words" section (where they define their own understandings of common teaching-related

terms), to show how these individuals' distinctly motivated intentions (and the dialogic classroom exchanges that emerge therefrom) *translate* into likewise distinct practical understandings of teaching—as evidenced in their (conceptual) explanations and (practical) reenactments of common teaching-related terms.

## Statements of motive and language of intention

What is notable in all three of these expert teachers' course descriptions, on a practical level, is how consistent the themes are in their descriptions and justifications of personal professional practice—and how *different* those thematic structures are from teacher to teacher. While research has repeatedly shown that experts generally organize and distill their knowledge into useful networks, much more comprehensive and unified than those of novices (discussed here in previous chapters), what struck me in comparing these teachers' course descriptions was the *uniqueness* of those experts' organizational structures, despite the similarity of the practical educational situations they were describing.

Individually, each teacher's responses to interview prompts cohered quite nicely—in terms of their goals and reasoning, beliefs and support, emotions and appeals—as I looked analytically in turn at each of those aspects: the teachers were projecting a clear and consistent image of their internal attitudes and motives, of classroom realities, and of their teacherly identity. But from teacher to teacher, the themes being used to prioritize those goals practically, to organize those realities narratively, and to illustrate those relational experiences convincingly were tailored quite differently. This, then, lead to practical explanations which were often more distinct than similar, for example, when I went to compare answers for the "21 terms" related to teaching.

Like experts who have been studied in other fields (military generals, chess players, etc.), these teachers expressed situated understandings of classroom realities and exigencies—and many of these ideas underlying successful practice, they held in common (e.g., the way *friendships* evolve naturally with some students over time, the importance of *social modeling* and *personal stories* in helping students understand material, the necessity of earning *credibility* with students in order to lead the class, the intrinsic role of *improvising* when walking others through a lesson, and the support that some preliminary *order* and preparation provides for that in-the-moment flexibility). But where the teachers proffered strategies for achieving success (doing educational work in ways that are right and good) in classroom practice, responding to these realities, their conceptual definitions, narrative descriptions, and valuative judgements of teaching-related terms were expressed—and related to one another—in semantically idiosyncratic ways, sometimes merely distinct in their described importance relative to the work of teaching, and other times almost antithetical in their described reality as classroom experiences.

In looking more deeply at the individual teachers' stated motives—their primary goals, underlying supportive beliefs, and according emotions within the classroom—I began to perceive where these practical differences might be originating from: the teachers' distinctly personalized understandings of what success means, looks like, and feels like with their writing students. And moving from there into examining their language of intention— the patterns of reasoning, types of support, and style of experiential/sensory appeals that they used to convey their approaches—I began to perceive why these practical differences might be *persisting*, despite these teachers' years of working together within a common field, university, and department rife with attempts at culturally norming educators' lexicons and values and activities: the practical meanings of these professional terms (more than through

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any other exogenous channel) come through the teachers' dialogic exchanges with students. While at times the teachers allude to literature or describe professional development activities to help them explain or defend their ideas about teaching practice and values (relative to given terms), more than anything, they are defining what educational success means, looks like, and feels like (in relation to those terms) based on the synchronous or asynchronous group interactions, student responses, and personal realizations that they associate with those ideas.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

First, I created a "Content and Style" key, to structure my understanding of how each teacher views and presents their educational approach within the practical realities and possibilities of the school environment. To do this, I gathered together statements regarding their fundamental beliefs about students' learning and needs, their goals for students in their courses, and their emotions in working with students toward those goals—the "content" (what they feel, expect, and hope for in the classroom) underlying their practical approaches. Alongside this, I collected examples of recurring patterns in their way of "selling" or justifying those classroom perspectives and related teaching approaches to me, using a blend of rational arguments, concrete examples, and figurative language to bring me into that perspective—the "style" of persuasion they use to bring together the descriptive, normative, and subjective elements of their teaching approaches:

V presents himself as a somewhat iconoclast rhetorician-jester in his classroom, using humor and his inviting enthusiasm to draw out students' interests and abilities, then using copious examples and other strategies from ancient rhetoric in ways that make students feel comfortable about their writing, as they practice viewing media more critically and learn to make "big picture" connections. He warrants these approaches largely by citing

student's observable reactions in conversation as a metric, which show him how he's keeping that educational interaction moving positively forward—teaching work which he describes as "coaching," that feels a lot like "chik-a chick-a" jazz: a matter of timing and connection, an artful flow.

B presents herself as a gently supportive community-builder in her classroom, using an inclusive, caring demeanor and cycles of responsive feedback to bring students actively into a shared discourse community, then introducing an array of thinking/writing strategies and explicitly discussing the theory/research behind these approaches to get students experimenting with different tools and lenses, laying groundwork for them to expand themselves—as writers, thinkers, learners, and whole individuals. She warrants these approaches largely by citing her own process of trial-based discovery with students and pointing to research from the larger educational field, a knowledge-base from which she rationally and intentionally builds a a classroom culture with students that supports individuals' learning and growth together—teaching work which she describes in organic and nurturing terms, as feeding "roots" and "cultivating the ground" to support students in eventually "blooming."

M presents himself as a challenging and encouraging experienced-professional in his classroom, using firm standards and direct language to acclimate his students to a setting where everyone is accountable for their ideas and work, then using his growing knowledge of these individuals (though their writing and their participation in classroom debates) to fine-tune the balance of pressure and support that he gives to prepare them for the demands of the real-world—e.g., attention to technical details, resilience in the face of criticism, and ability to address alternative viewpoints. He warrants these approaches largely by citing his own experience as a professional writer giving him knowledge of what students will need in

their futures as adults, and citing the appreciation of former students as reassurance that many learners really do enjoy and value his "hardass" style—teaching work which he describes much like a trial-by-fire, evoking students' serious efforts and best thinking through the imagery of "judges" and "last stop before the desert," with the pressure to "put your head on your shoulders" and produce something better than the "garbage" you can get away with in other classes, and with the opportunity to learn things you can really use beyond the university.

Below, I will explore in detail the core goals, basic beliefs, and pervasive emotions that these teachers express in their interview's introductions. This list of hopes, understandings, and experiences motivating each teacher's approaches, is not meant to be comprehensive, but merely to provide a sense of the unique professional lens each teacher brings into the classroom. I will then explore the reasoning, support, and descriptive language that each teacher uses in those introductions to convey and justify the intentions of their teaching approaches (that is, as rationally warranted, realistically doable, and emotionally/spiritually worthwhile).

By juxtaposing these overviews—the personal content that motivates each teacher in their work; the way they use language to convey those motivated intentions—I hope to make clear how natural, and to some extent inevitable, is the variation among expert teachers' practical understandings. I will then use six teaching-related terms, selected from the "21 terms" section of the interview, to illustrate that sometimes-broad variation in their judgements, applications, and dialogic images of educational ideas, at the practical level.

**V – Beliefs, Goals, Emotions**

Three basic beliefs come up in V's introduction to his writing course. One is that writing evolves through use: what works for individuals in a given situation gets taken up and proliferates—he mentions this both in explaining how the "no formulas" process of teaching reflects the "Oh, That worked – let's do that" process by which genres like scriptwriting evolved, and in describing how students analyzing what works and doesn't work in others' writing does more for their own technique than memorizing "Okay, here's all the parts of a sentence." Another, more general educational belief, that transcends writing, is that showing people a range of examples, of "possibilities," is the most effective way to draw out their own ideas and creations—he cites the ancient Greek notion of copiousness, "writing huge amounts" based on someone you admire, as a sensible learning approach, and ties it to his "see one, do one" philosophy both in the classroom ("We'll watch a couple clips, talk about them, and now you guys do that and see if you can apply that to your writing") and beyond ("I built my own house; I watched somebody build one and then I built mine – it seemed like the thing to do"). A third belief V holds is that students, coming into the classroom, are already good at elements of critical and theoretical writing, even before they feel fully comfortable with it—he gives the examples that students "all write from theoretical perspectives" already, even if the phrase 'theoretical analysis' makes them uncomfortable, and that students are "great at finding the little things" that are the base for analysis, and just need a little push to look for connections between those parts that form a bigger, more conceptual picture.

Atop these beliefs about education, his discipline, and his students within that discipline, V also explicitly mentions two educational goals that he has within his classroom. One course-specific goal is that he wants students to become conversant with analyzing the material aspects of film—accepting that many students never get comfortable with the

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abstract theoretical terms, he focuses on building their fluency with critically observing and explaining what they see, and viewing upper division courses as a place to work on thought quality rather than grammar details, he spends his energy on drawing out their ideas: "I am way more concerned with their ability to read critically – to read and then relate that back to the viewer." A further goal is that students will start making more holistic connections, seeing the greater overall argument being made through material details—what V calls the "conceptual stuff," the way that the parts reflect the entire film, director, genre, and so on.

And below these intellectual beliefs and goals, the emotional experiences that V describes in teaching this particular course include feeling **settled** (having found a place where he's *comfortable* with the material), intent (getting audibly energized is discussing how he likes helping them find connections between storytelling approach and story content, fitting the little parts into a greater argument), and **playfully mischievous** (for example, "loving" the quizzical looks that students give when he shows them clips of unsettling surrealist films), but also somewhat "**scattered**" (which he notes is not normal, in a course he's taught so much). Again, these snapshots do not provide a full image of the factors motivating V's practical approach—he confides in me, after one course, for example, that he may have *burned out* on the course content and may need to revise or scrap it to re-energize it; after another, that he has been unusually stressed and waylaid by personal issues during this term—but they provide some nascent sense of his perspective's general foundations, orientation, and tone.

**B – Beliefs, Goals, Emotions**

For B, those motivating ideas, aims, and feelings that rise first to the surface when introducing her writing course are comparable, but come from a notably different

perspective. For example, she references explicitly five basic beliefs, which she ties to a background in holistic childhood education and character-building pedagogy (whereas V ties his to a background in rhetorical studies). One belief is that notion of the integrated individual: that teachers educate the *whole* person, as they develop, rather than simply inserting subject-matter into them—she accepts that students bring their own "complexity of issues, ideas, readiness, predispositions...learning styles, past successes, past failures" into the classroom, and that they can't just leave it all "behind that door." She also believes that writing is a self-finding tool: a vehicle that can help individuals grow in self-knowledge— for example, she describes students' works of writing as places where they can show their own voices, and think about their relationship to other people/readers. Her next three stated beliefs, then, fall along this line of understanding: one, that every course is a discourse community, that students as participants must willingly enter into—she paraphrases her attempt to prepare one student for the course as, literally, "enter this community"; two, that every student is a capable thinker and writer—and that thinking and writing are inseparable; three, that these students are diverse as thinker/writers, meaning that some ways will work better for some people—so teaching entails reading students, understanding them as individuals, and offering a diversity of methods for them to try on.

B's stated goals then echo these fundamental beliefs; she mentions four within the introduction section. One goal for her, in teaching the *person* in each of her students, is to educate their character—which, in this course, she translates to their developing writing that is "fearless," and "honest."Another is that students take away something about the *craft* of writing that they can use, beyond their paper or the course's genre of focus—for example, the fundamental process of writing clearly, and growing as writers after and beyond college. Additionally, within the topical bounds of the course, she wants to see students entering the

discourse community, engaging in the *work* of a social scientist—such as reading and talking about and looking at their work with the kinds of lens that a social scientist might apply. Finally, through this, she hopes students will undergo a thought-shift, learning to think like social scientists—moving from "I have a thesis, I'm gonna collect information to prove thesis" to looking first at data, then asking real questions and forming hypotheses that can produce new knowledge.

And the emotions she describes in her introduction fall in three places. The first is a peaceful sense of **accepting** what is natural, if not convenient, about her students—that they grow at the rate they go ("that's okay with me" not seeing fruits of the seeds she plants in them), and that they like different things ("That's alright, I can live with that" not all students like all activities she shares with them). Next is a playful sense of **enjoying** the messy, genuine process of thoughtful exploratory learning ("I love" the messiness of research, when Ss start asking real questions) in a supportive community ("I'm happy" that some students are really getting fired up with the class's work, despite "sadly" a school culture where teachers expect less of students, and they expect less of themselves). Related to this caveat, her last category of feelings is a sense of **struggling**, to support students' education in the face of institutional constraints and pressures—she reminisces that she "loved" the freedom to design her own curricula and "loved" the interdisciplinary nature of elementary school; that it takes more effort now to find creative ways "to reach students," and is "hard" to stick to the curriculum she's been given, because "I care" about them developing as writers, as she's always "cared about" teaching the person over the subject.

**M – beliefs, goals, emotions**

For M, those motivating ideas, aims, and feelings once again communicate ideas comparable with those of the other teachers, while at the same time conveying a markedly different angle of approach. For example, three beliefs that come to the foreground in M's introduction imply ideas that B and V have championed—the innate capacity of students, the importance of creating an educational environment that learners feel comfortable in—but states these in terms of students' working duties and teachers' structure-asserting responsibilities, which neither B nor V focus so acutely on. One belief M states plainly is that being an accountable thinker is a crucial practice or disposition for succeeding in life beyond school: the real-world will not simply accept your views; you must be able to support with evidence and defend with logic what you believe, in the face of opposition—or in his words, "it's not an 'Anything goes; I can say anything I like and it's going to be accepted' [in real life] … [so students] have to be held accountable for their ideas." Another belief is that structure is reassuring to students, and good for them: many look for and appreciate clear guidelines, and there is true danger in propagating a contextually ignorant free-for-all attitude of "I want to do what I want to do, and not have anyone tell me what to do"; that useful educational structure is what university is here to provide—he alludes to research supporting this claim, that "in Educational things, that laissez faire? is something that students like *least*. They *want* to know what are the rules." And a third belief is that both teachers and students have professional responsibilities in the classroom: the student's job is to engage and give serious effort; the teacher's job is to encourage that by showing that, somewhere in the world, people do think seriously and value serious thinking efforts.

M's stated educational goals for students likewise fall along similar chords with B's and V's—shifts in thinking and awareness, growth in character and experience, that will be useful to them in life beyond—but emphasizing M's particular practical focuses. One of his

goals is that students taking up an open, discerning intellect: internalizing that research is not about finding ideas and dividing them into those you agree with or those you oppose, but about looking at topics, having questions, and critically analyzing *why* you agree with certain perspectives—he explains that, in life, they will inevitably have to realize "that's what real research is; where you *don't* know the answers. And that's the hardest thing, so I push that." A second goal is that his students learn to take criticism resiliently: as constructive feedback, as an opportunity for reflecting and improving; not as a personal attack— sympathetically, M expresses that criticism is emotionally taxing, including for himself, but inevitably in life we have to take and respond to sometimes hard (even "crazy") criticism; for that reason, he explains, he's "ruthless," to show them that even at its worst, a critique is not so bad: "Does the ground open under you and you go to hell? No you're embarrassed for 5 minutes That's the end of it." Yet another of M's goals, again concerning students being prepared for the real world, is that they be aware of the details in their work, both in ideas and in presentation, that others see as differentiation-points between adequate, good, and excellent—he says that someone needs to *tell* students this, so they know: "they think they're not getting the job because they need more women or they need more blacks or they need more minorities-- No! It's because you didn't spell the words right, it's because you've got too many passive-voice constructions"; so M sees it as his work here to help them build awareness and control of these things: "you're here to *learn* and to develop techniques that you will *need*. This is not summer camp.' … [There are] students who warm to that, who like the idea of, 'I'm learning something that I can use.'"

     And M's descriptions of emotions are, clearly, his own: similar to B and V, they fall along lines of satisfaction, discontentment, and care, yet are shaped by all of M's idiosyncratic joys, sensitivities, and social characteristics. The ones that he discusses in his

introduction fall into three places. The first is **enjoyment**: of the interesting topics they study, and of debating those ideas with students—he finds the complex topic of war "fascinating", easy to "get hung up" talking about; he finds certain outspoken students "fun" to observe and "fun" to going at it with intellectually; he finds it "wonderful" if a student disagrees with him, "loves" students who can speak their mind and show a real interest in the world around them, and is always "hoping" that students will be bright, bring something to the table, and have intelligent discussions. The second is **disapproval**: of environments that leave students unprepared for serious thinking, and of students who cling to those noncommittal and lazy thought-habits in classroom discussions—he mentions being so "disappointed" by one advanced class who couldn't read or write but had pretensions that they were writers, and finding it "disappointing" when he sees a student's enthusiasm going; he says it makes him "squirm" when student evals say a teacher "let me choose whatever I wanted to write on," and "hates" shallow answers not looking in-depth but simply "I agree with so-and-so." And the third is **being surprised**: in the process of connecting with and coming to understand students individually—he recounts being "amazed" at a student picking up the detail of "Tow" rather than "Toe the line" in Microsoft article; says it's "amazing" and "interesting" seeing where students remember his stories, because you never know what they will pick up; notes that he's "happy" to learn new things from students, is "interested" in discovering who they are, and is "devastated" sometimes reading critical notes from students on evaluations.

At this basic level of description, these teachers' motivating factors are not incompatible with one another, practically: they all express in their own ways, with their varied terms and emphases, a similar belief in the value of their subject and the abilities of their students, an experience-tempered sense of what growth they can generally expect from

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their students over a term, a sense of enjoying their work as educators and caring about the learning experiences of their students. But, in examining their languages of practical intention—the ways they describe and justify approaches for turning their motives into reliable educational protocols—those individuals' distinct formative backgrounds, varied prioritizations of learning outcomes, and incomparable sensations of emotional exigencies in the classroom begin naturally to draw those professional approaches (at the conceptual level, even prior to practical implementation) apart from one another.

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**V – Practical Language of Intention**

Within V's course/self introduction, three central lines of reasoning arise prominently as he works to convey (as rational, tenable, and worthwhile) his professional approach: they pool around the notions of "comfort," "appreciation," and "keeping the conversation going."

First, his language use implies a correlation between comfort and sense-making; between areas where individuals feel comfortable and areas where they are willing and able to explore and grow in their understandings. Accordingly, we see V emphasizing terms related comfort—both for himself ("where I'm comfortable, where it all made sense to me") and for his students ("let them do their comfort-level")— when he talks about creating an educational environment. Next, his language implies a correlation between appreciation and attention/effort, and thus the idea of selling class to students—making course-matter intriguing and approachable, in order to draw students into that learning experience.

At one point, later in the interview (explaining the term "Personal Stories"), he states this link explicitly: "to persuade, to teach, to inform—they're all connected together to me." But we see that idea alluded to amply within the introduction as well: describing the course

as a "tough sell" to students in Spring, when the sun is outside; attending closely to which materials students "can appreciate" (e.g., "getting in on a particular film") and "don't appreciate [as] much" (e.g., theoretical terminology) when refining his course; working around where they feel uncomfortable and homing in on what they do well, to make the course appealing. And thirdly, his language conveys the central importance, for students' educational progress in the course, of keeping this momentum; of maintaining students' comfort and investment in the ongoing conversation that is guiding their learning. V repeatedly emphasizes this point: that teaching the course is "all about keeping the conversation going" within and beyond the classroom, in private office-hour sessions, in written paper comments that are essentially "just me dialoging with them," that then support classroom interactions where "I try to just let them go" in talking out their ideas, and to "keep it light enough" as a teacher, with his energy, to be forgiven for any "lags and drags" and keep that conversation moving forward.

In support of these ideas, V presents several recurring categories of evidence in his introduction, which convey how fitting and tenable is his conversation-enticing approach to teaching university writing.

One category is a series of moments where V illustrates the hands-on, interactive and interpersonal nature of teaching writing: describing the work as "coaching"; making clear to his students "off-the-bat … 'I can't teach you...I can show you'"; guiding them through discovery to apply the tools of writing and rhetoric, rather than through memorizing formulas; leading and guiding their exploration through an "old school" see-one do-one approach; resisting giving students the neat definitions they ask for, in favor of showing them possibilities, to draw out their own creative work. Another category of evidence is a series of asides where, from an internal perspective, V describes his ability to read students'

comfort and interest in real time: noting how when students are distracted by their own lives beyond the class, "you can see them being drawn..."; how their disinterest shows itself as "shark eyes," whereas a "quizzical look" of curiosity and puzzlement is a more positive sign of engagement; how comments on papers need to be placed strategically, not get lost to the voracious "where-is-that-grade" look on students' faces; how grammar drills' lack of efficacy can be learned first-hand from "a body of twenty-five students who all have exactly the same look in their eyes, which is they're not in the room at the moment"; and how, during lags in course dialogs, without words a teacher can go "that's one of my talkers...do a quick eye-contact, and all of a sudden they're brought in." And a final category of evidence is a series of narrative vignettes where V describes adjusting his self-behavior to maintain a desired energy in classroom conversation: adjusting, for example, the content he's inclined to talk about ("I'm very historically driven...totally stepped back from that"), the extent to which he shares his own ideas about content ("Sometimes I feel like I'm cutting them off, so I really try to bite my tongue … I'm such a natter-box that it's, 'Oh! That reminds me...' And I try to just let them go"), and the type of guidance he provides as they develop their ideas ("Sometimes I actually actively try not to [point out all little grammar mistakes, and say to myself] 'We'll let that go, just make one comment [at the end]' … I am way more concerned with their ability to read critically").

This practical notion of the conversation-centered, inviting and engaging classroom that V promotes, then, pervades his language down to the level of the imagery and description that he uses; the heart-language that he uses to color these rational notions and this descriptive evidence emotionally. Three aspects of the ideal classroom seem to emerge through these figures: one that is socially approachable, that dissolves divisive boundaries, and that seeks dynamic engagement.

Imagery promoting the classroom as approachable includes the numerous sports-culture metaphors ("coaching," "off-the-bat," "out the gate," "Okay, we'll have a little game of tennis here, throwing the balls back and forth", "see if anything's going to hit you"), the resistance against terms that make this class feel high-pressure or intense (no "nitpicking," this is not "rocket science or brain surgery"—so relax, there's flexibility in that "mushy line" between criticism and theory), and the self-deprecating terms in which he describes himself ("I'm such a natter-box," "that's my ADD for you," "can I be wishy-washy," "if there's any way to soft-shoe my way out of it, I'll give it a try", just give them enough credentials to "establish ethos … I've done this before, and it's not like I was raised on a a small fishing village").

Imagery of the boundaryless classroom comes mainly through emotional metaphors related to traditional classrooms that V hopes to avoid: the "good-cop-bad-cop" teacher ethos, using power-position as a "bully pulpit" and becoming an abusive "puppet-master," "shooting students down" when they are "walking out on a plank" by putting their hand up in class, taking a "whip in the hand" approach, being a "vulture sitting there going 'Okay do you have this assignment ready'" or a "drill sergeant" forcing students' investment, creating a "fascist regime," evoking "shark eyes" in "terrorized" students. By contrast, V describes the classroom he wants as a "symposium" where everybody is involved and they can "spark" one another, a feeling he likens to "stepping into a warm bath, that is behind his efforts at "breaking-down [barriers] … like insisting that people call me V." And the imagery V associates with this ideal classroom foregrounds the importance of its dynamic energy: the goal is to achieve that "Chick-a chick-a" jazz beat of a class that's moving, and so coming in "gangbusters in the Fall" and keeping his own "energy up," maneuvering around "lags and drags" in the class to really "get [students] rolling," because it's a "tough sell" but "if I sink"

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so do the they—and the goal is really for them to take over that momentum, for you to feel like "I'm a space-saver" in that active class, more of a "passenger on the train" than an engineer; it shouldn't feel still like "a day in a dental office" or "like an oil painting"—so when he sees looks of apathy, his impulse is immediately "I'd like to wipe it off your face."

**B – Practical Language of Intention**

Whereas V's language of practical intention focuses more immediately and directly on appealing to students' interests and building up an active conversation within their comfort zone, B's language of intention communicates a longer and broader focus: supporting students' ongoing trajectories of personal growth, building a community and a structure of activities wherein they can choose what is most useful and worth carrying with them.

Reflecting this distinct practical orientation, three central lines of reasoning arise prominently in B's self/course introduction, as she also works to convey her professional approach as one which is sensible, tenable, and worth its effort. One is that getting informed about students requires first caring about them, a second is that sharing and responding to such information from students nurtures classroom community, and a third is that students taking personal ownership of classroom knowledge is a central part of making course learning experiences valuable to them.

This first notion, that a teacher's concern for students is a core driver behind their inquiry into student's learning experiences, arises repeatedly in her stories of seeking feedback from students: creating early formative evaluations based on a desire for "more information … [to] address their needs"; seeing these evals as part of her "education,"

important because they offer a way of "understanding [students'] vocabulary" and perspectives as they work together through students' issues; learning from these exploratory exchanges approximately when she'll "start seeing things clicking" for students; and looking forward to that shift because *they* enjoy and appreciate it ("[Students will say] 'This really opened up possibilities for me,'" and "I'm satisfied that it's meeting their needs").

The second notion, that responsively discussing students' feedback and questions can build a sense of trust and ownership in a classroom community, is emphasized consistently in B's descriptions of following up on midterm evaluations: actively monitoring students' changing perspectives, to allow for group-coordination ("somebody said … so at the end I came back … tell me your perspective on it now...then if there's something that we need to address together we can"); explicitly honoring their complaints, even the predictable ones, to show that the course's purpose really is students' learning (e.g., regarding style-exercises: "what I told them in the past were things like, 'Okay. I'm gonna come back to that question at the end, and then tell me. Because I wanna know if, by the end, it really didn't help.'"); clearly validating personal differences in what people find useful, so students can participate without subscribing to all course activities ("Not everybody has to be thrilled with [e.g., the drawing strategy], they just have to try it, once—at least once. And I think sometimes if they have the big picture and they know, 'Okay, I can let this one go.'" "I tell them at the beginning, and I tell them many times, 'I'm gonna teach you lots of different strategies, and some of em are gonna hit you, and some of em are gonna hit that person, and that's okay.'"); and openly recognizing all questions, even disruptive ones, to encourage ongoing intellectual engagement ("I'm in the middle of answering somebody's question, and his hand goes up...I said, 'Wait, I'm answering this question, … If you want to talk later, fine, but not now'").

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And the third notion, that students taking ownership of course knowledge and activities is essential to their carrying this learning beyond the class, shows itself in B's descriptions of learning experiences that the course is designed to evoke: activities that shift students' individual ways of thinking ("practice at reading, talking, engaging in the work of a social scientist – asking them to look at their work as a social scientist might"); an environment that invites genuine interaction among those thinking minds ("Enter this discourse community"), and seeks genuine practical appreciation from its participants, as a sign that the course is going where intended ("they're saying things like … 'I really am getting this' … And so to that extent I'm satisfied … that we're moving along as we probably should").

In support of these ideas, B presents several recurring categories of evidence which illustrate how she connects her classroom discourse communities to the larger academic fields they draw from, how she informs her understanding of students' learning experiences, and how she encourages students to support and perpetuate that culture of learning among themselves.

First, she bings up several ways in which she introduces writing and educational scholarship into the classroom, either explicitly for her students or privately in her own mind: thinking "in terms of different learning styles" from educational theory, and how to meet those students' various needs; thinking in terms of "character education...teaching the person...[helping] that individual grow" when planning her university writing courses; considering the "geography of the classroom," from a Fresno State research presentation, to help attune her awareness of where students sit and where she goes or focuses in the classroom; presenting students with "Here's the research" so they know the reason for activities and that "it's it's really important, it's not just a filler...it's not just me"; and also

providing students with "a little bit of theory … a little bit of the big picture" to help them relax and be more tolerant of parts of the class they don't personally connect with.

Second, she describes several concrete instances of her dialogic data-gathering, where she seeks to understand and to help improve students' personal learning experiences: realizing that she doesn't know how to read students' summative evaluations, and so creating formative ones; recognizing that students' formative evaluations are based on incomplete knowledge about the course, and so asking them questions to keep track of how their perspectives develop ("Somebody mentioned this last time … Oh, that was me; I take it back"); and noticing trends in what students like or don't, and negotiating accordingly (e.g., a few students in every class say "This style business, ditch that – I felt it was elementary," so she cuts back to just the most important style exercises, then asks those who still complain to let her know at end if it didn't help).

And thirdly, she narrates several specific instances of group forging – getting students to support and perpetuate this learning community: she describes making a social contract with one contentious philosopher student ("'You have to learn to think as a social scientist, can you do that?' 'Yeah, I can do that.' … I made him kind of agree upfront, and so now I'm coming back to him consistently saying, 'You're thinking like a philosopher now, I need you to make this shift'"); letting students somewhat mediate the classroom atmosphere when one of their peers is disruptive ("I said 'Wait, I'm answering this question.' So when he finally gets a chance to say it, the rest of the class is going, 'What? That's stupid,' you know, they're all over him. … sometimes I have to say, "No. I'm not going there with you on this one. If you want to talk later, fine  but, not now.""); and actively looking for signs of students shifting their thinking, coming to own the intellectual process that the course is teaching ("We're almost at that point, where I start seeing that shift … it is right at this point that they

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start gathering data, and they start working with the data, and they have to start coming up with original ideas—then I start seeing things start clicking").

This practical notion of the community-rooted, informed and increasingly autonomous classroom that B promotes, then, pervades her language down to the level of descriptive imagery and other heart-language that she uses to make these rational notions and concrete evidence resonate emotionally. Three aspects of B's intended classroom learning environment seem to emerge through these figures: that the classroom is a community; that it provides support that is organic, living, garden-like; and that its work is not an artificial exercise, but a genuine act of creative production.

The image of community comes through B calling certain students "happy / unhappy campers," describing certain class groups as "family-like," explaining students' behaviors in terms of their social sub-groups beyond the classroom (the "philosopher" with his penchant to pontificate, the sorority "divas" asserting power and privilege), and describing student struggles as "rubbing up against the edges" of this course's conventions and standards. The image of the organic-garden comes in the way B describes students' learning process (as "growth," developing a "root system," and eventually "blooming" in or beyond the course's time frame) and her own work in relation to that (to "cultivate the ground," to get in tune with the "pulse" of the class). And the image of striving for genuine participation comes through in the way B describes working to get beyond students' "mask" in front of the teacher, striving to make the course feel right and fitting to herself as well (whereas teaching another person's lesson plan feels like "wearing someone else's clothes"), and constantly seeking to "read students" and uncover "blind spots" so that the group can better connect in their sense of belonging and purpose.

**M – Practical Language of Intention**

Like the other two teachers, M's stated educational goals center around preparing university students for successful adult lives beyond academia. And, as with V and B, M's language of practical intention focuses on leading students to feel at-ease and in-control with key adult responsibilities: questioning with serious attention the present issue, seeking and examining with an open mind the available evidence, expressing with a clear and audience-aware voice one's personal insights and perspectives. But, where V and B describe that work as one of congenial or gentle persuasion—with rationales, evidence, and imagery coherent with that intended approach of disarming immersion—M describes that work more as a trial by fire: sparking students' clearest attentions and best efforts through a healthy dose of *dis*-comfort and *set* parameters, to foster in students a sense of ease and control that is resilient and persistent in the face of real-world challenges. Accordingly, M's language of practical attention is arguably even more distinct from B's and V's than are B's and V's from one another (despite the essential similarities in all three teachers' practical aims).

Reflecting M's distinct practical orientation, three central reasoned claims arise prominently in his self/course introduction, as he works like the others to convey his professional approach as one which is sensible, tenable, and worth its effort. One is that teaching demands constant trial, learning, and adjustment with students; another is that guiding students requires first a personal experience and understanding of how subject-matter is learned and used; and a final assertion is that preparing students for real-life requires exposing them to serious intellectual and technical demands.

This first notion, that one's teaching is based in one's connections with students—that is, that students' responses to classroom exchanges provide a continuously shifting sense of the fittest approaches—shows up repeatedly in M's stories of students teasing him or

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otherwise interacting with him unexpectedly, in ways that updated his conception of how the class should be taught. He offers stories of witnessing students' changing historical positions relative to the subject-matter (e.g., teaching about Vietnam to students who have lived through 9/11), of being shaken into awareness by students' negative reactions to his representation of material (e.g., explaining Malcolm X as a "radical revolutionary" to an all-black class), of taking aside one student to ask why her interest in the course was suddenly and inexplicably fading, of hearing students' frustrations with the stories he repeats to fix ideas in their heads ("What was the other one they told me off for using too much—was the gymnast one. … I used that one like four times in the other class. 'You *told* us that already.' "). All of these stories, in parallel fashion, convey the importance M places on interactions with students as a site for learning about their perspectives, and using that to calibrate his teaching (e.g., reflecting on his copyediting notes, "I sat there going, 'Oh my God If I got thirty notes, what would *I* say?' … maybe I should separate them into two sections 'Here are all your grammar issues, and here's all your intellectual ideas.' … Why did I not think of that 20 years ago? … then they'd have them separated into 2 columns. Ooh, I'll try that.")

The second notion, that teachers should start as practitioners, in the real-world for which they're preparing their students—that this experience of learning and using subject-matter well in real life helps the teacher to figure out ways of helping the students understand that material and its personal value—M expresses often when justifying his classroom leadership position to me, or when explaining a lessons' importance to his students (in re-enactments), on the grounds of real-life experience. One excellent example of this is when M re-enacts explaining to students the difference between having writing habits and having a writing style that is flexible to professional writing demands:

So I'd be pointing out passive voices and I'd be pointing out dangling modifiers and I'd be

pointing out  misspelling and I'd be pointing out a weak vocabulary, word repetitions –and

they'd get pissed *off at me* I was "killing there style" I go, "What style? I don't *see* a style"

You know, I say, "I wrote for the bodybuilding magazine  and I can write for academic

journals I can do both. You can just—you just *write.* There's no sense of your own *voice*,

and who you are."

 In addition to citing his professional experiences in the subject, he also uses his past

experiences as a student to maintain empathy and perspective with young learners as he

asserts his expectations for them: "they need to engage … that's their *job* at the university …

It doesn't mean you have to sit around here and *study* all day long and you can't party—I

partied when I was an undergrad—it's that– put your head on your shoulders." And bringing

together these two sides of his role (as guiding practitioner and fellow learner), he cites his

experience as the motive and warrant for his firm and assertive manner in leadership, that he

does this work not for inflating his ego but for presenting earned insights: "The [students]

who have a big ego, yeah, that's a problem. And we clash … [But] it's not ego in the sense

of 'Agree with me.' It's ego in the sense of 'I think I've got something to teach you.' … *And

I'm happy* to learn new things. So if Laura is doing linguistics or Eva's doing visual things, I

don't know the *theories* they're doing, but I can say, 'This is how you do a theory *paper.'* "

And the types of stories he recounts sharing with students show that he sees his experiences

not only as a tool for reassuring students that these lessons are useful, a path to successes

("That's why I tell them I've been published. It has nothing to do with ego. It's to say,

'Here's a research article I just got it published.' "), but also to reassure them that failures

leading up to those successes are normal and educative (e.g., the story M shares about a

publisher telling him"You're as self-pitying as your prose").

The third notion, then, extends from this one above—school is a serious and important staging ground that prepares students for life's demands, and so bringing the {hyper}reality of those demands into the classroom is an important facet of their education. We see this notion asserted in the way M describes discussions, as a place for practicing real-life accountability: "discussions are important. … I mean you joke about this, and I know that it's sort of my [demanding] *style* – I really want them to know that it's not 'Anything goes; I can say anything I like and it's going to be accepted.' I don't think that's *true* in real life, and I really feel they have to be held accountable for their ideas." We also see this notion arise in the way he ties noticing detailed mistakes in class to the demands of real-life professionalism ("Cody in the other class sent me an email from Microsoft in which they had written 'Toe the line' T-O-W 'Tow the line' and he sent it to me and I went to get it and they *changed* it to T-O-*E* … [So] the little things In real life? Yeah, I think they need to know"), in the way he justifies preparing students in terms of these professional demands ("That's why I'm *ruthless* … 'That's not a good topic sentence.' Why not? They'll get some crazy boss who will be absolutely insane,  and they'll *do* what *that* boss says. But why, at the university, are they not allowing the teacher to say, 'I've been around the block I've been published.' "), and in the way he asserts the real-life value of that preparation ("'You're here to *learn* and to develop techniques that you will *need*. … If you want to goof off and get your 5-dollar-an-hour job at the GAP, don't be *here*. This is *not here*.' And I think there are certain kinds of students who warm to that, who like the idea of, 'I'm learning something that I can use.'").

In support of these ideas, B presents several recurring categories of evidence which illustrate his ability to forge a connection with, provide a living example for, and encourage forth students in their preparatory practice for the real-world ahead: by seeing their needs,

using himself as a tool, and pushing just enough to bring out their engagement with the course's work.

First, M tells several stories about the content he focuses on in his teaching currently, which are couched in a larger narrative theme of recognizing what students need, struggle with, and are not getting help with elsewhere, and then adjusting his approach to the group of individuals at-hand. For example, he describes having discussions about readings to help students look in-depth at things, easing off of grammar to make room for pushing audience awareness and close critical reading; he explains that this is important because (a) they don't seem to get that practice in many other classes, and (b) getting good / comfortable at that takes them a while.

> Some of the William Broils is just his own personal opinion, but I *teach* it and say, "Okay, look how he's doing it; it's exactly what I'm talking about. Opposition comes first, he acknowledges his audience." So I did push those things much more—opposition, audience, who you're writing for, don't assume everybody agrees with you. And I didn't push [grammar as much this quarter … because] the discussions are important. … They have to be held accountable for their ideas. … That's why I have them write it *down*. And it's your *idea*, you have to read that paragraph. I want them to have looked in-depth at things. And it *takes* them a while; they're not English majors. I have no idea what goes on in other classes … There's no [clap], "Let's think about this for a change. Let's relate what you've learned to what we're learning in here."

Similarly, M tells the story of walking students through seeing how arguments are constructed, because their school experiences leave them unpracticed in doing that critical

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analysis on their own, but they can do it when they are shown: "I felt like if I don't keep repeating it and show how it's done—yes, and I *will* do that much more in the future. So they *know* … What is he doing? Humanizing intro. He's talking about his friend … opposition is 'War is ugly' … That's to get on to different sides of the argument. Somehow they can do it when I *show* it to them,  but on the papers they have a hard time—again, because I think they're trained just to go down to the library, get your eight articles on grasshoppers, and write down. That's your research—which it *is*. It's research, but not very critically-*demanding* research." He also tells stories, then, of adjusting approach depending on students' attitudes in learning, for example, directly confronting egotistical pretensions that impede student development, while actively encouraging students who are putting forth effort to develop:

> One [advanced writing] class I taught a year ago, I was so disappointed …
> They didn't *read*, they couldn't write, but they had these *pretentions* about
> themselves that they *were* all writers. And so I'd be pointing out [passive
> voices, dangling modifiers, misspelling, weak vocabulary, word repetitions]
> and they'd get pissed *off at me*. I was "killing there style." I go, "What style? I
> don't *see* a style. … I wrote for the bodybuilding magazine and I can write for
> academic journals; I can do both. You just *write*. There's no sense of your
> own *voice*, and who you are." At the same time, … if I see a student like a
> *Stan*, this kid needs to be encouraged; he needs to be told that he's *wise*, that
> he can put together diverse ideas, he speaks wonderfully well. … in Writing
> 1, I had a student go from a D to an A. I *knew*, he spoke in class—again,
> *bright*. Couldn't write, but he *read*, and he *knew*. So I encouraged that
> student.

Through such stories, M repeatedly affirms the narrative of his efforts to see what students need academically and to meet those needs, and his ability to adjust those practices to fit the ever-changing character of the classroom's individual learners.

Second, M tells stories that illustrate how he uses himself as an educational tool, intentionally and responsibly: actively aware about his students' perceptions of his character, and the span of reactions that they have as learners to that characteristic manner in teaching. At one point, in a long aside, he runs through a list of personal attributes that he stays professionally aware of as he adjusts his interpersonal approach:

> I think the fact that I stand up, they sit down: that makes a dynamic. The fact that I'm a *male*, not a *female*: I think that makes a new dynamic. How would that class be with a woman teacher? Saying exactly the same things that I'm saying—but I'm a woman? … I think those guys in that room would have a different reaction. Again, both of my classes, interestingly, were predominantly *male*. [But] my 109V is predominantly female—I've got three guys, the rest of the class is all women—and I'm *different*. I have to be different. I know the women are going to look at – You know, it's like when I went to teach an all-black class and I was the white guy? I knew intrinsically I'm 'the Man,' the *white guy authority*? And I have to work against that.

Alongside this awareness of needing to adjust his self-presentation, he also senses practical limits in adjusting himself; that going outside of who he is, to please all his students, does not create an effective educational dynamic: "I think I'm the kind of teacher who does set certain students' teeth on edge. And quite honestly? I'm not gonna try to be mister nice guy to everybody; I think that's a losing situation. I do what I do." He acknowledges several times that some students say in evaluations that they don't like his demanding, and that those

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with big egos will clash with him and put that in their evals. But he continues on to clarify

that those clashes are not about defending his own character, but about driving students'

learning. He explains (quoted above) that his "style" is purposeful, to hold students

accountable for their ideas. Furthermore, he shares stories showing that this "Mister

Hardass" approach works on some students, getting them to speak and engage where softer

approaches left them silent and disconnected. And he notes that some of them really like it,

and keep taking his classes: "they know I'm going to be tough, but for some reason they

[come back for more] – and then some of them *don't like* it. What a surprise." In these

stories and reflections, M demonstrates a controlled awareness of his character in teaching;

its practical strengths and its drawbacks in educating students.

Third, within the classroom structures and interpersonal dynamics just described, M

offers stories that show how he calibrates to students as individuals when spurring their

engagement: gradually learning about them and figuring out a balance of pressure and

support to stimulate and draw out their best ideas and efforts. Most fundamentally, he

enumerates various channels of communication that he provides for getting to know them: in

class, in office, "I meet with them all twice, they can email me if they want." M presents

various instances, within these communicative interactions, where he does things that test or

challenge specific students, and then remembers when they respond in ways that show their

character—for example, when he told a student with a leg injury, in an email exchange, that

he'd be dropped from the course if he didn't come in the first week, and that student came to

class. He also gives gentler everyday examples of learning students and connecting with

them—asking "What did you see this weekend?", going to performances they invite him to,

recommending and discussing articles related to their expressed interests, and so on:

You know, I saw Smalias in another class, so we talked about that. I'm *interested* in them; it's like I don't know who they are. So if I discover, as—I [didn't] know who Stan was on the first day: there was nothing for me to know that this kid was an innately *bright* kid, or that Smalias was taking Copper Penny's *porno* class, and, you know, that AJ was –

> He had emailed me that he wasn't coming the first two days, and I emailed
> him back and said, "You've got to be there or I'll kick you out of the *class*."
> And then he pops *up*. He immediately went up higher on my register, because
> he turned up. And I knew it was a problem for him to get there with his leg.
> So I really, immediately went, "Okay You're here, *great*."
> So I can say in that class I pretty much know – *I get to know* my students. I sit
> and talk to them in the 109V: they're all doing these art projects, so I got to
> know what they're doing.

Then, once M tests out and sees who these students are, he give them the push they need: again, he shares several stories that illustrate this practice. For example, after forcing the student Mr Biscuits to speak, and realizing "this kid's not dumb"—he reads and thinks well, but is just disorganized—M decides to I give him some leeway within the course, to figure things out: "even though I *presume* I come across as really hard and adamant and domineering and everything else, if I see someone like a Mr Biscuits who I *know* is innately bright, I'm not gonna get on his case. I think he'll get his act together." Conversely, M points out, if a student demonstrates that they've already decided the class is not worth investing in, he's learned to let them go, and put his focus on those who are willing to work with him and learn through the course:

> If I see a slacker, I give—I'm too old, "You're not going to give me the
> energy, you're not going to do the work. I can tell when this is a blow-off. I'm

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not going to spend hours with you because I think it's a waste of my time, a waste of your time." I mean, I give them the *time*, but I feel like what I'm looking for in the room are to encourage those [bright, invested] students. To at *least* let them know that somewhere in the world there *are* people who *do* think this way. That there are people who have ideas, and that they need to engage in."

And finally, M recounts several instances that show him attending to not pushing students too far. He describes thinking about and respecting students' particular identities and circumstances in the university: "let's say Seena-Day, who hadn't spoken all quarter [and I didn't push, because] … African American students at our university are a minority of a *minority*, in every class. So … I don't want Seena-Day to feel like, 'What would *you* [as the black perspective] think about that?' … but, you saw that [when she finally spoke, all those interesting ideas]. She was eng*aged* that day." He also reflects on taking one woman aside to ask about her situation, when her attitude in class changes visibly. And he muses about correcting a male student in a humorous way, knowing he has the disposition to take it well:

I try in my notes not to be totally negative – un*less* I see they [can take it] – but it can work: Jason used the word 'women' 67 times in this paper. But I knew because I had talked to Jason, and he's a *hard* worker, … And I was able—and I said it out loud in class—I said, "Jason, you used the word 'woman' sixty-seven *times."* Because I popped it in on the disk and I put 'M' – replace 'women' by 'M' – 67 replacements. So he *laughed*. And then everybody in the class was laughing. … another student might get pissed *off*, that "you embarrassed me" But Jason can see.

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So all of these stories are rooted in the common notion that M knows these students well enough to sense where and when to push. Often, M points to this notion explicitly in each story's narrative, as in the story below, where he is careful to note the equity of his educational approach (not playing favorites, but trying to pull out the best of what each student is willing to give) and the close interpersonal connections that this approach is grounded in:

> If Stan wrote a bad paper? He'd *get a D*. I'll have no {problem} – I had a student … I gave him an F on his first paper. I said, "You're *far* better than this crap This is garbage" He *blew* up at me And the next day he came back and said, "Okay. What do I need to make this paper an A." I said, "You need to do this, this this, this, and this." He did. He got his A. He got his A in the class. *And* I wrote him a letter of recommendation for a job in Japan. So I think, Josh, it's because I get to know the students. They're not seven hundred in Campbell hall – my TAs are not grading the paper. There is this connection. Now, that pays off in *some* ways, and there can be a negative reaction. But I'm still getting emails from students 10 years ago. I just got one from a student, "remember me?..."

M's practical understanding of his classroom as a professionally serious stage preparing for the after-life that follows school, then, pervades his language down to the level of metaphors and other emotionally resonant imagery that he uses to drive in these rational notions of his intended classroom environment. Three aspects of this environment rise up in M's choices of comparison and description: the orthodoxy-echoing aspects of imminent danger or decay, of a critical trial by fire, and of preparation for coming judgement in the world beyond.

When M discusses the process and challenge of spurring students forward, the situations that they—and he—are being pulled away or saved from are often infused with images of loss or rot being shaken off: getting away from a world of "Terdy comments," telling students "You're *far* better than this Crap, this is Garbage," recognizing problems that are "going to Fester" unless they're talked about, almost getting "Slaughtered" when not addressing those issues seriously, confronting interlopers in the classroom who threaten "Spoiling" that delicate dynamic. When he describes the high-energy, contentious moments that help to cross that threshold, these are often peppered with corporeal—even pugilistic—descriptors, set on a backdrop of hell-or-salvation imagery: students needing to "put your Head on your Shoulders" / "get your Head on straight," showing their commitment or "I'll Kick you out," commanding that they "speak or I'm gonna pull a lever and you're gonna go to Hell," making sure that arguments are not "Below the Belt," but knowing that these interactions will set some students' "Teeth on edge," making them feel he's "Killing their style," but persisting because it's important that students experience living through that trial—"Does the ground open under you and you go to hell?  No you're embarrassed for 5 minutes, that's the end of it." And when M justifies imposing those challenging ordeals on students, he portrays it as preparation, couched in comparisons with the real-world trials to come: this university education is not a "Free-for-All" "Summer Camp" "Coffee shop," but rather is "your Job" as a student, the "Last Stop before the Desert," preparing you for "Judges" who will know what quality looks like, and the "Crazy Boss" who will make demands you have to meet—and it's not the teacher's job to "Coddle" them or be their "Friend," but to help move them beyond "Pretensions" and "Ego" and a "Tea Party" whatever-I-want mentality, and to learn and remember skills they can use in the "Real-World" beyond university.

You're not paying twenty-thousand dollars a year so I can say, "Oh, you're a

nice guy, you're really clever" No. Your job here is to learn. That's your job.

I'm your boss. … My hope is at the end of ten weeks, they will leave my class

and they would not forget what I've taught them. And … if they're writing a

letter or an application, they'll go, "Well, I have to make this opening

sentence really sing." I'm hoping they remember those things. Those are the

things that are important to me. Thus ended the lesson, right? You can hear

the priest in me, or the rabbi.

So here with M, as with V and B before, we see an internally coherent style of practical

argument and description being used by an expert teacher to justify and illustrate

practically—in a reasoned, tenable, and emotionally resonant way—a teaching approach

grounded in personal experiences and motives. In the quote above, we can see all these

elements at play: that metaphor of school as a job for university students, those echoes of

religious orthodoxy in M's approach to being the "boss" in that learning scenario, and the

overriding intention that this be an educational experience that students will carry with

them—that will lead them to success, and make their written words in the professional world

sing, like an angelic choir.

<div align="center">*</div>

By creating these keys, then, I was able to clarify for myself *where* differences arose

in these teachers' practical approaches to common classroom situations: their general values,

understandings, and intentions as teachers of university writing are, in essence, tightly

aligned (a warm respect for the practice of composing and refining words, a belief in the

capacity of their students to think and write well, a desire to prepare those students for their

futures in literacy-centered communities); but the ways they transition from those broad

expert frameworks into nuanced practical details—the ways they in-fill those organizing meta-structures with sense-making patterns and analogies, drawn like a necklace cord through dependably recurring situations and specially educative anecdotes—are quite unique (directly reflecting the personal, first-hand experiences that make their convictions internally unified, practicable, and resilient in the face of a classroom's intrinsic uncertainty, novelty, and stress).

Whereas V has turned his early negative schooling experiences and his late-blooming personal academic renaissance into an anti-stress and and role-upending approach to the classroom, rooted in the inviting persuasive traditions of rhetorical imitation; B has turned an early sense of being corralled in her creativity and a later sense of finding herself in social environments around school into a socially orchestrated and openly exploratory approach to the classroom, rooted in the theories of character education and multiple intelligences; and M has turned early feelings of low self-efficacy and valuable moments of care-filled challenge from his formative educators into an ironically respectful and attentive browbeating approach to the classroom, rooted in years of professional writing experience and an orthodox cultural disposition.

These essentially aligned, inevitably distinct teacherly approaches begin deep down: evident at the level of motives stated and intentions described, above. This, in turn, helps to explain how these teachers seemingly—let that be emphasized, seemingly—have very different understandings of basic teaching-related terms, when those ideas are taken one at a time, out of the context of the teachers' uniquely interwoven personal-dictionaries. A few poignant examples of this will be explored now, before comparing the teachers' dictionaries more holistically: as their own identity-congruent and experience-cohered versions of a general and comparable sense of teacherly purpose.

# Practices Planned and Dialogs Enacted

After using the above keys to clarify, for myself, the underlying motivations and intentional approaches that each teacher was presenting in their self/course descriptions, I then moved on to examining the next portion of their interviews: the "21-words" section, where I presented a series of teaching-related terms and phrases, letting the individuals define and explain those ideas' meanings—in whatever way they perceived them, and to whatever extent they felt those words warranted practical elaboration. I compared their answers quantitatively first, calculating the median time that each teacher took in answering (and ordering their terms from most time spent to least), then counting the number of archetypal and specific stories and dialogs that each term evoked within those answers (and ordering their terms from most dialogs and stories to least).

From here, I sorted the responses and compared the spreads of teachers' answer times and reenactments (Table 2), to see which terms came in above the median response time and/or evoked the greatest number of archetypal and specific stories of classroom interaction. Through that comparison, five terms rose to prominence (in order of prevalence): "Friendship," "In-Class Correction," "Personal Stories," "Apathy," and "Order."

Table 2
*"21 Words" prompts, ordered by amount of time teachers spent answering, with number of narrated (archetypal / specific) scenarios in parentheses, underlined where those stories include at least one reenactment of dialog. Large gaps between response times (i.e., more than 30 seconds) are denoted by "[...]". Prompts not defined in the interview, but defined afterward in writing, denoted by {brackets}.*

| Longest | - | {Median answer-time} | - | Briefest |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **V  410 seconds** | | | | |
| Friendship (9//3), […] Peer Relationships (6), In-Class Correction (9//2), Sincerity (3), Discuss/Debate/Argue (2//1), Explicitness (8) […] A Good Question | | Test (2), **{149 seconds}** Personal Stories (7) | | Modeling (4), Extra Credit (5) […] Order, Humor (2), "I don't know the answer" (3), Credibility (2), Improvisation (2), Tempo (1), |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| (3), Apathy (5), Basics & Review (1) | | Enthusiasm (3) |
| | | **46 seconds** |

**B  268 seconds**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Friendship (3//2), In-Class Correction (4//2) […] Personal Stories (3//2), Peer Relationships (2), Apathy (4//1), Discuss/Debate/Argue (1), Explicitness (2//1), Basics & Review (1//1), Humor (1), A Good Question (1//1) | Enthusiasm (1//2), **{52 seconds}** Order (4), Improvisation (2) | Credibility (2), "I don't know the answer" (1//1), Classroom Space (1//1), Modeling (3), Extra Credit (2), Sincerity (1), Tempo (1//1), Test (1), Exemptions |
| | | **10 seconds** |

**M  169 seconds**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Credibility (6//4) […] In-Class Correction (4//1), {A Good Question}, {Classroom Space}, Order (6//1), {Tempo}, Humor (1//3), "I don't know the answer" (1), Modeling (2//1), Test (2//2), Improvisation (2//1), | Friendship (2//1) **{54 seconds}** | Exemptions (1//2), Discuss/Debate/Argue (4), Personal Stories (5), Extra Credit (3), Apathy (2), {Sincerity}, Basics & Review (1//1), Peer Relationships (1), Explicitness (4//1), Enthusiasm |
| | | **5 seconds** |

Numerically, these terms and phrases stood out variously (as one might expect) from one teacher to the next. As a baseline, the median answer time was 149 seconds for V, 52 seconds for B, and 54 seconds for M; V averaged 3.9 archetypal stories and reenacted dialogs per answer plus a total of 6 specific stories among the "21 terms," B averaged 1.9 archetypal scenarios plus a total of 15 specific exchanges, and M averaged 2.6 archetypal scenarios plus a total of 18 specific exchanges. For both V and B, the term "Friendship" evoked the longest answer (261s and 216s above their respective medians), the most specific stories (3 and 2), and most or second-most archetypal scenarios (9 and 3). For M, it evoked a median-time response and prompted 2 archetypal scenarios. For all three, "In-Class Correction" evoked either second- or third-longest response times, and prompted a high or above-average number of archetypal scenarios. The phrase "Personal Stories" evoked B's third-longest response, and prompted both V's and M's third-highest number of archetypal scenarios. "Apathy" drew above-average response times and archetypal scenarios from V and B; a briefer response with 2 scenarios from M. And "Order" prompted both B's and M's

highest number of archetypal scenarios, with median and above-median response times from them (though not from V).

The rest of the terms where too variously distributed to warrant selecting them on quantitative grounds, among these particular teachers.

Content-wise, these terms and phrases that evoked the most elaborate explanations seemed to be associated—in the three teachers' internal compendiums of storied experience—with particularly challenging or nuanced practical aspects of the educational exchange. Perhaps this is illustrated best by differences in response-times to the terms "Discuss/Debate/Argue," which V and B take much more qualified stances on (both of them explicitly remove the term 'Debate' when explaining how this idea fits into their practice) while M immediately embraces that trinity of terms as a staple of his practice: V and B's responses are 304 and 86 seconds long, respectively; M's is 39 seconds. Narrations of archetypal / specific scenarios, and dialogic reenactments, also occur most prevalently within these longer answers: the majority occurring in answers above each teachers' median-time (53 scenarios with 37 including reenactments, for V; 35 with 22, for B; and 46 with 27, for M) as opposed to below, in their quicker responses (only 29 scenarios with 18 including reenactments, for V; 21 with only 1 reenactment, for B; and 25 with 16, for M).

This pattern, of time-intensive answers incorporating comparatively more illustrative scenarios and reenactments than did straightforward explanations, was strong enough to persist even in M's responses, despite the anomaly in his data that three of his longest answers were given in writing[21], and notably lacked the scenarios and reenactments he had used when speaking directly with me, in real-time, to elaborate and think through his teaching-term explanations.

Among all three teachers, the idea of Friendship generally evokes a notion of right time and place: that friendships are not really a helpful professional goal, but rather a natural outcome of positive and influential educational exchanges with students; problematic to entertain during a course, but pleasant and reaffirming to nurture once a course is over. Conversely, the idea of In-Class Correction prompts teachers to wrestle with describing how to give an academic correction to students without undermining the sense of social-emotional support and trust being built between the teacher and student. Besides maintaining this balance of professional purpose and personal connection, the other terms and phrases (Personal Stories, Apathy, Order) stimulate discussions of how best to use one's own learning experiences, to respond internally and publicly in the face of self or student disconnection, and to structure interactions and expectations within a classroom—all in service of achieving practically those teachers' uniquely identity-framed, experience-based, emotionally resonant educational intentions (as described in the preceding section).

Below, I will use this lens of each teacher's motivated intentions to help explain their idiosyncratic practical understandings of these common teaching-related terms and phrases: their evaluative judgements of those ideas-in-action, their descriptive definitions of those ideas-in-action, and their illustrative stories of that action as dialogic reality—in educational exchanges between teachers and students, as they have found and remembered it.

The pattern that emerges, in each of these examples, is of expert teachers (a) describing *fundamentally similar* educational challenges that they have encountered, relative to that given topic/term (friendship, order, etc.); (b) framing those experiences within a *personality-congruent* structure of arguments, support, and examples which reflects each individual's characteristic values, goals, and dispositional strengths/struggles (as explored in

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21   These responses' times estimated based on comparing their text length to his other timed transcripts.

the keys above); and (c) concluding with *seemingly divergent* overall attitudes and protocols regarding that topic/term—where they see it landing on a simple scale from positive/necessary to negative/perilous, and how they generally operate to manage that aspect of educational reality.

**Friendship: the Expressing-Care-for-One's-Students Challenge**

All three teachers associated the term "friendship" with the practical challenge of having learning relationships with students that are simultaneously professional and academic, personal and intimate. Their dialogic reenactments each touch on the theme of an interpersonal connection that grows over time with students—sometimes quite personal (B, dialog-a), in interactions extending beyond the walls of the class (M, dialog-a) and the set start-to-end dates of the course (V, dialog-d). Additionally, their narratives each emphasize the importance of maintaining the decorum in that relationship; the professional recognition that the teacher has a power (B, 7/dialog-c) over students' feelings of safety and a responsibility (V, 6/dialog-e) for students' progress with the subject-matter, as well as a generational distance (M, 4/dialog-b), and that this mandates a teachers' conscious control over the way that interpersonal connection expresses itself.

The way that each implements this control, though, heavily reflects their personal ideologies and teaching experiences.

V, for instance, has an aforementioned strong belief in breaking down social barriers between himself and the students, as well as breaking down those emotional barriers that build when students are forced—as opposed to enticed—to participate. So, in his protocol for managing friendship, we see him actively anticipating the responses that students have to his (situationally unconventional) teaching style: he defaults to giving students trust and a

congenial affect from the outset (3), while communicating clearly his role and his academic expectations with students (6/dialog-e, dialog-a/b), so he doesn't feel emotionally obligated to chase them (2/dialog-c), and can instead put his energy into reading each classroom and being the kind of presence those individuals need (7, 8/dialog-f)—allowing friendships to evolve out of those teacher-student relationships, with those who keep in touch (4/dialog-d, 5). Thus, V regards friendship as a "tricky" concept, associated with his struggle to be disarming and low-stress while maintaining an atmosphere of student self-management and personal accountability.

B, alternately, crafts her approach to friendship through her lens of whole-person education. Using the story of a single relationship with one of her early college students, she paints a picture of how deep connections can form between her and students, naturally, as she compares her own experiences with theirs—to address their needs "one human being to another"—and in offering support, becomes a "touchstone" in their growth and development (dialog-b). For her, then, the protocol for managing friendships has come to involve crafting appropriate steps to insure that she expresses her genuine care (8) in acts of support (6, 7/dialog-c) that the individual student will appreciate and understand as intended. Thus, B regards the concept of friendship as a natural side-product of allowing real human connection in the classroom: it is not a professional goal, but rather the sometimes natural evolution of relationships wherein a teacher draws on her own experiences to intuit and address the educational—and human—needs of students.

M, more definitively than the other two (V, 5/6; B, 9), foregrounds his approach with a clear temporal line (1): friendships come after the class is over. Similar to B, he explains the evolution of friend-like relationships as a side-outcome of his professional process as a teacher of getting to know his students really well (2). But unlike B (2) and V (4), M does

not label these as friendships—distanced by age and context (dialog-b)—rather as people who "keep in touch" with him and with whom he "like[s] to hang out." His protocol with teacher-student interpersonal connections, as with the previous teachers, seems rooted in the notion that those relationships center on supporting students' growth: watching them perform (dialog-a), catching up and seeing where they've gone beyond the class (dialog-b). Thus, M regards the concept of friendship in clear lines that reflect his orthodox approach: get to know them well, teach them things they need, and enjoy seeing where they go in life, if they reach out after the class.

Table 3.1
*Comparison of three teachers' practical explanations and reenactments of the teaching-related term "Friendship."*

| | Practical Explanation | | Practical Reenactment | |
| | Judgement | Implementation | Narrative frame | Dialog |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| V | Tricky. Not a sanctuary from class obligations. | Formalized friendship. Congenial, but clear regarding class expectations: personal friendships do not absolve academic sins. Relation varies, on the fly, with every student. | **1** "You've got to be careful with [friendship] because, if you really get a good friendly relationship going with someone, but their writing sucks—it's like, 'Uh-oh,' what do you do with that?" → <br> **a** "But I always go into it giving them the benefit of the doubt. You know, 'We can be friendly about this, but these are some specific things I want.'" ← <br> **2** "I think students will tend to think that, if someone is friendly, then that's gonna cover other sins, or something?" → <br> **b** "Which is, 'Get this straight – these are the things I want for the grade. And then there's my style of teaching. You can find me goofy, or irreverent, or funny or silly or whatever you wanna find me. But how I am in that public persona isn't, 'Well, I like you, so don't worry about that other paper.'" ← <br> **c** "It's like, that kid who just came in a minute ago and was like, 'Do we have to do the re-write?' I said, 'Well, what did you get on it?' He said, 'D-plus … So do I have to?' … It's like, "Well I don't care – you can get a D-pluus if you want it.' | |

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| | | | | I'm not invested in that way." ← |
| | | | 3 | "So, out the gate, I think you should be friendly, and you should be open to having [a] congenial sort of relationship with the students – teachers should not be stern-faced" → |
| | | | 4 | "I've made great friends with some of my students" → |
| | | | d | "I've got one student that graduated three years ago – worked doing some copy-write for a while – and she's been keeping in touch with me. Now, she asked me for a letter of rec for NYU, she's off to this fall, and I'll see her again before she goes, kind of thing" ← |
| | | | 5 | "But there's that, and then there's the teacher-student relationship we have. And one shouldn't creep into the other" → |
| | | | 6 | "I think over the ten-week period they get to know me a lot better. But in terms of what I offer up-front, it's just like, 'Okay establish ethos'" → |
| | | | e | "'Why am I standing in front of you, telling you this? Well – I have a basing in rhetoric, so that gives me this argument. I also have a designated emphasis in film studies, so that sort of takes care of that side of things. And I have been teaching for about—mwam, fourteen years? Ten here, four up there. And I think it's important for you to know that, I mean, this is not my first class, and I've done this before, it's not like "I was raised on a small fishing village up in the Northeast coast of the North American continent." ← |
| | | | 7 | "a huge amount of my relationship with every student and every class is on the fly" → |
| | | | 8 | "I think that's why every class is so radically different too, because I so much let the students determine what kind of a class you're ultimately gonna have for those ten weeks:" → |
| | | | f | "I've taught classes where it feels like I'm a space saver – all I do is walk in the door and, "Bah –" [all they need is a couple of pointers] and then they go, and they're off and talking about something. And then there are other classes where it's like a day at the dental office – ev-ery sin-gle day … it's like, "What is this an audience or an oil-painting? God—let's go." |
| B | Natural. Not a goal; an emergent connection that comes from addressing students' human | Allowing for genuine connections, with empathy and consent. When students bring their lives into the class, being with them in those | 1 | "there's an element of friendship that evolves in classes, but I don't start out to be their friend." → |
| | | | 2 | "I have made friends, with students who keep coming back and visiting me. And we know each other from more than just that class." → |
| | | | a | "There was a student my very first quarter who— we were just about to start class, and she peeked in and motioned me out of class, and I went out there and—she explained that her father had just passed on that night. |

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| needs, as another human. | moments is part of seeing and addressing their needs, one human being to another. So an element of friendship evolves in classes. But have to factor in their identities and own teacher role in deciding when/where to express that connection (some turn into fuller friendships, after class). | Without even thinking, I just put my arms around her. And held her, and she cried and. And I wept with her for a little bit, just. As one human being to another; to feel what she was feeling, and to understand the moment of that … I peeked back in the class and said, 'Do this for a while, I'll be in in a minute.' And then I just sat down with her, and we talked a little bit about what she was feeling, what she might need to do, and practical as well as emotional stuff. And [I] said, 'Do you think you can sit in class?'— she originally said, 'I may have to leave class, 'cause I don't know if I can sit here and be...'— So she said, 'I think I'd like to start class and see.' So she came in, and she did stay the whole class. That night on my way home I stopped and got a blank book." ← |

3 "Now, my husband passed on …So, I knew something about this experience, from their point of view" →

4 "At the time, I got a new blank book and I gave one to each of [my] kids, and I said, 'Use this however you want.'" →

5 "Mine started out with journal entries—just what I was experiencing, was so intense—and turned into letters to my husband, [be]cause I wanted to talk to him about all this stuff. My son used his to vent for a while—anger, confusion, sadness—and his turned into poetry: eventually, published poetry." →

b
"So , I got it to her the next day.
I knew she was going home, and I got it to her.
She must have written me probably 5 notes thanking me for that.
And then she kept coming back and we'd go out to lunch after—you know, this was fall quarter of her freshman year; my first quarter here—and, every quarter after that [un]til she graduated, we went out to lunch together.
And I watched her grow. I was a touchstone for her; she could, you know, talk.
There was a genuine friendship that evolved from that.
Didn't start out to make that happen.
It was just one human being to another."
←

6 "That's kind of how I think of my relationship with these students when—I was talking about—they come in with all of their lives. When I see a need, it's one human being to another." →

7 "And I don't –" →

c
"I remember somebody,
when I was relaying this experience …
somebody who knew I just hugged her said,
'You did? I don't know if that's a good idea.
I don't know B, you probably shouldn't do that.'
I thought, 'Yikes. I better be careful,'

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| | | | | and after then I just started asking students, 'Do you want a hug?' Some of em said, 'Yeah,' some of em said, 'No,' And I thought, 'Okay, that's probably true: some people do have a different sense of space and, whereas my hug is just a human being to another [clap], they might not know that.'" ← |
| | | | 8 | "I don't think I've ever asked a boy; I haven't hugged a young man and I haven't asked. But I think it's—at least from my point of view—just so genuine in that moment that, I'd do it again." → |
| | | | 9 | "But I do … think about who they are, what I am. And where I can, I try to express that. [palate clack] Sometimes it turns into a friendship. Most of that's after the class." |
| M | After the Class is Over. I like to hear from my past students; if they reach out and keep in touch with me, I enjoy and am receptive to that. | Seeing them as they continue to grow. I get to know students well, so many do reach out and keep in touch. And I enjoy seeing them again: supporting their productions, hearing about their progress. We're not 'friends' like peers, but they are people whom I'd like to see again. | 1 | "After the class is over" → |
| | | | 2 | "because I got to know them really well … I do have a lot of students who keep in touch with me" → |
| | | | 3 | "So, I wouldn't say 'friends,' em, but certainly, people I like to hang out with." → |
| | | | 4 | "I won't go out for the movies with them; I won't do any of that. But" → |
| | | | a | "I'll go to the concert next week. The kids came to me and said, 'Will you come to our concert next week?' Sure. I've arranged my schedule, I will go to the concert." ← |
| | | | b | "If AJ gets in touch with me, I'll be friends with him. I won't be friends-friends—he's eighteen years old, come on—but certainly I'd like to see him again. I'd like to see Mr Biscuits again, Mil – there are lots of students who I'd love to see and I'll see them on campus and we'll chat." |

## In-Class Correction: the Guiding-Without-Embarrassing Challenge

All three teachers associated the term "In-class Correction" with the practical

challenge of responding to students' classroom efforts and contributions, in ways that help

students progress without feeling ashamed of their current stage of thinking or ability. Their

dialogic reenactments each touch on the themes of providing tactful educational guidance

and effective social reassurance—deciding what details are worth correcting, and teaching a

lesson by, in a given moment (B, 2/dialog-b); controlling the urge to voice judgments (V, dialog-d; M, dialog-a) or insert personal opinions (V, 4/dialog-b) and minor details (B, dialog-a) that would distract from or undermine that larger lesson; and protecting students' personal feelings of validity and social-emotional safety in the classroom (V, 1/dialog-a, 3/dialog-b,c; B, 5/dialog-b,c; M, 2/dialog-b) during such teachable moments. Additionally, their narratives each emphasize working proactively, through moments of correction, to reaffirm the type of learning environment that they intend to foster; what the learning experience should feel like (V, 6/dialog-e,f), how the social learning process works (B, 3, 6/dialog-b, d), and who the learner is as a participant in that growth and change (M, 5/dialog-d)—specifically, the opposite of "stupid" (V, dialog-d; B, dialog-b,d; M, dialog-a).

The way that each envisions and fosters the norms of an ideal learning environment, though, heavily reflects their personal ideologies and teaching experiences.

V, for instance, almost viscerally recoils at the notion of putting down students; he believes in an inviting and de-stressing manner of education. So, in his protocol for responding to unexpected or undesirable student responses, we see him taking active steps to curb his own impulsive judgements and gently redirect the course of those conversations: keeping his personal views out of discussions (4/c) and consistently acknowledging a balance of viewpoints (b), speaking from a position of understanding (a) and using humor to diffuse any perceived tensions (d), and diffusing the stresses of both perceived subject-matter difficulty (6) and perceived social pressure to participate (7/f,g) through the way he frames his classroom environment. Thus, V regards "In-class Correction" as a somewhat counterproductive concept, associated with the conversation-stunting, confidence-undermining, and de-motivating style of teaching against which his style is a direct response.

B, rather than focusing on internally editing and redirecting initial responses, crafts her approach to "In-class Correction" with an external focus on nurturing positive group attitudes about learning together, reflecting her belief in community-driven character education. In the same way that V does (in dialog-b), B introduces her manner of approaching in-class corrections through the eyes of an observer (a). In her case, that dramatic-foil is a fellow teacher impressed by all the little errors that B lets go during a lesson. B then continues to explain how this surprise from her peer illustrates B's distinct view of the purpose of "in-class corrections": not to show individuals where they're wrong (7) or less-than-perfect (the manner to which teacher often acculturate students in schools: dialog-d), but to help the classroom forward as a "we" community, in what they're learning and practicing (2). She then details concrete aspects of this approach, as she translates it into classroom strategies: minimizing personal embarrassment (5, 3/dialog-c); acknowledging students' moments of vulnerability, and respecting their willingness to engage in those moments with the class (dialog-b); and explicitly describing for students the collaborative spirit (4) and important educational benefits (dialog-b) of these public corrective activities, to foster with them a cultural "norm of vulnerability, … teachableness, and fearlessness" (3,6) for building characters and nurturing subject-matter learning. Thus, B regards "In-class Correction" as a positively pro-social concept, associated with opportunities for reshaping students' cultural perceptions of how individuals in class groups can learn with and grow through one another.

Unlike V, who adamantly resists contradicting students' contributions (1/a), and B, who carefully qualifies her feedback as facilitative (whether something is "working" or not) rather than boundary-setting ("should" or "wrong": 4,7), M is very comfortable with correcting students in terms of "right" and "wrong," "good" and "not good," reflecting his

teaching approach's European/orthodox influences. He emphasizes that, in practice, he distinguishes between the individual and the error they make (dialog-a) and—recognizing that students nonetheless feel personally embarrassed by these necessary (2) educational corrections sometimes—takes pre-emptive steps to reinforce that person-error distance by maintaining student-writers' anonymity (b) or using past class's samples (3) to teach a relevant point; by alternately encouraging students to seek the good qualities in their work, when they begin preempting his assessments by prefacing their own works with criticisms (c); and by just as actively admiring students' ideas when they offer to the class an insight that M has not heard before. He steps out of his explanation at this point, to ask me what they're attitudes are about his markedly direct corrective approach—and when I tell him, agrees enthusiastically with their interpretation of his style: in the educational exchange, he is treating them as intellectual equals (5). Thus, M regards the concept of "In-class Correction" as a defining element of his teaching style; the place where he asserts fundamental standards of quality, and lets students know exactly where they stand on that scale as they work to develop their thinking and writing.

Table 3.2
*Comparison of three teachers' practical explanations and reenactments of the teaching-related term "In-Class Correction."*

| | Practical Explanation | | | Practical Reenactment | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Judgement | Implementation | | Narrative frame | Dialog |
| V | Counter-productive. Undermines students' engagement and educational enjoyment. | Correction comes through positive validation, humor, and clear guidelines. It takes self-discipline to swallow personal opinions and impulsive "you're | 1 a | "I really have a problem shooting students down" → | "If I hear something that's like, 'whoah,' I'm more of a mind that, 'Oookay, that's one view, I can see how you come to that, but – what about these other considerations,' as opposed to, 'Nonononononono, you're going the wrong direction there, stop – stop' kind of thing." ← |
| | | | 2 | "I can't. It's a stylistic thing; can't do it." → | |
| | | | 3 | "if somebody is *bold* enough to put up their hand, and then | |

| | | wrong" responses, to allow space for all perspectives and to not force participation, while providing guidance in an inclusive and reassuring way. | | they say something and it's just like walking out on a plank. If you shoot them dooown, next time they're probably not going to put up their hand." → |

b "I remember a student saying once to me
about five weeks into a Writing 2.
She came up to me and she said, …
'You know, I can't figure out
if you're a Democrat or a Republican.'
She didn't say that to me in class, she said it to me personally.
And my first response was kind of like,
'Those are my two choices?' You know,
but I said, 'Well—why is that important first of all, but—
why do you say that?'
And she says,
'Well, because what you tend to do in class is say,
"Okay, there's this side, but there's also this side."'"
←

4 "And that has been the biggest teaching challenge for me, is not using my position—because I'm very politically motivated, and it's very hard—not to use that position as a bully pulpit." →

c "You can't – it would be so easy to pick on a student,
draw them out in a classroom, and even turn the class on them.
That's not that difficult a job; it's not like we're puppet
masters up there. It's pretty easy to pull a string and then point
and, before you know it, you've got fist-a-cuffs in the hall, or
in the aisle."
←

d "There Have *been*, you know, sure:
it's kind of like,
'Whoah, did you just say that to me?' What do you do?
But usually I'll—even then
I don't want to pick on the student—
I'll turn it around and I'll probably
turn it into some sort of humor in some way,
maybe even reflect it back on me—to get (quietly)
'That was really fucking stupid, I can't believe he said that,'
you know, my brain is saying that, but—
my words are like 'Well, you know, um.'
And then I usually wait for something to break the tension,
like a joke"
←

5 "I wouldn't say [humor's] my key corrective mechanism, but … I just keep coming back to it – for me it is number one, definitely." →

e "I just – I see those students get terrorized,
in some classes.
They'll come from, and they'll tell me
about these lecture halls and stuff and I'm thinking,
'If that was my educational experience,
I wouldn't have enjoyed any of it.'
You know, that sounds horrible."
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| | | | 6 | "So, anything to lighten things up – and to – it's like, 'Relax. This is not fucking rocket science or brain surgery or anything else." This is – yes, you've got to" → |
| | | | f | At the very beginning, for the first week, I'd say, 'Okay, let's get some things straight here. When I ask – when something is due, it's due. I am not gonna chase you for it, I'm not gonna say "Hey, did you get your paper in." I'm not even gonna remind you on the day. It's all in the syllabus' " ← |
| | | | 7 | "And I guess that's the price they pay, is I'm not a vulture sitting there going, 'Okay, what, do you have this assignment ready?' or, 'You gonna have to be ready next week for this.' I don't do that." → |
| | | | g | It's like, 'If you want to blow it off? Feel free. It'll show in your grades. But I'm not gonna chase you for this.' You know, 'And if you dis me, I'll dis you.' And it's all connected it that way." ← |
| | | | 8 | "But I just find that you get more with humor. I just think you do." |
| B | Yes – to create a Culture of Teachableness. Positive, helpful guidance forward; moving past the facade of perfection, to a norm of vulnerability and fearlessness. | Teaching in context, to further the lesson. Done supportively and with understanding, to minimize embarrassment and encourage group learning rather than self-protection. | 1 | "It varies – I can think of a lot of different instances where I do it differently. tone change" → |
| | | | a | "Someone observed me with my Writing 1Ace class, … I was trying to teach them some different principles about thesis-writing. And so I was focusing on those issues, 'Do you have a statement of fact? Do you have a position you've taken?' And the grammar was terrible. And afterwards, the person who was observing my class said, 'Oh! That would have driven me crazy not to correct the grammar! How could you just let that one go when the grammar wasn't right?' And – it had to do with 'What am I teaching?' You know, if I'm going to correct someone because it furthers the lesson on what we're talking about, or whether I'm going to correct someone and just make em feel like an idiot, … I'm taking that correction kind of out-of-context, unless I'm actually gonna stop to teach that. And apply it." ← |
| | | | 2 | "It's not a hit-and-run, it's a correction that furthers what we're doing." → |
| | | | b | "I had my Writing 2 class today go around, and everybody shared their thesis statements – orally. And sometimes I say, 'Let's just listen to them. Just listen and see what patterns you see in these.' |

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| | | | | And I decided that this time<br>I was gonna stop with each one<br>when they were off-track.<br>And I actually stopped after the first one<br>and thanked her, for offering hers first.<br>And talked about,<br>'I know this feels kind of vulnerable;<br>you're not real confident about your thesis statements anyway,<br>and then you have to share it,<br>and it has to get corrected,'<br>and I said,<br>'There's real virtue in sharing half-cooked writing,<br>at this point,'<br>and that,<br>'You're sharing this, and my ability to help raise questions<br>about that is part of the learning process. And if you're not<br>open to that –<br>you're progress is a little slower.<br>So this is an act of your wanting to learn,<br>by doing this.'<br>You know, just tried to put it in a positive context<br>so that they could see the correction as not being<br>'Gee, you're stupid,' but,<br>'Here's where you go next.' "<br>← |
| | | | c | "I try, not to use the word 'but.' I use the word 'now':<br>'Okay, this part is working, Now – look at this part.' "<br>← |
| | | | 3 | "So, there are certain things I do to minimize embarrassment.<br>But I also try over and over and over again to create a norm of<br>vulnerability, in a class." → |
| | | | d | "I think [students] come from a culture that says<br>writing's supposed to be perfect the first time out.<br>And so I'm trying to complicate that for them,<br>as well as make it a norm that correction isn't, 'You're stupid';<br>correction is, 'Ooh! This might help.'<br>And then if I can get the whole class doing that."<br>← |
| | | | 4 | "When I do peer response – it's not peer editing, it's a reader's<br>response; it's not telling someone what they should do, it's<br>giving them response." → |
| | | | 5 | "So if I single someone out, and correct them, and it's not part<br>of serving the larger need—if it's not part of the culture, and it<br>ends up embarrassing the person more than helping them—<br>then, I don't want to do it." → |
| | | | 6 | "But if I can create a culture of teachableness, and<br>fearlessness, and, wanting to learn more than preserve-the-<br>façade-of-perfection, then I think it serves everybody." → |
| | | | 7 | "I try to do it gracefully, and I try to do it as part of the culture,<br>not as part of an individual getting it wrong. But I do think<br>they oughta know when it's working; when it's not." |
| M | Yes – as<br>intellectual | Balancing<br>corrections with | 1 | "Well, WOW. I think we've covered that *pretty* well  and I<br>don't—it's not—" → |

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| equals. They have to get this feedback to know what is—and is not—right, good, appropriate. | encouragement. If something they share is off, I let them know, and minimize personal embarrassment; if they say something of theirs is off, I encourage them to share it, and let them know where I see good. | a | "I try to do it not in a way, like, 'You're *stu*pid?' It's [just like], 'It's not the right answer" And you can say to them, 'This is not the right *answer*. This is not a good *topic* sentence.' " ← |
| | | 2 | *How* [else] are they going to know this—*sometimes* it's embarrassing. And I try," → |
| | | b | "when I do the worksheets, I never say, 'Who wrote this?' It's *anonymous*, and I try not to call on the person – if I remember." ← |
| | | 3 | "What I'm doing now is I *save* the mistakes from this quarter 'til next quarter. So there's never anybody on the sheet who's written it in *that* quarter." → |
| | | c | "I have no problem with saying to somebody, 'That is not an appropriate answer,' And I think be*cause* of that … what I did notice was – I don't know if you saw that – they'll sometimes start off by saying, 'I think this is *wrong*,' or 'This is not very good,' And they'll start prefacing them that way? And I still say, '*Still* read it because it might be better than you think it is' " ← |
| | | 4 | "You've seen me *in* action. You know that it's—How do they feel about it? Were they, like, '*Yuck*'?" → |
| | | 5 | "*Good* Oh, de*light*ful. Great. *Yes.* I'm glad to hear that because that's exactly the truth: I'm treating you like an intellectual equal" → |
| | | d | "Like this other class – Travis said something; I went, 'That's really clever. I've never heard that before.' " |

## Personal Stories: the My-Life-into-Their-Education Challenge

All three teachers associated the term "Personal Stories" with the practical challenge of deciding what parts of their life are relevant to students' learning in the course, and holding themselves to that line in classroom dialogs. Their reenactments each touch on this theme of discerning what is and is not valuable to the class educational exchange, and controlling personal sharing accordingly—internally justifying what they do share (V,

dialog-c/e; B, dialog-b; M, dialog-a); drawing clear boundaries about what they don't share, or how much they share at a given time (V, dialog-a/b; B, dialog-a/c; M, dialog-b/c). Additionally, their narratives each define clearly the operational role of personal stories in educational exchanges with students; what those stories accomplish for them in their role as teachers (V, 3; B, 2; M, 4), and how that contributes to a larger overall vision of that learning environment (V, 4/5/6; B, 5/6; M, 1).

The way that role of a teacher's personal stories is operationally defined and situated in the class, though, heavily reflects each teacher's personal ideology and teaching style.

V, for instance, believes that learning environments should entice students in; make them feel welcome and enthused to join in the subject-matter exploration. So, in his protocol for telling personal stories, we see him directly correlating that sharing-act with other barrier-breaking / relationship-building acts (e.g., first-name address, crafting meaningful assignments: 5/dialog-c,d), intending those stories to move students emotionally and stimulate their attentions in learning (3,4), helping him to create an atmosphere like that he remembers in his best school experiences (6/dialog-e). Thus, V regards "Personal Stories" as a valuable persuasive tool for bringing students into the educational exchange, and associates this concept with his discursive style of teaching—his only practical concern with the concept being how to rein in his enthusiasm when stories arise (dialog-a,b).

B, alternately, crafts her approach to personal stories in a way that reflects her belief in building a collaborative classroom community, where students have an influential voice in the educational exchange and freedom in their thinking as they learn. So she shares stories about herself responsively "when [students] ask" (5), or when it's relevant to the values and directions of the course (2,6) or has in some way influenced the agreed-upon progress of the course (4/b)—and draws lines in that story-telling where she thinks that personal information

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might interfere with students' learning or suppress their voices (3/c). B is cognizant that she holds a de-facto power position in that discourse community, and so she self-polices to make sure that what she offers is not self-indulgence (1/a) but a demonstration of mutual openness in that learning community (4,5,7). Thus, B regards the "Personal Stories" concept as an act of "sharing" that is ultimately warranted and natural in the classroom, because—as a teacher—she teaches others through the lens of her own learning and growing experiences (6).

M has a more tightly-defined practical notion of the "relevance" between a teacher's life and a course's content, compared with V's persuasive and B's communal treatments, when he explains personal stories; a difference rooted in M's belief that school is a student's job, preparing them for success in adult life, where the teacher models that professionalism of thought and behavior. In this context, M sees personal stories as valuable opportunities for illustrating the teacher's humanity and comparability as a fellow-learner (1): those common moments of failure on the path to eventual successes, and those relatable moments of personal excitement that exemplify the value one can find in the subject-matter (a). But M places a firm boundary at this point, that the story has to be directly relevant to the course topics at-hand (4); not about subjective internal struggles or life-context that is tangential to the material (b,c). Thus, M regards the concept of "Personal Stories" as an important relational tool—but in a more tightly academic sense, more socially reserved, in a manner reflecting his professionally firm and orthodox approach to preparing students for adult life experiences.

Table 3.3
*Comparison of three teachers' practical explanations and reenactments of the teaching-related term "Personal Stories."*

| | Practical Explanation | | | Practical Reenactment | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Judgement | Implementation | | Narrative frame | Dialog |
| V | Persuasive. An effective barrier-breaker, related to humor, that draws students in and builds a positive learning relationship. | Used to evoke feelings, create an inviting and interesting atmosphere. Often hard to control the urge to share personal details beyond what's relevant, but—like using first-name address or being honest and fair with assignments—stories can make educational experiences positive, persuasive, and informative. | 1 | "I find myself into them before I realize what I've done" → | |
| | | | a | | It's like, "Oh, Why the hell did I start telling that story?" ← |
| | | | 2 | "I think that they can be effective, but I also think they connect directly to the humor thing" → | |
| | | | 3 | "Story-telling to me is kind of a humor project …Why are you telling someone a story? Either you want to make them 'feel intense,' or you want to make them laugh, or" → | |
| | | | 4 | "It's like, 'to persuade, to teach, to l[earn]—to inform" – they're all connected together to me." → | |
| | | | b | | "so personal stories. I don't think you should do [too much of them], and I try to put the brakes on it when one comes out – but I can't help it. It's just, 'I r—That reminds me of the time that, back in aught-seven –'" ← |
| | | | | [You use them informatively too though: you say, "Oh, my research was in this,"] | |
| | | | 5 | "Again, it's just part of that breaking-down thing." → | |
| | | | c | | "It's like insisting that people call me [first name] V – I don't know how much it works, but at least it makes me feel better, and I think it makes them feel better." ← |
| | | | d | | You know, I think that they have great bullshit detectors, and they hate busy work – there's no point in giving them busy work; it's just – it's no good for you, it's no good for them, and it's no good for the relationship you're trying to work out by the end" ← |
| | | | 6 | "I have to admit at the end of ten weeks, it's as important to me that someone had a positive experience in my class, interpersonally, as much as it is important that they saw some new stuff about film or had a little fun" → | |
| | | | e | | "So I—my best classes, when I was at Berkeley, my best classes were the ones that I walked away from thinking 'I enjoyed being there.' It wasn't just kind-of cool classes like, 'This guy was funny,' you know, 'It was a great topic, he was open to bringing as much stuff as possible' And yeah –" |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | 7 | Anyway, I could go on all day. ← |
| B | Sure, sharing parts of life that are connected to the class. We teachers build classes around our selves, values, experiences. | Share what's relevant, or what students ask about. But keep it short, don't impose it on them self-indulgently, and share nothing that interferes with their learning or their agency as free thinkers. | 1 | "I do bring in personal stories. I try not to do, a lot of that if I don't—just to be indulgent." → |
| | | | a | "You know, 'I want to tell you about my life.'" ← |
| | | | 2 | "It's when I think that it's going to illustrate something. Or, it's before class and I'm excited about something." → |
| | | | b | "You know, my daughter's boyfriend, yesterday, asked for my blessing. And, he's gonna propose probably next week. When I went in my Writing 2 class— and I can't tell her, and I'm just dying with this secret— and it did effect, my not having papers to return in my Writing 2 class, … So I told them, before class, 'I'm sorry, I don't have all your papers, here's what happened, will you forgive me?' It's that sort of thing. There was a reason for that." ← |
| | | | 3 | "There are things I don't tell them, because I think it might interfere. I don't tell them my political bias. I don't tell them my religious background. If they ask, certain questions" → |
| | | | c | "like when, the last presidential election, the students wanted to know who I was going to vote for. And I said, 'I'll tell you after the election.'" ← |
| | | | 4 | "I'm conscious of my position not being just one of the students. And so there are things that I don't [tell]—They know I have kids, if something happens with that." → |
| | | | 5 | "When they ask me, I don't mind sharing my life with them, unless I think it's gonna interfere in any way with their learning. But I also don't impose it on them." → |
| | | | 6 | "Again, I think we teach who we are and we construct classes in a way that has something to do with our values; has something to do with who we are and our personal experiences – positive or negative. It all plays into that." → |
| | | | 7 | "So I don't mind sharing myself. I don't mind telling personal stories, but I also don't use them as a captive audience. And I try to keep things short." |
| M | Yes, helps humanize the teacher. In their relation to the subject-matter. | Sharing stories of learning and experience relevant to the class. Rejections, acceptances, moments of excitement around the subject of Writing—but nothing beyond that, | 1 | "I think that really helps tremendously in making the teacher a human *be*ing." → |
| | | | a | "Like when I say 'they rejected my manuscript, or 'this manuscript was accepted,' or 'I met so-and-so, *so*-and-so,' or the excitement I had over meeting Norman Mailer, or whatever it is." ← |
| | | | 2 | "I think – as *long* as it's not personal" → |
| | | | b | "like, 'I didn't know what to wear today.'" |

| | | like relationship issues or family distractions. | 3 | "you know, that kind of personal; something about my personal life." → | ← |
| | | | c | | "You know, 'My partner left me,' or 'My child's got whooping cough,' or something like that – none of that stuff." |
| | | | | | ← |
| | | | 4 | "It has to be something relevant to the—whatever's going on." | |

## Apathy: the Challenging-Students-to-Care Challenge

All three teachers associated the term "Apathy" with the practical challenge of stimulating students to invest in the course learning experience. Their dialogic reenactments each touch on the theme of being constructively assertive—recognizing apathy in students' faces or behaviors (V, 4/dialog-b; B, 1/dialog-a, 3; M, 2), and using positive determination to pro-actively shift the class environment into one where engagement prevails over apathy (V, dialog-b,c; B, dialog-b; M, dialog-a).    Additionally, their narratives each emphasize the importance of feeling genuinely committed to one's work and one's subject-matter in these moments; teachers drawing on personal wells of belief and conviction (V, 2,5; B, 2; M, 1,2) based in emotionally resonant experiences (V, dialog-a; B, dialog-c) as they elevate their voices to counter the weight of apathetic individuals in the classroom.

The way that each teacher implements this purposeful stimulus to students' energies, though, heavily reflects their personal ideologies and teaching experiences.

V, for instance, deeply appreciates his learning experiences in higher education, which continue to shape his motives and approaches both professionally and generally in life—but recently, he has also been dealing with energy-draining personal issues. So, in his protocol for shifting apathetic energy in the classroom, we see him actively drawing on core positive experiences (dialog-a) to reinvigorate his passion (5,2) as he attempts to maintain

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his own energy (3,4) and project that same enthusiasm into his classroom (dialog-b)—so that he and other students won't "catch" the contagion of apathetic feelings from unenthused individuals (1), but rather find those individuals' interests and draw them into the larger group's collective momentum (6/dialog-c). Thus, V regards "apathy" as a pestilence, antithetical to the love for, interest in, and energy sparked by teaching and writing, that keep him dedicated to that work—even in those waves when energy dips and times are trying.

B, alternately, crafts her approach to student apathy through a larger lens—looking at the defining spirit of each generation of students, and responding in a manner that reflects her whole-person, community-situated view of educating students. As with V (6), B takes an understanding mindset: seeking to relate with or at least conceive of students' motives for resisting the course and its subject-matter (3). But she both interprets those motives and crafts her response from a generational vantage-point: seeing students' walled-off faces and body-language (3,1/a) as situated within a larger context of cultural energy (4) that is beyond her right or responsibility to change (2), so rather, she focuses on shaping the course as its own stimulating counter-environment and argues for why it's beneficial for them to care in that context (2/b)—echoing the her own generation's revolutionary social energy (c). Thus, B regards "Apathy" the concept as, again, something natural: an aspect of students' larger complex wholeness as individuals, that she recognizes and respects, then addresses through the environment of her classroom.

M's style of dealing with apathy, however, is much more direct and pragmatic than either V's or B's approaches—as evident merely in the comparative brevity of his response—in a way that again reflects his orthodox approach of setting clear, professional expectations for his students in the classroom. In explaining teacher apathy, he states simply that he doesn't believe in it, and asserts confidently that no one would claim he exhibits it (1). And

he describes his response to student apathy, on an emotional level, as almost energizingly agitating: annoying, dissapointing, and frustrating (2). And his counter-response to students expressing apathy, as he describes it, leaves no room an alternative: he wants students to be engaged, demands that engagement, models that engagement for them, and so evidently compels that engagement from them (a).   Thus, M regards the concept of "Apathy" as simply unacceptable—reflecting his personal educational orthodoxy: personal engagement is the only, right way to be in the classroom; if you are in his classroom, M makes clear, you will be involved in that educational exchange.

Table 3.4
*Comparison of three teachers' practical explanations and reenactments of the teaching-related term "Apathy."*

| | Practical Explanation | | Practical Reenactment | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Judgement | Implementation | | Narrative frame | Dialog |
| V | Contagious, Death. Absence of love, interest, energy. | Something to fight against, chase off. In self, by remembering what you love in what you do; in students, by eliminating what creates discomfort and distance, drawing up what evokes interest and interaction. | 1 | "I think apathy is the death of all of us – I think if we're apathetic about things, it's just gonna rub off on the students. And if they're apathetic [it']s gonna rub off on you, and it's gonna affect the way you teach." → | |
| | | | 2 | "I just think that life is too short for apathy; I just don't believe that you can be apathetic about anything." → | |
| | | | 3 | "I try to avoid it – maybe if I'm tired, or if I fall into: week seven, spring quarter, on a nine-thirty in the morning – maybe there are waves of a[pathy] that come in. But I certainly try to stay away from it, and I firmly believe" → | |
| | | | a | "You know, I was out of school for a long time before I went back. And going back, to me was like stepping into a warm bath – it was like, 'Oh my God, I c[an]—I just get to read and argue and talk about these things and write about these things and engage in that way?' It was like, 'pf,' manna from the gods kind of thing, in that way. And, that's always there with me." ← | |
| | | | b | "I mean, I may look out and I may see a certain apathy in some of the faces that I'm seeing, but it's like, | |

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| | | | | 'Well number one, you're not gonna bring me down.<br>Number two I think I'd like ta' wipe it off your face,<br>and if you give me a minute, maybe I will.' "<br>← |
| | | | 4 | "But who can avoid—I mean, that's the horrible thing about apathy, I guess: if it's on you, it's on you." → |
| | | | 5 | "But I certainly personally try not to – because I love teaching: I love the topics, I love what I'm doing for a living. So I never feel apathetic toward it." → |
| | | | 6 | "I understand why they [students] would, and I'm hoping to a degree that my style of teaching is going to speak to that," → |
| | | | c | "to say,<br>'Okay, this is—I don't want you to be apathetic.<br>First of all, all those things that really bug you about—<br>okay, they're not going to apply.<br>And, so let's get those out of the way,<br>and then we'll see if there's anything still of interest:<br>you picked [this class], presumably,<br>because you're interested in film,<br>so what can we do with that?<br>Is there anything –' you know –<br>'Can we move from that point?' So." |
| B | Generation-al. Apathy comes in waves, between movements of activism, in generations' cultures, and you can see it in students' faces; it's ultimately their choice. | Let students decide in themselves whether to engage. Teacher's responsibility is not to change students' (cultural) attitudes or motives; just to create an environment that's stimulating, that encourages them to care. | 1 | "It's what I think I see on some students' faces? And I often don't – I try but – I don't know quite how to break through that with some students." → |
| | | | a | "I mean, I've had some students – I had this one class,<br>and I had several young men who<br>in their letters of introduction pretty much said,<br>'I dare you to make me try and like this;<br>I'm not gonna.'<br>You know, 'You can do everything you want,<br>but you oughta know ahead of time:<br>I hate writing, I don't want to be in this class.<br>Sorry. Nothing personal.'<br>[I] thought, 'Oh great,<br>I have to spend ten weeks with this group' –<br>and they were hard.<br>This one guy would come in, sit in the back,<br>pull his cap down.<br>I talked to him about it –<br>didn't seem to make any difference.<br>He was just determined not to like it."<br>← |
| | | | 2 | "So I don't—it's not my responsibility to do that; to change them. I try and construct an environment that's stimulating." → |
| | | | b | "Sometimes I'll challenge them directly,<br>'This is your choice, but. You know,<br>ten weeks of not caring is harder, than caring.' "<br>← |
| | | | 3 | "But, yeah – I see it in their faces and their body language sometimes when they don't want to take writing and they have to and they think that they're just going to—resist. Maybe it's |

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| | | | c | satisfying. I don't know." →<br>"I was in college in the sixties and seventies, so my college was social – I was socialized to try and 'change' things. Apathy was not an option when I was in college. So"<br>← |
| | | | 4 | "I've watched different generations of students come through, and seen kind of a different wave of apathy – and then it resolves into activism and then, kind of, more apathetic, and then activism. So I keep that in mind too, that they're also—it's not just about my classroom: they're also in a context of their own culture." |
| M | Not acceptable. Neither teachers nor students should be apathetic; I stay engaged, and expect students to be engaged. | Don't believe in it; don't leave room for it. Be involved and engaged as a teacher, and clearly command that students bring that same presence and engagement. | 1<br><br>2<br><br><br>a | "Apathy? Don't believe in it. Teacher apathy? No, … I don't think a teacher should be apathetic. I mean, one thing they can not say about me is I'm apathetic." →<br>"[Student apathy] That's very disappointing and frustrating. Nothing that annoys me more. I want them to be involved, engaged." →<br>"I give them that Edgar Allan Poe line, 'Do you believe in ghosts? I do when I'm writing my short story.' Be in this class, be engaged. And it works. They're engaged." |

## Order: the Preparing-to-Be-Spontaneous Challenge

All three teachers associated the term "Order" with the practical challenge of establishing with students a shared purpose for each class, as a supportive base that orients that planned exchange's spontaneous unfolding. Their dialogic reenactments touch on the theme of preparing self to give students a sense of direction—going over materials so that they are fresh-in-mind (M, dialog-a); planning out an intended way for the course to proceed (B, 2); and then making very clear for the students what that plan and its educational end-goal is, so that everyone feels comfortably primed-for-action moving forward (V, dialog-a,b; B, 2,3; M, dialog-a). Additionally, their narratives each emphasize that classes unfold in ways that are always innately somewhat wild, and that being prepared with a plan actually allows more freedom to respond flexibly to those surprises (V, 3; B, 3,4; M, 3); by providing

internal confidence and practical direction, a teacher's clear goals and plans lay a basic stability under everyone's feet in the spontaneous progress of an educational exchange.

The details that each teacher focuses on when describing this process of self-preparing and group-coordinating, though, heavily reflects their personal ideologies and teaching experiences.

V, for instance, explains much of his (disarming, enticing) teaching practice as a balancing response to the (stress-inducing, oppressive) classroom environments by which he believes many students' educations are scarred. So, in his protocol for "order," we see him focusing first on the  emotional and pragmatic motives—like fear of slipping from order into unmanaged chaos (3) or desire to earn good institutional reviews (1)—that may compel other teachers to fixate heavily on achieving "control" over students and classrooms. He then illustrates how he enforces impartial accountability without forcing students militaristically into obedience (4/dialog-a,b; see also "Friendship" dialog-c): by providing students with clear course goals and procedures, and inviting but not chasing them into joining that process, and then objectively (without any projected anger or internalized guilt, neutrally) giving each student the grade that reflects their work; their self-chosen level of investment. Thus, V regards the concept "Order" as a distraction from teaching, associated with the drilling and oppressive micromanaging of student conformity that is to him the opposite of where education should focus: building out from students' existing passions, abilities, and comfort levels into the subject-matter—even if that means, every so often, slipping out of and reining back in the planned direction of the course (3).

B, alternately, sees the term "Order" as much more integrated with her community-focused approach to the classroom. She interprets *order* not as externally controlling how others behave in her course, but as internally organizing her own vision of what the group

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needs to accomplish together, and the ordered stages of that forward progression (4, 2). She describes this preparatory self-organizing work as a kind of disciplined learning (3): the teacher familiarizing herself with the basic steps and different variations involved in a given educational exchange—like a dancer who meticulously learns the elements of their craft, and then spontaneously preforms from that foundation. This readiness, then, makes her feel comfortable and free when improvising her steps with the students (1), resolving the potential for group discomfort and chaos (2) with a sense of order about the class (4), that gives those shifting moments a constant and stable direction, as the group moves forward. Thus, B regards "Order" as a liberating base of informed planning—an interpretation that befits her scholarship-grounded manner of teaching, both in thinking though approaches and situating/explaining classroom activities for students.

M also sees "Order" as before-class preparation that provides a base for in-the-moment improvisation. But he describes that planning and organization in much more definite terms than either B or V, portraying it as a more central part of his professionally orthodox approach. As M has explained at points prior, he wants to have substantive intellectual exchanges with his students, and selects materials and activities intentionally to bring out these quality conversations. Here, we see him setting up an ordered structure for these educational moments in three stages: first, planting the day's source-material freshly in his own mind and telling students clearly what is going to be done on that day (1/a); next, orchestrating the classroom conversations by-feel within that framework of activities— calling on different students and adjusting depth of discussion, for example, to move conversations and get through the content with each unique class group (2/b); and finally, learning from the way students respond—with or against the teacher's expectations—how to alter and fine-tune those ordered plans for the next round of that course (3/c). Thus, M

regards the concept of "Order" as necessary for both the teacher and the student; a structure

that lends some certainty to the naturally somewhat unpredictable classroom exchange (3)—

so that, like in a ceremony, everyone knows the day's procedure and end-goal, no matter how

unexpected the revelations and dialogs within that orderly intellectual exchange.

Table 3.5
*Comparison of three teachers' practical explanations and reenactments of the teaching-related term*
*"Order."*

| | Practical Explanation | | Practical Reenactment | |
| | Judgement | Implementation | Narrative frame | Dialog |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| V | Distracts from teaching. Not my language: becomes a focus when people are worried about losing control; but really, order is not such an ordeal to maintain. | Let students know how your class works; let them be responsible for whether or not they join that ordered system. I don't get personally / emotionally invested in their getting in line with my class, or controlling their participation: let them know the way the class works, invite them in, let them choose, and hold them accountable for that choice. | **1** "I think it's a very important thing – in fact, it shows up everywhere. I noticed that it's even on the evals – it says things about maintaining order," → <br> **2** "it's like—That's a little-bit like a foreign language to me. I don't know." → <br> **3** "Some people have a hard time keeping order anyway, and they're afraid it's gonna slip out. Once in a while it's moved that way for me, but I usually find it pretty easy to rein it back, and I'm never worried about completely losing control." → <br> **4** "Order is … it's right up there with teaching grammar and those kind of things: it's kind of thing – well, yeah, to a degree you have to main[tain], but I'm not there to be your drill sergeant." → <br><br> **a** <br><br> **b** <br><br> **5** "So order, I would say, is distracting, frankly. I think it can be distracting," → <br> **c** | <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> "It's like, 'We're here to talk about film – are you in, or not?' It's like, 'Okay.' You know, I don't have any investment in it." ← <br> "And I like the students who blow you off and think you don't catch that you're being blown off. And they'll just very matter-of-factly make eye-contact with you and come talk to you, and it's like, 'But you've blown me off this entire quarter, and now you're going to sit here and ask for the grade you want? Well, I don't think so.' It's all, 'But I told you this in week one. I'm not gonna be this way.' " ← <br> "but I'm thinking of the other two [teachers in this study] and I'm thinking, |

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| | | | | 'Okay, let's—we'll have a little game of tennis here,' you know? Throwing the balls back and forth." |
| B | Allows for spontaneity in teaching. The underlying discipline that enables freedom in practice. | Being organized, having a sense of how I am proceeding though the course. Having that sense of order about the class, allows me to improvise as that class unfolds. | 1<br><br>2<br><br><br>3<br><br><br><br>4 | "I think, the more organized I am, the more free I feel about spontaneity." →<br>"If I'm not organized and I don't have the sense of order about how I'm proceeding through the course, then it can just be chaos. And it's not comfortable for me, and I don't think it's very comfortable for the students." →<br>"So there's this balance – it's sort of like discipline and freedom. You know, the dancer who's disciplined at learning all of the different steps and all of the different positions, then has the freedom to dance. And improvise." →<br>"I think that's part of what that order and spontaneity is. If I have a sense of order about the class … then I can be spontaneous and improvise." |
| M | Necessary. Both teacher and student need to know the plan, what you're going to do, even if you don't know how that exchange will play out. | Come in with readings freshly in-mind and topics-to-cover ready; make sure everyone knows, in common, that class's goal. You may not know what will happen – different class groups run differently, students may respond in ways other than expected, so you improvise and change plans over time – but you come in with a plan. | 1<br>a<br><br><br><br><br><br>2<br><br><br><br>b<br><br><br><br>3<br><br><br><br><br><br><br>c | "*Oh* yeah. I *come* in" →<br> "even if I've read the article for the last 20 years,<br> I *still* read the article the night before.<br> I still make notes on it,<br> I still see things I haven't seen before.<br> I think students *need* to know,<br> 'This class, we're going to go through *this*.' "<br> ←<br>"Now, sometimes it'll run long – fourteen kids will run shorter than a twenty-five class. So the twenty-five class doesn't cover as much as the fourteen. You have *less* students to *call* on. So they may or may not be verbal." →<br> "I was lucky with that 14 class, that I had.<br> Five or six students who were *great* –<br> who I could call on and just be—<br> they would speak, *you know*, at length."<br> ←<br>"So I think that it's important that you know *what* you're going to do. You may not know – and that goes back to improv – you may not know what will *happen*. You'll throw something out and they won't respond the same way as you thought they would. Even from class-to-class in the same *year*. But I think the teacher has to know what they want to cover that day and what the issues." →<br> "I used to do a lot of grammar.<br> I used to do, like, everything in the world.<br> Now I just pick those *seven* items –<br> that's what we're focusing in on.<br> Because if we give you more,<br> you're just going to be totally confused.<br> So it's:<br> Dangling Modifier, misplaced modiverb, vague pronoun reference –<br> I don't even do faulty predication,<br> because that's a hard one for them to grasp,<br> so I might just drop that—"<br> ← |

| | | | | "Okay." |
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## From Practical Operations to Principled Values

For each teaching-related term that these expert educators explain, the same pattern holds: while their *descriptions* of educational realities and practical challenges associated with given topics are very similar in essence, nonetheless their understandings of each topic are highly personalized. The way each expert interprets operationally and responds practically to these given teaching-related concepts (e.g., humor), actions (e.g., in-class correction), or phenomena (e.g., apathy) diverge among those individuals: at the level of dialogic teaching experiences associated with the terms, so too at the level of sense-making narratives that tie those experiences to larger patterns and purposes in teaching related to the terms; and so ultimately at the level of emotional-rational judgements toward, and practical responses for teaching in regard to, those terms.

When looking term-by-term, at the individual level, these teachers' responses all tied back in fairly clear ways to elements from their Keys of Motives and Intention-Language: V's radical recoil from hierarchically divisive educational acts that stress students and distract teachers, is an attitude that arises again and again in various guises; B's emphasis on honoring the broader humanity and social connectedness of her students, is a value that infuses many of her responses; and M's belief that student's must be prepared for and encouraged into their adult potential for intellectual  rigor and professional flexibility, is a goal that underlies his rational approaches and emotional sense of satisfaction across most all his explanations. Thus, these basic personalized elements—a set of beliefs, goals, feelings; and a narrative style for cohering these factors purposefully into practical intentions—seem, in the experts' explanatory narratives, both to characterize each teacher's

process for developing professionally (the way they perceive, reflect on, and distill practical lessons from their unique subjective experiences) and ultimately each teacher's current-ongoing wisdom of practice. Looking, one classroom-related concept at a time, helped to make visible these threads of development in each expert's understanding of teaching writing: from common educational situations, to idiosyncratic knowledge-bases regarding what works best, how and why—each term/topic's central or marginal relevance to teaching practice; its characteristic moments and effects, when/where it appears in classroom situations; its positive or problematic general nature, within educational exchanges; and practical strategies for capitalizing on or dealing with its presence.

Looking then, as a whole, at these three teachers' idiosyncratic dictionaries of topical wisdom about teaching practice, their interpersonal differences (e.g., in attentional focus and perceiving, in observational organization and sense-making, in practical translation and refinement) appear predictable and unified; they reflect a core set of emotionally resonant attitudes, experientially resonant beliefs, and morally resonant goals. And—if teachers' accounts are being taken at face-value—this compelling core drives both their intellectual/spiritual sense of purpose in the classroom, and their ongoing cycles of professional practice and development.

As will be explored in the next section, tracing the referential connections that teachers weave among their term-explanations—e.g., direct allusions to other terms, common discriptors linking terms, scenarios or dialogs shared by terms—enables one to see how these Personal Dictionaries might serve as a functional framework in guiding their professional actions. They take simple, polished ideas (e.g., humor breaks barriers; we teach who we are; students need and like clear guidance) and link them together complexly in a soil of memorable stories (e.g., single, profound teaching moments; recognizable, recurring

patterns in educational exchanges) to form a principled network; a values-based, action-oriented, and identity-integrated manner for being a good teacher.

Additionally, by comparing these principled, practical, personal dictionaries with excerpts from teachers' actual dialogic progress with students over the course of a term, we can press the clear touchstone of their personal ideals against the rough ore their professional performance and its educational impact: the teacher's verbal and nonverbal behaviors, and students' reported perceptions thereof; the teacher's in-class discourse with students, and students' educational memories therefrom; the teacher's reflective assessments of students' learning and performance, and students. Through a personalized dictionary, each of these teachers plans for, describes, and reflects on their educational exchanges with students in the classroom; so by reconstructing those dictionaries—noting their essential themes and tracing their web of principles—I have prepared myself (even as a relatively novice teacher) to glimpse at how these three expert teachers intentionally implement their practical wisdom in educational dialogs with students, and to assess the intersubjective synchrony of those exchanges.

CHAPTER 8


AN EXPERT BECOMES A LEADER (V):

FROM CLEAR VALUES AND CONSISTENT SELF-INVESTMENT TO

SYNCHRONOUS EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES


**The Principled (reason):**

**Values-Based Frameworks for Teaching Core Content**


**Why Principles are Relevant to "Good" Teaching**

  Before talking about these teachers' "principled" approaches to educational work, in depth, it is important here to state clearly what makes a Principle distinct from—say—an Adage, Proverb, Maxim or Aphorism. While these latter types of short, pithy, poetic, memorable statements are all meant to capture some universal truth or cultural wisdom, none of them are explicitly defined as intended-for-practical-use. "A promise is a debt" (Irish), "A man can see another man's ass, but not his own" (Japanese), "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Indian, East Asian, Iranian, et al.), "Take hold of it together, it won't feel heavy" (Russian): these lines do clearly convey social values, observational beliefs, moral and pragmatic guidelines; but in their decontextualized generality, they leave open such practical decisions as When/Where they should be considered most relevant, within What circumstantial limits, to What practical extent, and How implemented? So these

lines are not, in and of themselves, principles; not until a person integrates them within their

own way of being in, perceiving of, and interacting with the world:

> Principle (noun): 1 – A fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the
>
> foundation for a system of belief or behaviour or for a chain of reasoning. 'the
>
> basic principles of justice' / 1.1 – (usually principles) A rule or belief
>
> governing one's behaviour. 'struggling to be true to their own principles' / 1.2
>
> Morally correct behaviour and attitudes. 'a man of principle' [22]

Principles are distinguished from mere statements of human morals, truths, or strategies by

*Sincerity*; by those words' genuine link to an individual's deep feelings, private mindset, and

outwardly projected disposition—that makes those words, when spoken by that person,

viscerally meaningful, intuitively trustworthy, and resonantly understandable.

Principles take time to develop, and in that way, they are closely related to wisdom:

that uniquely privileged subset of knowledge that is born of first-hand human experience,

distilled and organized through environment-attuned expertise, and so associated with good

and timely practical judgement. Societies—by definition, as a "more or less ordered" and

"purposeful" community of individuals (OLD 2017)—value their collective cultural

wisdom, both as a tool for reaffirming established social patterns or activity systems

efficiently, and as a touchstone for intelligently expanding on (or away from) those historical

approaches for existing with others and sustaining a shared environment healthfully. In

service of this, societies also generally value the practical wisdom of individuals: both of the

scholars and innovators who collect, debate, and advance society's knowledge; and of the

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[22]  Oxford Living Dictionaries (English), <<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/principle>> 13
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educators who embody, explain, and orchestrate experiences of fundamental knowledge (skills, notions, dispositions) for future generations to take over.

In crafting this study about how good teacher teach (wanting, as a novice teacher, to research their educational exchanges in a way *useful* for my own teacherly development), I realized that the part of their practical Wisdom—that experience-based, gradually developed expert knowledge—which I valued as a learner, and wanted to understand, was how they as educators maintain and convey Sincerity.

All of my best teachers—the ones who, in retrospect, made the deepest and longest lasting positive impacts on my educational development—I remember as markedly *Sincere*. During my learning experiences with them, I was convinced in my heart and mind (though not consciously at the time) that they valued the subject-matter they shared, cared about myself and my peers as people, and had crafted their courses as some marriage of that intellectual enthusiasm and human compassion. So, as a learner, I trusted them all in their courses—through my phased experiences of novelty, difficulty, confusion, discomfort, and doubt therein—because as leaders *they* seemed stable: prepared, invested, understanding, reassuring, and certain in ways that balanced my moments of instability, learning with them in those dialogic educational environments. Their genuine-seeming connections to the subject-matter, and to the class group, created a sense *Synchrony* in those environments: like everyone was on an analogous path, sharing and negotiating the shape of some learning-centered purpose (see Coles 1978), our unique steps in that progress coordinated through the teacher's unified and unifying presence. From their Sincerity, our Synchrony; from those moments of triadic (You-I-It) connection, a lasting change in some part of my feelings, views, or habits in this world.

What I am now finally beginning to see—after observing these three teachers in dialog with their students over a term, exploring both sides' perspectives of that educational exchange, and analyzing how the teachers explained their reasons and intentions in that work—are the observable signs of these educators' sincerity: the unity of their feelings, thoughts, and actions as teachers, reflected in the coherence of their personal narratives and identities, their practical motives and rationales, and (below) their principled manner of teaching and learning with students. Additionally, I can see evidence of that Sincerity's impact on course learning experiences: the students' sense—not immediate, but developed gradually in dialog—that their teacher is invested in the subject-matter, and dedicated to their learning; the difference that makes in their feelings of connection, their academic efforts, and their ultimate satisfaction with the course; and the teachers' and students' synchrony in their perspectives of how well-or-poorly that educational exchange went, compared to the principled ideals that guided it.

So, in this concluding section, I will present these elements in succession for each teacher's course. To begin, I will explore their guiding goals (what/why they're teaching: those ideal end-points) through each one's stated ideas about the general place and purpose of writing education in a university context. Then I will overview their principled framework for achieving that (how they're teaching: those pragmatic means) through a unified "word web" I've charted from their 21 term explanations. Finally, I will examine those ideas as integrated-in-practice.

*The social foundations of the educational exchange* will be presented first: that human connection between teachers and students (how they regard one another in mutual learning) illustrated through segments of participants' reflections—surveys and interviews of both teacher and students—grounded in moments of reference from classroom images and

dialogs. Then, within the context of that social foundation, *the academic progress of the educational exchange* will be presented: that educational take-away from the course (what teachers and students have developed together with shared subject-matter content) illustrated through segments of participants' reflections—teachers' private self-assessments and students post-grade course assessments—grounded with samples of the class's progressive dialogs about the discipline of writing.

Finally, we will hear what each teacher has to say about the notion of "Sincerity," as it relates to their principled work as teachers, alongside the voices of their students on that same topic. Presenting together teachers' and students' assessments—of the teacher leading the course, of student learning progress in the course—from their inside-participant perspectives, provides a fittingly internally-scaled, dialogic metric of that the Synchrony in that educational exchange.


**Word-Webs:**

**A Process for Coherently making Sense of Teachers' Internal Dictionaries**

By exploring B,V, and M's personal educational biographies, building a key to understand their (personally grounded) practical motives and rationales in teaching approaches, and then using the 21-term prompts to look at the constituent parts of those approaches—one topic at a time, in an ordered way, comparable across individuals—helped me see *at what level* these experts' knowledge-bases diverge within an educational exchange. At a *descriptive* level (what is real or objectively common), they offer essentially similar accounts of educational environments (e.g., student characteristics, interpersonal dynamics, a group's learning progress, leadership challenges along the way). But at a *normative* level (what is ideal or subjectively desired toward, in that reality), they express markedly

idiosyncratic relationships with these environments (e.g., internal responses to students, public presentation of social role and character, philosophical contextualization of learning within a larger societal view, mental habits and behavioral dispositions in responding to challenges).

That is to say, as expert educators, these individuals seem to recognize a unified teaching reality but a highly individualized sense of what "works best" for them—a catalog of personal responses and practical priorities that make complete sense *only* in the context of each teacher's idiosyncratic values: about their Subject-Matter (university writing), the ideal Educational Exchange (how they and their students should be learning together), and that education's Ultimate Existential Meaning (what they intend these shared learning experiences to give, or evoke or change in these students and in themselves, for the larger living world).

Accordingly, in analyzing broader patterns among their 21-terms' definitions—beyond single-topics, as a larger-lensed compendium of practical wisdom about teaching—it made most sense, given the idiosyncratic data-sets at hand, to seek coherence within their personal dictionaries (rather than among them): to treat each sum of explanations as *a single image, reflecting their principles-In-practice*; their values-based framework for asserting priorities and deciding on right actions in the moment, in an educational exchange. Thus, I created *"Word-Webs"* for each teacher, by coding for markers of cohesion among the topic-term explanations (based on shared stories/themes, repeated descriptors, or direct allusions connecting those responses), and then arranging those terms spatially (based on the number and/or strength of emphasis each teacher placed on those connections). This yielded three distinct maps of the 21 teaching-related concepts.

As common and vernacular as these terms are, still each teacher relates them together differently, based on their idiosyncratic educational experiences, values, and reasons. So mapping the terms via these internal relations bringing to the foreground which notions (from these 21) are most prominent and/or central within each teacher's principled framework for teaching university writing. This, in turn, helps us—as observers—to trace the line between teachers' more abstractly generalized statements about what they teach (the "core content" being shared with students) and why (the "core purpose" that brings meaning to that work), and their more concretely visible exchanges with students, as they co-construct their writing course's social foundations and negotiate its intellectual progress.

That is, the "Word-Webs" as a tool can help us to see and interpret teachers' course structures and classroom manners from within their own moral/ethical perspective: the values that they prioritize in educational exchanges, and so what they imagine "should be" (ideally) in the classroom, as they navigate what "is" (really) in their educational exchanges with students. While that classroom reality is always part-surprising, given the uniqueness of students and the dynamism of the world emerging around them, it is also patterned in these expert teachers' minds. Their years of work in school environments have repeatedly exposed them to stages of educational progress, and types of student characters, and moments of learning experience; that these teachers have encountered, and responded to, and reflected on; that they've learned from, grown through, and distilled down into their own personal dictionaries: each a *principled* framework for defining and accomplishing their teaching practice.

For example, here, it allows us to see more clearly the line of reason and purpose connecting V's *moral* ideals about university learning, through his *principled* dictionary of right teaching approaches (oriented toward conciliatory Humor and away from punitive

Correction), to his visible classroom *practices*—a line that might help explain his private preoccupations and his public struggles in teaching this current course (where he is feeling fatigued, and his excitement to teach the same syllabus material is ebbing).

### V, as a Teacher and a Course:

### Educational Values and Implementation Intentions

V is a university writing teacher. But when talking to him, or to his students, about the way he approaches that educational work, those descriptions are marked by difference: where many teachers treat writing as a set-structured, detail-harping, meticulously cited report of more "legitimate" academic minds' findings and theories, created through a process of strict due dates and constrictive prompts, V promotes a process based in students' interests and ideas, culminating in products that are judged by the quality of those big-picture ideas and the compelling interweaving of those supporting details. He is an iconoclast, with a clear educational  purpose behind his method and his manner: to balance out students' experiences of writing, giving them a chance to find the pleasure and the empowerment in that process of developing their ideas and capturing those thoughts in writing.

**What I Am Teaching, and Why**

When I ask V about his vision of academia—its purpose, and his role in that—he specifies that he is speaking from a humanities perspective, when he says that this education is not about training for a job or directly preparing for one's role in world outside. To him, academia is a place for experiencing a learning process: being a student in a place dedicated to preserving and furthering human knowledge, and within that "culmination of education … liberal arts, all the rest," starting to focus in on "the thing that you want to spend your life

doing." And as a teacher, he sees his purpose as one of asking questions that stimulate students to start—and continue—thinking of better and better questions to ask for themselves:

> To me, academics has always been as much about what you learn, and how you're learning it, as it is about what you're going to do with that later … That's the reason we're able to read Aristotle twenty-five hundred years later, is the people who wanted to cloister it, and put it in their rooms and hang on to it: read it and re-read it, and copy it. … And I think that, as a teacher, the drive should always be for finding those critical questions, and letting questions lead you [the student] to better questions. That is the life blood of academia to me.

When I ask him how he sees college writing instruction's role, within that larger university purpose, he explains that there are two faces to its reason-for-existing: one is in service of other disciplines at the university, helping to improve students' fundamental writing composition abilities so they can function well within those fields. But the deeper reason for the writing course, as V sees it, goes back to its roots in rhetoric—once "at the core of education"—where composing (invention, arrangement of ideas, style of presentation, etc.) is about strengthening your thinking process:

> Composition is only a reflection of how well you're able to think. So … there's way more to it than simply preparing students to write well for their biol[ogy], sociology class or whatever. It's more about getting students into a way of thinking. The academy – especially in the humanities – is the place where writing is the vehicle: … the act of writing is the act of engaging.

> That's what writing is, is engaging in whatever's around you. Otherwise,
>
> what the fuck are you writing about?

This, for V then, is the core content in his course; the educational ends that he most values. Through his classes, he is working to stimulate ongoing questions and lines of thinking in students's minds—that they will take with them into whatever subjects of learning they commit themselves to—and to prepare them with the underlying technical proficiency to express their thoughts well through the "vehicle" of written text.

## How I Am Teaching: A Personal Dictionary

The way that V defines and explains the 21 teaching-related terms help to clarify, for outsiders observing his educational exchanges with students, *how* he intends to share these above notions, practices, and orientations from his discipline: writing (with a values-emphasis on classical rhetoric and composition). Together, V's personalized understandings of each teaching-related term's educational significance (as an ideal) and practical implications (as a reality) provide a simple and comparable image of a more complex and unique principled framework for teaching university writing.

In the word-web below (Figure 12), which illustrates how topic-terms are associated with one another in V's personal dictionary for teaching, several terms can be seen playing structurally integral roles in that principled teaching framework. First, **Humor** and **Improvisation** (along with Personal stories) help V to navigate the trickiness of formalized Friendship as he teaches in a public, degree-granting school environment—where students are often grade-anxious and terrified by unsympathetic teachers. Within that context, V uses **Modeling** (with Explicitness) to create clear expectations and a low-stress path toward Good Questions and Discussion / Argument in his courses. Along that path, **Order** (as well as

Credibility) help V to alleviate his own stress, as he comes in with his ideas prepared, and leaves the students responsible for accepting, or not, to do their part as the course moves forward in cycles of Basics and Review. Finally, in principle, all of this is organized away from **In-Class Correction**, which (like Tests) V sees as oppressing genuine responses in writing-related courses and which (like Apathy) V views as the antithesis of demonstrating one's love for teaching a subject.
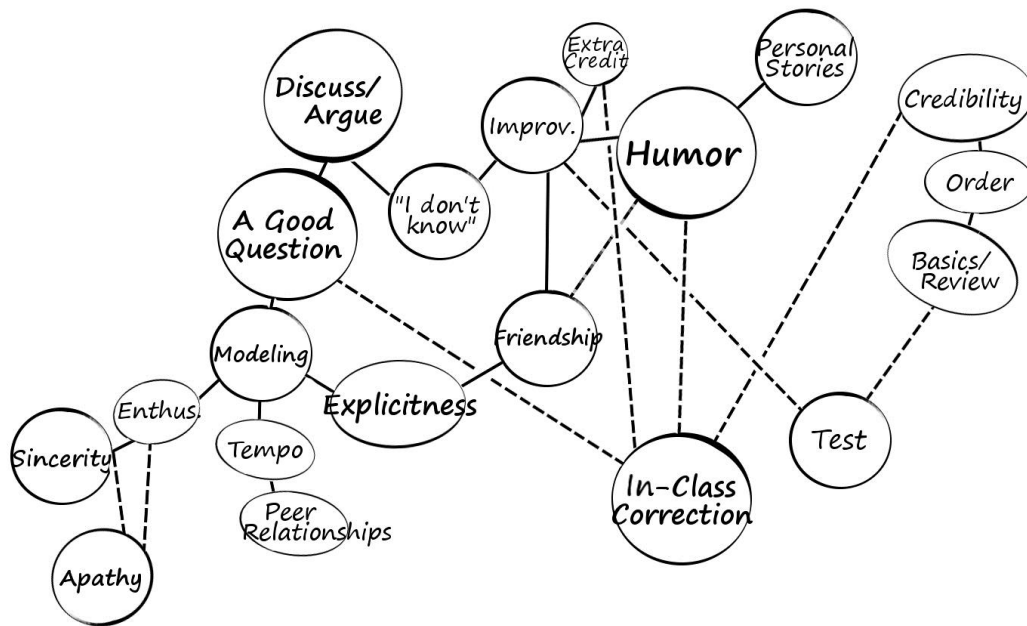


*Figure 12.* V's Personal Dictionary – a principled framework for teaching. Illustrated as a 21-word web.

**Humor and Improvisation:**

These two ideas encapsulate V's essential approach to the classroom. He defines **Humor** as "[his] style" of interacting (antithetically related to In-Class Correction: "not my style"), and **Improvisation** as "the way the class is set up" organizationally (antithetically related to Test: "not the nature of the class"). Humor, to V, is a vehicle for breaking down

social/emotional barriers, such as the formal part in educational teacher-student **Friendships** that has to assert at times. He thus sees **Personal Stories**, as a tool, closely associated with Humor in its function: breaking barriers and building personal connections, while also being academically persuasive and informative regarding the subject-matter. The Improvisation in his classroom structure also straddles this relational/academic boundary, with his lessons flowing conversationally as "five things [written down] in my iPhone, and … a couple of clips that are associated with it … connected to the personal stories and segues … so, (laughter) anything that gets you there, and *hopefully* gets you back – at some point," and with his interpersonal connections likewise adjusting responsively during those conversations: "I'm realizing as I talk to you that a huge amount of my relationship with every student and every class is *on the fly*" (this description, linking Improvisation to Friendship in his dictionary).

      **Modeling:**

**Modeling** is the term wherein V places his "See one, do one" teaching philosophy: a way of learning and helping others to learn, by providing copious examples and then letting individuals creatively riff on those practical inspirations—finding their own ways, through the models with which they connect best. He sees **Explicitness** as an important co-concept here, one which he defines as directness and clarity about a learning assignment's requirements (e.g., engagement: doing the work, giving the effort) and purpose:

> They say, "What do you want?" Well, "This is what I *want*" … and then I'll
>
> give them forty possible *topics*; critical questions that they *could* write,
>
> "These are the kinds of things that students have come up with on their *own*.
>
> Have a look at those and see if anything-anything's going to hit you." And
>
> usually I find that that's enough to get them rolling. So it's *explicit* in that

'*modeling*' way; in that, "Okay, *this* is great, that's good, that's a great

example. Let's look at the different possibilities. Alright, now where can you

place yourself within that."

This self-determined beginning—where students choose openly (not directed by a prompt)

what topics they care enough to write about—serves, then, as the base for educational

development in V's course. First, these topics set an arena for students to find critical

questions to build their writing around, and for V to explore with and question them in ways

that engage their further questioning (e.g., **A Good Question** {from teacher}: "How can you

expand on that idea that applies *here* in one small place? How can you *generalize* it? How

can you *make* it more specific? Or how can you *build* on that idea?"). So, as a result, these

selected topics provide fuel in class for quality **Discussion and Argumentation**—which V

states in the ultimate goal of his course, and of humanities writing in general:

At the end, I want them to be presenting me an argument about the topic

they're talking about. … So I *really* try to encourage *finding* a point and

*arguing* it, and looking for the support around that. And if somebody

*challenges* your idea, don't just back *down* – say, "Okay. I accept what you

have to say, but I don't think that changes my point."

In support of this educational process-and-goal, V additionally connects with his method of

Modeling, Questioning, and Discussion the ideas of **Tempo**, **Enthusiasm**, **Peer Relations**,

and **Sincerity**: that he has to set a tone for the group dynamic—through his energy and his

valuing of the subject-matter—that will initially fire up the way students then run with the

course, inspiring and supporting each other as a community.

**Order:**

Finally, off to the side, V notes the importance of **Order**, signifying the idea of having some measure of control over the class group's attention and course dialog's practical direction. V defines Order (in this sense) as fundamentally important to have with a class group, but also as a detail that—like small points of grammar—can distract teachers in writing from the larger concepts and purposes of the course. In this way, the idea of Order is similar in character to that of **Basics and Review**, which V explains as building on (rather than simply revisiting) the course's important core elements and their connection together—critical points that can get lost in the wash of little details:

> [I say to students] "Okay, keeping in mind this *first* thing that we learned about. Let's not lose track of that; let's try not to isolate the things we're talking about. Okay, now we're gonna talk about this. Now we're gonna talk about –" … I like to go back over the *bigger critical issues* that we need to think about, as opposed to going back and reviewing grammar, you know – I don't think that gets us anywhere. … I feel like every *step*, every *day* is a little bit of a review, and then go further; a little bit of re*view*, and then go further.

So then the idea of Order, like Review, is essential but not central in V's process of teaching. In this way, Order is also much in line with V's idea of teacher **Credibility**: V states that a teacher *must* be credible, but that it is ultimately the students' decision whether to accept or deny a teacher's ethos—so practically, there is no use in fretting it. In the same way, he explains that Order is pretty simple to maintain overall, and that if an individual student is going to blow a teacher off, they just need to know that that's their decision and ultimately their work and their grade: it's not the teachers work to compel them, nor to fret over their free will as a learner ("Once in a while it's moved that way [out of order] for me, but I

usually find it pretty easy to rein it back. And I'm *never* worried about completely losing control").

All three of these major idea-sets—Humor / Improvisation, Modeling, and Order—are oriented in opposition the the trinity of Tests, Apathy, and foremostly In-Class Correction.

**In-Class Correction:**

V describes the act of **In-Class Correction** with a powerful mixed metaphor (shooting down someone who has walked out on a plank), investing it with the notions that (a) student participation in class is a voluntary, vulnerable social act, and (b) teachers can very easily shut down that engagement, or—as he describes in a subsequent scene (teachers as puppet-masters, pulling strings and creating fights in the hallways)—forcibly direct students' words and interactions. Thus, he sees In-Class Correction as an archetypal misuse of teacher power in a course, one that breaks down connection and engagement (aligning it with **Apathy**), and constrains intellectual variation and originality (aligning it with **Test**). The "Order" word-clump is set in contrast to both In-Class Correction (versus Credibility, in which V notes "I don't know why credibility and solemnity are so often connected {laughter} together: they shouldn't be") and Test (via Basics and Review, wherein V describes the organic, recursive process of writing instruction that he argues makes standard testing a situationally unfit practice). The "Humor / Improvisation" word-clump is likewise contrasted with In-Class Correction, set against both Humor and **Extra-Credit** (block quotes, below), and Test, set against Improvisation (the course's intrinsic looseness, versus the strictures of standardized exams).

> **In-Class Correction** (as 'picking on,' vs. Humor): "It's kind of like, 'Woah,
> {laugh} did you [student] just say that to me?' … but usually even *then* I

don't want to pick on the student. I'll turn it around and I'll probably turn it into some sort of *humor* in some way."

**Extra-Credit** (as inviting, vs. a 'Fascist Regime' of Corrections / Punishment): "if it's all feeding into the overall aim of this class, … it's like, 'Whatever, sure, extra credit,' I just {whispers} I don't think the classroom is a good place to set up a *Fascist regime*. … I think *it's a place to try to set up* something closer to *a symposium,* something that gets everybody."

Finally, the "Modeling" word-clump is oriented by its opposition to both Apathy (via **Sincerity** / **Enthusiasm**: "I love *teaching*; I love the topics, I love what I'm doing for a living. So I *never* feel apathetic toward it") and, yet again, In-Class Correction (via A Good Question, which engages students critically, where In-Class Correction shuts down student engagement).


**A Unified Statement of Ideas-for-Principled-Practice**

So the expert understandings of teaching that V presents, in this interview, show a cohesive unity and a principled organization.

Many of V's ideas and their interconnections are, at points, at least partially tacit: clearly perceived but never stated outright in words, before our orderly point-by-point examination ("This is bordering on the psychoanalytic here," "this is so amazing, you know, I've never analyzed it in this way," "I *think* – I'm realizing as I talk to you …"). And those interconnections are, as the word-web makes visible, complex in ways that would confound any attempt at linear reduction: general ideas and their practical implications threaded together through identity-forging statements ("for me [humor] is number one") memorable maxims ("see one; do one"), validating and poignant experiences ("that student who asked if

I was Republican or Democrat"), emotionally resonant imagery and essentialized archetypal scenarios.

Nonetheless, V's ideas—in his personal dictionary about teaching—are *ordered*, through a hierarchy of educational values (what a learning environment should be: e.g., inviting, disarming, persuasive, encouraging, exploratory, critical, supportive, connected), and are *organized for use*, through their connected grounding in situational descriptions and educational dialogs (recognizable patterns within his first-hand history of educational exchanges). By rooting these values-based ideas in those resonant patterns of experience, V shows—at least a glimpse—of where certain "should be" statements rise to primacy, when he is deciding his actions as a teacher: Humor and Explicitness on day 1, Modeling and Enthusiasm as student projects begin, Discussion and Improvisation with a little bit of Order and Review as the course dialog matures.

With that principled framework in mind, we now have a touchstone for examining the social-emotional foundations and the academic-intellectual progress of V's upper-division university writing course: how he connects with his students (as a person) within a shared learning environment, and how he then leads and facilitates students' educational progress (in writing) through that environment.

**V, as a learning environment: social foundations of the educational exchange**

In many ways, V is the most difficult teacher of the three writing educators to assess fairly; the one easiest to project shortfalls onto, from a distance, with a normative scale that is not attuned to his pedagogical principles, practices, and personality. After watching him teach students for a term, talking to him in asides after class, and likewise asking his students in private about their educational experiences, the initial impression I walked away

with was one of shared discontentment: what hung in my mind were moments where V confessed his waning lack of enthusiasm about the course, moments where students described their disappointment at his lackluster feedback on their papers, and moments of classroom time where he fiddled long with projector-technology and voiced a general tiredness with the dragging Spring quarter. It didn't seem, to my observer-eyes, like an overtly "successful" course.

But going back over the data, my classroom notes and teacher / student interviews told a different story, of an educational dialog between this teacher and his students, emerging subtly below the surface that I was perceiving nearby. These interpersonal learning exchanges (on both a collective and individual level) were beginning in class sections and in written margin-notes, continuing over emails and after group discussions, proceeding through texts and in private office hours. It was a dialog that some students really engaged in and others recognized but let go—nonetheless, a dialog where V convinced them all, by-and-large, of his subject-matter knowledge and his enthusiasm for the topics, his reliable availability as a conversational guide through the process of critical writing, his genuine enthusiasm about their ideas and his sincere care for their positive experience with thinking and writing in this course.

Once I looked deeper, at what V intended to do for his students, and what his students described being done for them, the course seemed more of a success in regard to its pragmatic core aims (described above) as a learning experience: sustainable, reliable, and meaningful for V; enjoyable, memorable, and useful for his students.

Below, I will draw on selections of data—from surveys, interviews, and classroom notes and video-recordings—to detail the pragmatic arc of V's educational dialog with his students in this course: their views of one another personally and scholastically, their

individual motives in the course, and their progress toward a more synchronous dialog together in pursuing those essential course aims.

**The Personal (intersubjective): Who "We" are in this Dialog**

At the base of this learning exchange, even more fundamental than immediate practical goals ("Am I prepared to lead this class today?" "Will this work earn me an A?") and broader educational aims ("Am I contributing to my students' lives something valuable?" "Will this knowledge and experience serve me in the future?"), are personal relations: content issues aside, **what are the social and emotional dynamics like among the teacher and students in this learning environment**; how do they describe one another, and the feeling of being with one another, in this context?

V explains his teaching style as conversational and stress-abating, with the educational goals of (1) *encouraging* forth students' critical thinking in person and in writing, and just as importantly (2) making that thinking and arguing process an *enjoyable* experience. So in assessing V's classroom, on a personal level, the question becomes more specifically: to what extent does V's attitude and manner toward his students—and subsequently their experience of his manner and their interpretation of his attitude—socially-emotionally support (or create barriers to) that ideal educational exchange that he is trying to create with them?

When I asked V to place all his students, one by one, on a Performance/Attachment Grid—from "problematic" to "high" in their academic performance, and from "challenging" to "aligning" on their social orientation toward V's and the course's ideas—he categorized no one as a problematic performer, and socially placed most students (13) in the middle-ground, with the rest mostly aligning (10) and a few as challengers (5) in the group. When I asked

him about the conspicuous lack of students having difficulty, he explained that—in this upper-division course—students are coming in to fulfill a general education requirement, and most of them are repeating students who have had him before, so they generally have a come-in-to-get-it-done attitude and an appreciation for the subject-matter and for his teaching style:

> They're not by nature going to be problematic. I think the scariest thing you'll find from them is a certain degree of indifference. It's like, "Okay, I've gotta be here, I've got to do it, so.' But a lot of these are repeating students … and I ass*ume* they come back because they're getting to do what they want to be doing with their writing. … There's a bunch of these students who are graduating right now. So they've already got one foot out the door. And then the *rest* of them are students that are following me—so it would sort of make sense that if they're following me, they probably align with me to some degree.

As do his fellow well-experienced teachers, V readily acknowledges that he does not know what's going on in the minds of all his students. But he balances this by asserting a general sense—born from his collective teaching experience with this course—that students in it typically *want* to be there, and are *willing* to put in a reasonable amount of effort:

> If this were a Writing 2 class, I'd probably have a lot more down here [problematic]—a *lot* more. … And gain, maybe I'm just being naive. Maybe when you talk to them, they'll be lots more down here … who'll go, "Oh god, I just barely got through this." But what I'm seeing from what they do in class [discussions] and what they send me, I feel pretty good about that. The other thing about classes like [this one], is you don't typically end up with a lot of

students who are unsure about whether or not they want to be there. Usually

they're there because they're interested in film, or they've worked with *me*, or

something like that. So I've never had major turn-offs in [this course].

V also describes, throughout the interview (see previous sections on V) in fairly confident

terms, the way he generally comes across to students: his intentional self-presentation, and

students' evident responses to that.

In brief, V describes himself as taking on a very accepting, disarming, and playful

persona with students. He describes self-editing his internal judgments about their ideas,

working intentionally to make room for all sides in an argument, and seeing as successes

those moments where students are unable to peg him as one thing or another. He also

emphasizes his intent to make students feel relaxed and comfortable, connecting with them

through friendly conversations—a tone he extends even in his written comments on their

papers—and using humor to dissolve tensions. So essentially, this is the image V conveys of

himself: a person who cares about his students' experiences, who champions their passions

and respects their ideas (whether or not they align with his own).

Students' responses on mid-term surveys (Table 4.1) and in course-end interviews

about V and his course, then, describe by-and-large a similar intersubjective reality. The

survey responses below show strongest explicit consensus around V's respect for (and

interest in) students' opinions, his appreciation of them as people (and as contributors to the

course dialog), and his optimism regarding their improvement as writers.

Table 4.1
*Student mid-term survey responses, "What the teacher thinks of you." Ordered by consensus, high to low.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The teacher disapproves of my opinions. | (9/9 = False) | |
| The teacher dislikes me. | (9/9 = False) | |
| The teacher does not think my writing will improve. | (8/9 = False) | [1 blank] |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The teacher is uninterested in my ideas. | (8/9 = False) | [1 blank] |
| The teacher wants to hear what I have to say. | (7/9 = True, 1 = Neutral) | [1 blank] |
| The teacher respects my opinions. | (7/9 = True, 1 = Neutral) | [1 blank] |
| | | |
| The teacher is not impressed with my effort. | (7/9 = False, 1 = True) | [1 blank] |
| The teacher believes in my abilities. | (6/9 = True) | [3 blank] |
| The teacher does not really notice/interact with me. | (6/9 = False) | [3 blank] |
| | | |
| The teacher trusts me. | (4/9 = True, 2/9 = Neutral) | [3 blank] |
| The teacher feels that my input enriches the class. | (4/9 = True, 3/9 = Neutral) | [2 blank] |
| The teacher wants to be my friend. | (2/9 = True, 4/9 = Neutral) | [3 blank] |

Students' reflective statements during panel and individual interviews continue to reflect this sentiment, as the term draws to a close. In the panel interviews, several students describe how encouraging is V's manner of listening to and working through their ideas (e.g., quote 1 below). In response, I ask if V had ever corrected or critiqued, or otherwise done anything but encourage someone's ideas. One V's more ardent challengers replies unequivocally to this that that would be unexpected; not at all his approach: "I don't think he would say that." Another student follows this assertion by explaining why they believe he wouldn't ever shut a student down: because V really wants to hear their individual ideas, and get them comfortable bouncing different perspectives off of one another (quote 2, below). And later on, one of the students describes this as not just an academic interest, but an extension of V's personal passion about film; that he's really interesting in the subject-matter, and the perspectives that students bring to that material (quote 3, below).

> **Dannzee:** In terms of *talking* with the professor, I feel I was able to come up
> to him and be like, "Oh! I have this great idea!" and he's like, "Oh! That's an
> amazing idea!" And then we went through it, and it was pretty helpful.

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**Remus Lupin:** Also, I think he wants to hear our different ideas on things. He doesn't just want us to regurgitate what *he's* saying. He wants us to kind of have, "Oh, well I see what you're saying, but I also see this," and then discuss it.

**Reindeer Flotilla:** He loves movies. He's clearly passionate about film history, the industry, the culture. And he told us he had a professional background in movies. So, not knowing any specifics, you just get the feeling that if you write interestingly about any kind of movie, he'll—like I said, he'll go out of his way to watch everything that we're writing about for the final essay, if he hasn't seen it.

I got into more depth with these ideas during the individual interviews with students during finals week. The three students I talked too all separately emphasized their trust in his genuine interest, his dedication to encouraging their ideas, and his desire to be "real" (i.e., open and honest) and discuss real things with his students. Twinkeestid mentions how V seems genuinely interested when students propose writing topics, "almost like he's looking forward to reading people's critical papers." Alternately, Mike Hunt talks about V's active interest in drawing out the details of what students are thinking in class: "He doesn't want just two words out of you. He wants you to say something, and then he'll ask you why, and, 'Elaborate on that'—he'll say something along those lines to get you to speak and *use* those details." Twinkeestid then speaks specifically about the encouraging effect that V's particular (positive, additive) manner of responding encourages students forward in developing their ideas, without feeling ashamed second-guessing themselves:

Again, the way he puts that [feedback], it's not saying, "Well, you *should have* looked at this." It's like, "Hey, here's something *I* also saw. That you

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could have looked at," or "This is something that your work reminds me of."

So it's very, encouraging. He never, talks down to you. It's always, very—

promoting of your own learning, I guess.

And this disarming manner, according to all three students, makes V feel very approachable and easy to talk to. I was in the room for one of V's office conversations with Melanie Jean, and so got to witness first-hand the blend of affiliative joke-making and supportive idea-building that goes into those impromptu meetings. Mike Hunt notes in an aside that those interactions aren't just valuable as academic support, "it's also the point that I *enjoy* sitting there and talking to V; I went and saw him in his office one time when I was in Writing 2, and just sat there and shot the shit with him for a while, and talked about stuff." Twinkeestid never ended up going to talk to V, communicating after class and by email exchanges instead, but had a similar image-of-expectation in his mind, "like I probably could have gone to his office hours just to talk and hang out, and be like, 'Hey, I was thinking this way about whatever you said in class,' … I just never did {laughs}." They each engaged with V in different ways, but all described feeling similarly comfortable and willing to reach out to V for his conversational style of feedback.

Furthermore, the students made a point of noting how much they valued V's realness or honesty. For Melanie Jean, it was V's honesty about real-world issues that she found most endearing; his willingness to address the dark sides of human nature that many people in educational leadership roles shy away from or sugar-coat, and his humorous manner making those topics more comfortable to explore:

He's humorous {laughs}, and he poses a lot of different ideas, too, that a lot

of times teachers don't talk about. The issues he brings up in class is like race,

and sex, … horror films, murder, suicide, and all this crazy stuff that I don't

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think about—or care to think about, because it's out of my comfort-zone—but

then when I go in his class, I don't mind talking about it or thinking about it

… So I think that's cool, that he's not afraid to bring the bad out and, talk

about it. … And it's *nice* to have that; a teacher that's not just trying to sugar-

coat everything.

In addition to V's willingness to "bring the bad out, and talk about it" on a grander scale,

Mike Hunt mentions how much he appreciates V's openness about his *own* internal struggles

from day to day, and complimentarily, his sympathetic understanding about the stresses and

obligations that students are facing in their own lives. Not only did this create for Mike a

sense that V is "on your *team*" and supporting students to engage as equals, but also

encouraged Mike to be more outspoken for himself beyond V's classroom:

My willingness to, say whatever the hell I want, a lot, in classes, comes from

him I think, because he will come in and basically say whatever he wants.

Like, "Yeah, I'm very down, I don't really feel like being here today" … he's

not gonna censor himself. [Also,] he understands that you're busy, you have

other classes, you have other stuff to do, and so he can be flexible … and the

way that he kind of talks to you like you're his equal, and he's not talking

down to you or very lecture-y about the way he does class. And he's always

inviting opinions, and always asking for people to participate. … [It] puts him

on a more familiar level, that you're more willing to join in with, I think. He

destroys that big barrier that's between teacher and student, and tries to be a

tour-guide, if you will. That's probably the best way to describe it.

So in these three students' individual reflections, a general picture arises about the subjective

experience of being in a student-teacher relationship with V, at a personal level. The aspects

of his personal manner that they describe perceiving and valuing are quite well aligned with those themes that V both describes and enacts when explaining his teacherly approach: to give too-often "terrorized" students a sympathetic and inviting environment, where they feel comfortable and relaxed and openly invited, like the feeling of a "warm bath" that he associates with his most valued educational experiences.

These insights then helped, in going back to the surveys, to make sense of students' reported experiences of engaging with V, the person, as he guided them in that educational environment. The survey included questions meant to explore their sense of his character (his beliefs and values), of the social foundations of his intellectual exchanges with them (his public personality and teaching style), and of the emotional experience of interacting with him (how it feels to talk to him, what kind of animal they'd compare him to).

Regarding V's character, his beliefs and values in and beyond the class, students seem to key in most on his open-mindedness and liberal orientation ("very open minded" "open minded" "fairly liberal in political and social beliefs" "very liberal cause he let me write a paper on pot"), his relaxed and unworried attitude / attire ("laid back, chill" "not scared to voice his opinion" "kind of dark in a humorous way" "not-quite-grungey but definitely not formal attire" "values simplicity judged by what he wear and owns" "language is a little rough, he doesn't much care for what other people think about him"), his experience-base and personal interests ("previous work in the film industry" "I would classify his beliefs as well thought through and backed up by experience" "strong willed and caring about family" "computer and technology junkie" "likes to be alone and at home, … doesn't like mornings, and drinks coffee everyday"), and his care for students' experiences and ideas ("fairly empathetic" "seems to care a lot about his students" "cares more about the

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fact that you enjoy the class and get something out of it" "wants to draw out our minds" "enjoys hearing other people's view points").

This sense that students formed of V's integral self then reflects also in the adjectives they offer to describe his public personality and his teaching style. The former, they describe—as above—in terms of openness and understanding ("open" "mellow, thoughtful" "laid back" "" "understanding" "helpful" "nice" "friendly[2], relaxed"), as well as humor and roving fascination ("jocular" "jovial" "fun" "funny[2]" "comedic" "goofy, entertaining" "quirky[2]" "interested[2]" "intellectual" "distractable" "scattered" "clever"). And the latter, they describe similarly ("fairminded" "comical" "scatterbrained" "informative"), but with an additional focus on terms that juxtapose his relaxed teaching style with that of more stringent institutional norms ("open[3], free" "interactive[2], unorthodox" "Improvisational" "creative, flexible" "Relaxed, lenient, conversational") and emphasize his catching joy in doing the work he's doing ("energetic … excited" "enthusiastic" "light hearted" "enjoyable").

And this disarmingly open, invested social presence that students describe coming from V, then, helps to make sense of their descriptions of him on an emotional level: his animal energy, and how it feels to interact with him. One student describes their experience of talking to V in ambivalent terms ("nervous, intimidating, okay"), but all the rest characterize their interactions with him largely as feeling safe ("personal, genuine" "friendly, caring" "comfortable[2]" "reassured, easy going" "laid back"), as being enjoyed ("pleasant" "casual" "funny" " amusing, engaging" "entertaining"  "It feels good"), and as being worthwhile ("helpful[2]" "stimulating" "direct" "resolving"). Metaphorically, the animals to which students compare V seem to highlight these essential aspects of his presence: his relaxing safety ("Rabbit?" "Turtle" "a Meercat or a prairie dog"), his inviting playfulness

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("Easily distracted dog" "dog" "Ferret" "monkey" ""), and his understated competence as a leader ("Chimp – intelligent, yet entertaining" "a wise rat like in ninja turtles").

Ultimately, the students all had unique experiences of V's course. Mike, for example, is a strong proponent of V, who'd taken him for three other classes and was "savoring" this as his last writing course. Melanie had previously had V for Writing 2, and was disappointed about his "bland" complimentary comments on the papers compared to all the feedback and useful criticism she'd received from him before. And Twinkeestid, who had never taken a course with V before, was surprised that this became his favorite course during the term, impressed freshly with a teacher who was truly "promoting" his students' views and interests. But underneath diverging levels of academic satisfaction, all students—interviewed, panel interviewed, surveyed—seem to agree largely about the honest, familiar, interested, and enthusiastic personal manner of V's teaching approach, and about the open, comfortable, motivating, and enjoyable learning environment that emerges around that style of classroom leadership.

**The Practical (learning-centered): How "We" are Connecting with Content in this Dialog**

These interpersonal dynamics (described above), between V and his students, have an educational purpose that V repeatedly references when describing his classroom approach, and that students repeatedly point out they are awareness of when interpreting his motives and intentions: V wants to encourage students' active thinking and idea-building, get them feeling comfortable when expressing those ideas publicly, and foster their enthusiasm about writing, from the topics they choose, to the perspectives they hold, to the way they present and support those ideas. That is to say, V's course is *learning-centered*. He and his

students explicitly understand that his friendliness, his humor, his enthusiasm and his conversational honesty are all being applied in service of their educational growth.

In the space of the classroom, V doesn't regularly or explicitly pledge to students his practical intentions, nor do students regularly or explicitly validate it. Nonetheless, V's interactions with students have evidently communicated to them many of his motivations and goals, such that their descriptions of what he values and intends quite closely match his own. And that tacit understanding between them of V's practical focus is important for orienting their educational dialogs, as the course progresses. V's focus in course exchanges is not to be the students' buddy, nor a hilarious comedian; not to be indiscriminately excited, nor self-indulgently honest. His practical goal is to use these interpersonal elements (friendliness, enthusiastic energy, honest communication) to improve students' experience of writing and facilitate their thoughtful clarity of expression through writing.The fact that students understand what V wants from them, consequently, shapes their expectations of him and their efforts toward the course: that which they trust him to do and rely on him to give, and so what they produce independently when preparing for each coming day, and how they project imaginatively that he will use or respond to their offerings in the course.

When I ask V if he's had any particular issues with reaching his stated learning objectives in the course, in this term, he avoids placing responsibility on the student group, and brings the focus instead onto himself and his performance as an educational leader. He describes course interactions much like a continuous testing ground, where he is seeing what works and noting what should be kept or changed. The two issues that V does raise, then, regard his own habits in classroom dialog and his predispositions in reflecting on that practice. One, in practice, he notes how much he focuses on prime goal of getting students to engaged—and that this may dispose him to miss details:

I tend to look at things more globally, rather than see—I mean, maybe that

could be my one great weakness as a teacher: is that I tend to look at things

globally, and maybe I miss some of those little things. I guess, I'm always

trying trying to get a student to engage. And if I can do that, I think I'm doing

well. And if I haven't made them engaged, I usually reflect that back on me in

some way, and say "Okay, there's something I'm missing here, but I'm not

sure what it is. Is it one thing, or is it the aggregate … ?" But I think I'm

always mentally taking notes, going "Oh."

And two, in reflection, V notes that he focuses so much on his own delivery, and how he can

bolster those engaging interactions going forward, that he may not consider duly the

influence of the individual student-group's dynamic on that interactional outcome. But on

this point, he also seems to imply that other teachers go in the other direction—blaming the

students—and that he finds it more positively productive to reflect on revising his own style:

When I hit a question that typically gets great responses—or, not great

responses, but just great personal reactions to it—like saying "Whenever you

write, you should write to publish,"  and then I had a couple of students come

back to me and say "you know, remember when you said to me –" And I

realize, "Wow. For some reason, there's something about that that grabbed

the imagination." So I'll think, 'Well, I should always." So suddenly that

becomes something I'll say at least once during class, that "You should be

[writing to publish]."

Right down to the things like, what jokes seem to be the most effective for

getting across this point. It's, "Oh well, it's a big laugh but everybody *got* it

too, so maybe I'll come back to that." So, I think I'm always thinking on a global level, in terms of how I can improve my own teaching.

But I also believe that … I should be more willing to say, "Okay, well this may have been a bad class, and there may be nothing you can do about that. That's the dynamic." I also can't help but kind of blame myself. I mean, other teachers will say "Well, there's a group dynamic—(whispers) it was a shitty class, what can I tell you." But I always think, "Couldn't *I* have made it a better one? What did I not do, that I do with all of my other classes, that accounts for this?' So I'm always trying to revise my style in that way."

When students describe how V applies his personal manner to the practical aims of the writing course, those term-end reflections echo V's (above) self-stated understanding of his strengths and weaknesses: their comments on practical elements of the educational exchange point to (1) his dedicated focus on engaging students, in person, with building up and sharing their perspectives (and his poor attention, in written feedback, to addressing details in students' writing as he encourages them generally); (2) his refined approach for maintaining student interest and investment though film/reading selections and flexibly-crafted assignments (and his shortfall, again, in giving enough timely, specific grades and comments for students to know clearly where/how he would like them to develop their ideas and style).

Many students point out the considerable effort that V put into engaging them, and the success of that effort. Dannzee says that, in-person, V is always willing to hear ideas, validate them, and work through them in conversation. Other students describe details of this supportive manner: that V never shuts down students' ideas (Shany, Reindeer Flotilla), that he clearly wants to hear ideas and to get students discussing one another's ideas (Remus

Lupin), that he promotes creative autonomy in individuals' thinking—as opposed to forcing students to back up their arguments with ideas from readings (Twinkeestid)—and is open-minded and accommodating toward students' ideas for papers (Toby). Remus Lupin picks up on V's see-one-do-one teaching approach, seeing it as an effective way of drawing her in to participate in learning activities. Speedy Gonzales points out that the open environment V develops around these activities gets students comfortable in allowing their thoughts to flow, and in actively writing down those thoughts, to develop them:

> **Remus Lupin:** The way he shows clips, and he'll talk about them, and then
>
> expect *you* to say something. It really kind of makes you *want* to pay
>
> attention, and engage with it.
>
> **Speedy Gonzales:** So, it's kind of two-fold: he gets you to think about
>
> something, and he gets you comfortable with writing about something you're
>
> interested in. So it's not like you have to write on a certain set topic, … a
>
> certain prompt. It's getting you more open to writing your thoughts down and,
>
> just, getting better at putting your thoughts on paper.

Additionally, Shany points out, V is accessible not merely in his personal manner, but in the way he makes himself readily available—by Facebook, by text, in ways so much more convenient to students than office hours. And Mike Hunt notes that, when students do text V with questions, he responds helpfully and reliably, "usually within a couple hours."

But the students also point out that, in this class, while his encouragement gets them writing, his feedback and guidance about how to improve that writing often falters, if it exists at all. As Tough Cookie explains, so much of the course momentum goes into fueling students' writing, but then what they produce is treated almost as incidental; it's not brought

back into the course discussions, or even accessed to give a sense of its ultimate caliber—
which can be de-motivating:

> we're always talking about film, but we don't get—again—lots of feedback on
>
> our papers or our responses. And, like, I started out *really* caring about my
>
> responses on the blog because other people were reading it. But now I've just
>
> been waiting to the last second to just write it up because it's not for a *grade*,
>
> and I don't feel like it's really—our individual responses aren't brought up
>
> *here* [in class].

Such descriptions of V's inviting and encouraging manner with student writers, but de-
emphasis of technical details in—and use of—their writing, help to make sense of the survey
feedback that students give about V's delivery, as an educational leader, in the course (Table
4.2). There is strong consensus around the beliefs that V knows and enjoys the course
subject-matter, and that he will encourage students in voicing their positions. There is also
moderate consensus around the student experience of V communicating the subject well,
effectively illustrating that content with stories, persuasively presenting his own positions,
and acknowledging other viewpoints. But when it comes to elements such as making clear
the purpose of the course, fluidly connecting activities, and developing those threads from
one session to the next, that consensus among students begins to weaken.

Table 4.2
*Student mid-term survey responses, "Teacher Delivery, on the Scale (1-5)." Ordered by consensus, high to low.*

| 1 = "very little" \| 2= "little" \| 3 = "somewhat" \| 4 = "much" \| 5 = "very much" | |
|---|---|
| Enjoys the subject. | (9/9 = "5") |
| Knows the subject well. | (9/9 = "5") |
| Encourages the voicing of other positions in class. | (9/9 = "5") |
| | |
| Communicates the subject so that I understand. | (7/9 = "5", 2/9 = "4") |

Uses stories (examples, personal anecdotes) constructively.    (6/9 = "5", 3/9 = "4")
Acknowledges alternative ideas/methods.              (6/9 = "5", 2/9 = "4", 1/9 = "3")
Persuasively explains his/her own positions.         (6/9 = "5", 1/9 = "4", 2/9 = "3")

Makes clear the purpose of the course.                     (3/9 = "5", 4/9 = "4", 2/9 = "3")
Maintains awareness of the students throughout the class. (3/9 = "5", 4/9 = "4", 2/9 = "3")

Uses effective and appropriate language.          (4/9 = "5", 2/9 = "4", 2/9 = "3", 1/9 = "1")
Fluidly orders, connects activities within each class.       (2/9 = "5", 5/9 = "4", 2/9 = "2")
Maintains and develops ideas/activities from one class to next.    (2/9 = "5", 5/9 = "4",
                                                                                                  1/9 = "3", 1/9 = "1")

Likewise, regarding the structured course path that V builds around his teaching style, students point out that he has orchestrated the class so that it effectively engages students and mobilizes their interests, with well-selected reading/viewing materials and well-designed writing prompts,  but that he does not then channel his energy much into assessing or critiquing the written products that come out of students' engagement.

According to the students, V founds the course on clear goals and easy expectations: think as individuals, look analytically (Shany), develop ideas about your personal interests (Remus Lupin, Dannzee), and then show what's going on in your head (Remus Lupin) by writing out that perspective and supporting those ideas (Speedy Gonzales). They also point out that he provides well-selected readings to support their writing journey: pieces that are informative (Shany) and approachable, rather than obtusely theory-laden (Toby), from which students can read selectively along the lines of their own interests (Dannzee) or even add to if they find something beyond what's assigned to read or respond to (Speedy Gonzales). And he supports this same freedom in their writing: not confining their claims to those supported by pre-existing theories, but rather allowing students to follow their own thoughts and lines

of reasoning (Toby), measuring validity by how well the student writers represent themselves and specifically support their general ideas (Dannzee).

However, the students in this course also point out that while V is very good at giving them feedback and guidance to promote their writing, he doesn't provided timely grades or feedback on the pieces of writing that they produce and turn in. Students who have had him before (e.g., Mike Hunt and Melanie Jean) note that he is much more detailed and critical in his feedback for the lower-level writing courses that he teaches, and so they interpret this marked lack of response as his attitude toward the particular course—which he overtly recognizes as a final requirement that many students are taking with their eyes already "out the door." But even though the students express appreciation for his according ease of demands, complimentarily they voice frustration about not getting V's critical perspective as an experienced reader on their papers:

> **Reindeer Flotilla**: I haven't *gotten* a grade, yet.
>
> **Lincecum**: I haven't gotten any responses for anything I've written yet … how many people have gotten a grade back on something? {3 hands go up, out of 10}
>
> **Twinkeestid**: The only response that really stands out in my head is the one big film review … But [all he said was] "Oh, this is good." I, didn't feel like I was getting a lot out of it. Like, he didn't say, "Well, did you look at it this way, or that way?" Or "Did you think of these areas?" or something—I didn't feel like I got a lot of critique on my work.
>
> **Tough Cookie**: All he said was, "Oh, you said this word a little too much. But *good* job on everything else, and I look forward to reading your next

paper." And I'm just like, "Okaaay." {laughter} Because I knew it wasn't that

great.

If all of us got A's on the review, then I guess all of us should be writing for

the New York Times and editing, critiquing films. Right? But I feel like we

should be graded harder, because … I want to do well in this class, but I also

want to learn, because I'm going to be taking writing classes for my minor.

And when I get into it, it's going to be really hard.

As Tough Cookie and others explain, they missed having V's feedback on their blog-posts

and papers because, for many of them, becoming a better writer was a central reason for

taking this course. Thus, seeing V put relatively little effort into that part of their educational

exchange, several times over, disappointed many students and overtly deterred a few from

putting effort into their writing (note: those who saw use for their papers outside the course,

or just got really into the subject, still reported doing their best, but others who were

motivated by their work being read and assessed, within the course, put less effort in as the

course progressed). As Shany describes the experience, receiving no feedback about ways to

work on being a better writer made the papers feel unread, "just kind of like returning stuff";

a lack of challenge and critique to spur her moving forward as a writer, despite all V's

compliments.

This general agreement among students, about where V dedicates his effort and what

it means for the course, helps to make sense of their survey assessments of this course at

mid-term (Table 4.3). There is little to no contention about the course being fundamentally

flexible and inviting (i.e., entertaining and minimally intimidating) for students, and fairly

tight consensus about the course's path forward being conversational and engaging (i.e.,

interesting and interactive). But students express notably more variable views on metrics that

they describe as related to personalized feedback: the writing course's level of challenge, the

ultimate goals toward which that written coursework is driving, and the relevant use of that

exchange for the writers. While some students seem to find clear purpose and useful

challenge in V's course structure, others find that progression of course activities and

interactions confusing and unclear in its ultimate point or goal.

Table 4.3
Student mid-term survey responses, "This Class, on the Scale (1-5)."  Ordered by consensus, high to low.

```
     1 = "low" | 2= "below average" | 3 = "average" | 4 = "above average" | 5 = "high"

Flexible        (7/9 = "5", 2/9 = "4")
Entertaining    (7/9 = "5", 1/9 = "4", 1/9 = "3")
Boring          (1/9 = "3", 2/9 = "2", 6/9 = "1")
Intimidating    (1/9 = "3", 2/9 = "2", 6/9 = "1")

Conversational  (2/9 = "5", 5/9 = "4", 1/9 = "3")
Interactive     (2/9 = "5", 4/9 = "4", 3/9 = "3")
Interesting     (4/9 = "5", 2/9 = "4", 3/9 = "3" )
Offensive       (1/9 = "3", 4/9 = "2", 4/9 = "1")

Clearly Structured  (1/9 = "5", 4/9 = "3", 3/9 = "2", 1/9 = "1")
Relevant / Useful   (1/9 = "5", 3/9 = "4", 3/9 = "3", 2/9 = "2")
Challenging         (1/9 = "5", 4/9 = "3", 3/9 = "2", 1/9 = "1")
Confusing           (3/9 = "4", 2/9 = "3" 2/9 = "2", 2/9 = "1")
```

So V does not do a "perfect" job, in this course, of applying his personal style in

practice. Both he and his students alike acknowledge this: he points toward the causes in this

particular term (personal issues, being saddled heavily with 90 students, and feeling a little

burnt out on the course structure in its current form) and his students describe its effects

(delays in grading, a lack of critical feedback on their writing, a partial feeling of lost

motivation to write and lost opportunity to grow as writers). But when it comes to V's core

intentions, of encouraging student thinking / writing and making that process enjoyable for

them, students express understanding both why he values those elements in their writing education and how he implements those values in practice.

When I ask students about what V is really looking for, they agree that his focus for them—as upper-division college writers—is not the technical details, but the practice of thinking through and writing out ideas well. Speedy Gonzales describes these educational emphasis pretty bluntly: "he cares about [the actual writing itself], but it's not his number one priority. I really think he's all about putting your thoughts on paper. Your grammar could be wrong, you could have some misspellings … it's not a middle school or high school grammar session; it's a thinking, breaking down film." Lincecum then points out how this academically compliments the technical writing focus in most other college courses: "I write enough papers for all my other classes, that I get feedback on, like how to phrase words or construct sentences. I think V's is mostly about your actual thought process. And how you defend it." And Remus Lupin explains why this counter-approach or being relaxed-and-encouraging is valuable for them as developing writers:

> **Remus Lupin:** I think that's important, because it's really easy to talk about what you think, when you're talking to someone, but to actually write it down, and make it clear and concise? I think that's something he's really working towards. Like, Get your thoughts on paper! Actually put them on paper, and actually try to work through them in a sense that's gonna make sense to someone else, not just you." So maybe that's why, if you did that—as [Speedy Gonzales is] saying—it's not about the whole "grammatically correct."

This notion of the course's focus, as expressed by the students, is very much in synchrony with V's own statements about the ultimate goal of his course, as far as its educational value

to students: to get them viewing the world with a critical eye and build up their comfort in writing; to see it not as intimidating and laborious but as approachable and enjoyable.

> **V:** I am way more concerned with their ability to read critically—to read and then relate that back to the viewer. Maybe to a fault, but I just do not spend time on grammar, especially in upper division class. In lower division classes, yes, I do. But upper division, I don't spend any time on grammar.
>
> It's just not—I mean, there's nothing worse than looking at a body of twenty-five students who all have exactly the same look in their eyes, which is they're not in the room at the moment.

These signs of synchrony also extend into students' descriptions of the course work, where they seem to understand the intention behind V's method and manner. For example, when Twinkiestiid explains the way V has students develop papers—first by submitting a critical proposal for him to review, and then writing the paper after that review is accepted—his student's-perspective narration points out the pattern of positive encouragement and conversational guidance that V intentionally applies, and describes it as an effective approach:

> **Twinkiestiid:** I sent [V] the critical proposal, and then this was his comment back: "Nicely done. This could be a very cool discussion. Full-steam ahead: I look forward to the result." … So again, he's <u>very encouraging</u>. … I haven't really heard anybody that got a critical proposal back, and was like, "Oh, I did it completely *wrong*" or "This is a terrible subject; I'll try something else" or "I gotta go talk to him."
>
> [Was there ever any steering or guidance?]

Kind of. Before I actually submitted my critical proposal, I emailed hime and

I was like … {pulls up actual email.} "I was looking for possible topics. An

idea came up of pairing video games and films, and histories—[how they]

influenced each other. Do you think this is appropriate?"

And he said, "Yeah, absolutely – video games have been made from films,

but films have also been made from video games. They do share a similar

historical development. You might want to start with *Tomb*raider, which I

believe was the first, if not one of the first, game to make it into a film. You

could reflect on the ease of transition between the two media and then go on

to make your claim more broadly, and even cover some of the historical

development, which I think will really compliment the argument. There may

even have been earlier attempts at adaptation—maybe they made a feature out

of Pong, who knows. I think you got off to a great start."

And, again, he's showing you things you can look at. … He would, <u>promote

what you said</u>, and be like, "Oh, that was a nice observation," and then, <u>give

you, another thing to look at</u> or another thing to think about. And then he'd

just <u>jokingly go on to another subject</u>, and, be like, "On to the next thing."

So, in this end-of-term re-telling, Twinkiestiid is able to explain the procedure that V uses

(critical proposal, teacher's review, critical paper), the manner that V uses in guiding

students through this procedure (promote student ideas, suggest additional points to

consider, make a joke and encourage forward), and the effects that this practical approach

has on student learning experiences (no student feels embarrassed or self-doubting when V

gives feedback) and on subsequent educational dialogs with the teacher (seeking out his

feedback voluntarily when preparing to write). And he assesses this, overall, as an effective approach for encouraging students' thinking and writing.

Beyond seeing and appreciating V's encouragement, students in the panel interview also recount lessons and advice that V offers to guide them in writing, in language that is quite synchronous with his own re-enactments of his teaching. One excellent example is V's suggestion that students remember the audience they are writing to, and so the caliber of writing they should strive to produce. During my interview with V, he paraphrases himself driving home this argument with students:

> **V:** First of all I tell students, "If you're gonna write, write with an audience in
> mind. In fact, write with publication in mind. Even if you're not going to
> publish it. Write with the fact that if anyone ever picked this up – five years
> from now, ten years from now, or whatever – they might look at it and say,
> "Aw well this is juvinalia, But it's a serious attempt at something.""

And during my interview with the students, they paraphrase this same argument about considering audience, and about what that implies practically for the way they write:

> **Speedy Gonzales:** {Who are you writing to, in this class?} Well, the film
> review, he said "Make it like it could be in the New Yorker," I think. That's a
> special case. But I think our end-of-the-year critical essays would probably be
> just for him—*well* also, he likes you to write with the mindset that you could
> publish, like, anything. So in that case, it's like general public, if you want to
> publish it in a journal or something.
>
> **Remus Lupin:** But he wants you to keep in mind that whoever is reading
> your article, has most likely seen whatever you're talking about, so you don't
> have to get … scene-by-scene, "Oh, this is what happened in this scene";

you'd be pulling out parts of it and actually writing about them. Like, "This thing here, the way they developed this character, has something to do with whatever, or really expresses this type of social ideology, or—anything, really."

So students express a general understanding of what V is working toward in the course, regarding their thinking writing, and remember many of the specific guidelines and reminders that he offers consistently to guide them in those directions. They appreciate how readily he is willing to give them guidance and support leading up to their writing assignments—and it seems that the value they place on his critical feedback in the formative stages of their writing amplifies their disappointment at how unmotivated he seems to invest in summative feedback once their work is turned in. But many of them seem to pick up on the way that this disparity reflects his practical priorities in their education: as upperclassmen writers, he wants to give them a final send-off experience of thinking deeply, writing out those views clearly, and enjoying the process. Once he sees evidence of that, he commends them and is satisfied with that accomplishment—whether or not their writing is perfect in its details.

As V himself describes, freshman writers need a lot of detailed feedback about their grammar and composition choices. But with upper-division students, the educational aims of shaking off academic writing's stigma and drawing out students' motivated and critical-minded views supersede those more basic writing lessons. So accordingly, that is where he invests his time and energy with them: in conversation, in questions, and in encouragement.


**The Principled (goal-directed): Why "We" Choose to Participate in this Dialog**

Where V's course succeeds, or falls short, the question becomes—short of what ideal vision? We have already explored in detail how V wants his classes to unfold as a learning experience, and also to some extent the educational outcomes that students will carry with them from that exchange.

But it is important to recognize that these action-guiding ideas, these principles about *right* ways for providing students what they want (in the moment) and need (in the long run), are dialogically constructed: they are generalized notions nested in a blend of students' voices and V's own memories ("I see those students get *terrorized*, in some classes. They'll come from, and they'll tell me about these lecture halls and stuff and I'm thinking, 'If that was my educational experience, I wouldn't have enjoyed any of it...'"). Together, in V's narratives, his and his students' experiences provide a warrant for his approaches ("I just find that—you just get more with humor"), and a motive for his manner when intentionally implementing those principles ("So, *anything* to lighten things up, and to—it's like, 'Relax' … At the very beginning, for the first week I'd say, '… I'm not a vulture … I'm not gonna chase you for this'"). These are dialogically developed, developing, ideas and actions: planned in service of students' apparent needs, reasoned by personal analogy, supported by interactive experience, refined with and for each new group of individual students.

So before moving from V's and his students' reflections on the personal (social-emotional foundations) and the practical (academic progress) elements of their educational exchange, to moments in the classroom where that progress is evident, it is important to recognize explicitly the principled (intention-guiding values and ideas) stances that bring this teacher and this student-group together into this personal, practical educational exchange: what each is hoping to achieve, with and through the others, in this shared

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environment; from what positions they are negotiating toward a synchronous vision of the course aims, its day-to-day path, and its ultimate outcomes.

As described a few sections before, V sees higher education as a place for stimulating students' minds to question and think: more fundamental, in a way, than job training or life-skills preparation, the classroom is a place where he can encourage students to explore and connect their thoughts, and to see writing as an approachable way to capture and share those ideas, wherever they end up in their jobs and lives. When I ask him more specifically what this educational aim with his students looks like, what development he expects to see over the term in his students' thinking and writing, his answer focuses less on how "correctly" writing and more on how actively and actively they think about the world, one they leave his class:

> I expect them to get what I mean by "You need to think critically; you need to
>
> be able to come up with a critical question; you need to be able to not just
>
> take anything at face value, and you *certainly* need to be able to upset binaries
>
> and refocus them." So basically all the other things I've been saying all the
>
> way along, I'd like to think that some of that rubs off. So at the end—
>
> One student said to me the other day, after coming back to talk to me – she
>
> took 1 and 2 with me quite a while ago – but she made a joke out of it; she
>
> said 'Your class has ruined me. I can't look at a billboard now without
>
> wanting to talk about how—what that would mean...'And if I can get a
>
> student to come back and saying that to me? That's what I wanted to achieve.
>
> That's what I wanted you to do, you know? Was not just to look at something
>
> and go "I see it. There it is." But to go "Wow – I never looked at it in that
>
> way before." You know, can we, "Check it out – if you put it on its side, look

at that: it's something entirely new." So <u>if I can get a student to do that, I'm happy.</u>

… If I can poison a mind to do that, so when they look at something, they go "Oh wait a minute – did he just? Yeah, he did." <u>Welcome to my world</u>: this is the way I walk around the entire world, going "Wait a minute, is this – is this really what that means?"

In this above series of re-enactments, V enacts himself driving home his core message about what critical thinking as a process entails (first section), then enacts a specific student whose conversation with him makes visible kind of lasting change he wants to catalyze in learners' inner worlds (second section). He then clarifies how this student's cheeky feedback represents the kind of educational influence he intends to have, ideally, by enacting the critical inner thoughts he associates with such perceivable student responses (third section). And finally, he points out that this gift—or playfully, poison—that he wants to disseminate among those in his classes, is an integral part of his own world: an active and critical disposition-of-mind that is now a part of his identity, which he values and which he wants to help others find their own analogous personal versions of.

When I ask students on the survey what V wants them to get out of this course, their answers convey a clear understanding of V's goals: that he wants them to "look at film in a different way than just 'it was a good film,'" to make an effort at conveying an "originalish idea," and to make sure those ideas are "backed up by clear knowledge of the subject matter." Their summaries of these core aims emphasize that V wants students to proactively pursue areas of genuine interest ("he wants us to write what we want to write" "how we experienced … the material that we … have chosen to work with"), that he places value on students creatively generating and personally owning their own ideas ("He wants our true

opinions, interests, and insight" "Creativity and novel ideas" "Clear, creative" "our thoughts/opinions" ), and that he expects students to put effort into refining the ideas they care about ("He is looking for well thought ideas that clearly argue a point and provide necessary evidence for support" "To publish myself" "evidence that hard thought has been given to whatever I've watched that I'm writing about").

But students also give a range of personal reasons for taking the course: from being interested in film and in developing writing skills, to hearing that V's classes are interesting, to looking for an easy course to fill a general education requirement for graduation. And in the panel interview, they explain their interest in this course within the broader view of college's purpose for them: they see college as a protected semi-fantasy world where you get a piece of paper you need for future employment, but also an important training ground in which to develop fundamental life skills and self-management habits; a place for "learning how to learn" and how to "be an intellectual person [who] can hold a conversation and … articulate different subjects [and] … contribute whatever field I'm studying."

Within this larger scene, they describe the use of college writing as an important job/life skill, how to "articulate your ideas in a professional manner" toward a whole host of self-advancing ends (Lincecum gives the example that he has been writing his friends' junior-college admissions letters, and one friend's appeal letter to get into school: "I'm three-for-three, so far {students laugh}"). So the students' and V's pragmatic attitudes toward the course are not incompatible: they overlap commonly in valuing the ability to think independently and convey personal ideas articulately. Moreover, both V and the students express some basic awareness of differences between each others' motives and goals: students see that V puts his focus on upper-division writers' quality of thinking over technical details in their writing-craft, even though many still report wanting that guidance

from an experienced reader; V sees that students are often myopically grade-driven, even though grade-points are not an issue that he really cares about as a teacher.

As the course moves forward, with the students learning to trust the patterns in V's uniquely principled teaching style (enthusiastic support, willing conversations and guiding feedback, slow grading and minimal critical comments on final written products) and with V learning the collective character of this current student-group (their energy and interests, the dependable talkers and quiet thinkers), the class's pragmatic learning-centered relationship matures: what V values, intends, and expects in course activities becomes clearer for students; who students are and how much or how best they can be pushed productively forward becomes clearer to V.

In interviews, where V and the students discuss their course independently, there are moments where that mutual understanding between them is evident in the way they describe the subject-matter: what writing is, how it is done, and why it is valued, from V's course perspective. But even more concretely, in classroom recordings, these moments of synchrony between V and the students are evident in the class's educational dialogs, maturing at both an interpersonal and an academic level, as the course progresses.

This final section on V will describe some general patterns that I noted in his teaching style and manner, followed by a few examples of educational dialogs that occurred near the beginning, middle, and end of the course. This juxtaposition will highlight the idiosyncratic character of educational dialogs within V's course; that is, how the synchrony that arises in that learning environment between V and the student-group reflects the personal, practical, and principled character of his leadership as a teacher (as described above): who he is as a learner and how he relates humanly to other learners; what attitudes,

ideas, and actions he encourages or discourages; and what motives and values he embodies in his role as a teacher.

### V as a Course Leader: Academic Progress in the Educational Exchange

Analyzing the personal, practical, and principled aspects of a course learning environment radically alters the way one attends to observable patterns of discourse and interaction between teachers and their students.

In my initial notes about classroom exchanges between V and his students, I began to draw a stick-figure in a dunce-cap as short-hand for all the times V made self-deprecating comments: my log became peppered with these dunce-caps, and I found myself impulsively judging this as a destructive habit-pattern for V to have, that must be degrading his students' trust and respect for him professionally. But after reading their survey-comments and transcribing their interviews, I realized that they—and he—likewise understood his self-deprecating manner as a detail extending from his larger teaching philosophy: he knows the material, and he makes a concerted effort to deliver that knowledge in a confident but also honest and approachable way. As one student described the pedagogical value of his self-deprecation:

> Some professors, you're in a sea of 500 kids, and they're up on a podium in front of the thing, and it distances you from them … whereas in this class, you're on the same *level*, and you're right there—very casual and conversational—and then, when he makes mistakes like that, it's like, "*He's human. He's not some all-knowing professor.*" So it's kind of good to see that.

But it's not like, "Oh, this guy doesn't know what he's talking about." Again, you get the feeling that he knows what he's talking about, and he knows all the subject-matter, but it's in a very down-to-earth, human way.

A few students did not appreciate his casual use of swear-words, but several explicitly mentioned appreciating his willingness to keep things "real," both regarding world issues and regarding his own feelings of exhaustion or his silly mistakes.

So, revisiting my class notes in the context of these subjective reports, I recognized how consistent self-deprecation stuck a balance with consistent well-prepared explanations of class content and occasional references to V's own relevant graduate research. And looking at video-recordings from the beginning, middle, and end of the course, I could see how this manner of asserting relational familiarity with students, then, was reflected back in the way that students responded to V's critical-thinking prompts during discussions about films: students would disagree with his interpretations, or voice their confusion about certain text details, or offer partially-constructed explanations that others would then add on to—risk-taking and collaborating, in an environment that one student explained as "relaxed … , so it's not a lot of pressure but it still kind of builds that confidence."

The following overview of patterns that arose in my field notes from the classroom, followed by more detailed descriptions of a few recorded classroom exchanges, is meant to highlight the dependable style and manner of educational leadership that V establishes in interactions with students, and—within that social-emotional environment—the academic progress that emerges as their exchanges mature across the arc of the course.

**Reliable Patterns in V's Teaching Style and Manner**

Perhaps the simplest way to view a classroom educational exchange—in ecological and pragmatic terms—is as cycles dialogic interaction: structured, patterned classroom scenarios wherein the students seek to understand and utilize what affordances the teacher is actually offering them, while the teacher likewise seeks to gauge and catalyze what affordances the students are bringing to the group. Each learns about the other, building situational expectations and adjusting personal behaviors—in ways that will allow them to survive, sustain, and ideally thrive—in that particular educational environment.

So the most basic observation to make, toward determining how a teacher may be impacting students' educational outcomes, is: what kinds of environmental expectations is the teacher nurturing, through their patterns of behavior; what do students trust the teacher to do, for better or for worse, as leaders or examples or supports in their learning experiences?

When looking back over my classroom field-notes, which focused mainly on V's and the students educational exchanges (i.e., course-related topics arising in each day's conversations, and the manner in which V-and-students together select, contribute to, and direct the flow of those course topics), I notice several elements repeating in the way that V conducts these dialogs—dependable and characteristic elements of his educational leadership, in this classroom environment. These reliable patterns can be sorted roughly into categories of self-presentation, social-emotional affiliation with students, and intellectual guidance.

Regarding V's presentation of himself, in his role as a writing teacher, the most notable patterns are a blend of self-deprecation and ethos-building: he constantly pokes fun at himself or draws explicit attention to his shortfalls—particularly about doing menial tasks for the course—but also clearly demonstrates his experience and grasp of the course subject-matter. His self-deprecating asides persist throughout the course, for example, "I'm

completely thrown" (week 3); "probably my fault," "my ADHD, my OCD," "I take so long," "Sad, a man my age,""Help me! Do you enjoy watching me struggle?" "we have seven extra minutes, I was not well-prepared today" (week 4). As mentioned before, I began to shorthand these moments as dunce-caps in my notes: there were four in week 5, including mentions of him "geeking out" and "having breakdown"; six more in week 6, including calling himself a "blabbermouth"; and at least five mentions of his technical incompetence in the last four weeks, alongside other casual references to his incompetence, like "I can't speak," "I'm a moron," "Old fart."

But alongside this, there are also many moments where V, in much more substantial ways, builds up his ethos and credibility with the students. Twice, in week 3, he mentions his dissertation where it's relevant to the class's exploration of themes in the film The Fugitive. And throughout the course, he grabs opportune moments to enrich students' viewing of the films they're watching through his expert eyes: e.g.,  explaining film techniques and filmmaker intents "Notice the extreme close-up … he also loved the crane" (week 3); noting Hollywood plot structures and sources "things come in threes … Sid Field" (week 3); bringing in contextual factors "censorship …Hayes code" (week 4), and drawing attention to bigger-picture ideas, like deciding whether a detail reflects genre or auteur, defining what "Modern" means in the horror genre, or discussing why pacing in films has accelerated over last thirty years (week 5).

Regarding V's social-emotional affiliation with students, the most notable patterns are his empathetically framed check-ins with students' general wellbeing and course-related comfort, alongside statements of reassurance that he's on their side in this school exchange, couched in casually and playfully profane language. V check-ins on how students are doing extends across the course term: from individual-level queries when they sound sick "You

okay?" (week 3) "You okay?" (week 6), to general probes when the weather is oppressive "How's everybody, this gray day?" (week 4) "How is everybody? … is this global warming or ice age? Not natural weather" (week 4), to hopeful group championing as the course reaches its home-stretch "Week nine, I think we're gonna make it … Spring quarter is death, but we're almost done" (week 9) "Well it's our last day, and I'm trying not to break out into song [Ss laugh]. So maybe I'll just hum—hum hum hum" (week 9).

Alongside these probes, V also proactively assures students that he's thinking of their perspectives and wellbeing as he executes the course: pointing out, for example, judiciously in making assignments "I'm not going to waste your time" (week 3), understandingly in adjusting the course schedule "bet you were really bummed that class was cancelled, papers were coming in til 6am, so I figured I'd take a rare day to sleep in" (week 5), and empathetically as a day of hard work ends "Okay, good. Go in peace. We're done; I'm done [Ss laugh]" (week 8). And the tone V sets in these classes, as they progress academically, is colored as informal and jovial by his playful combination of religious and profane language: "Hallelujah!" (week 3), "Fuck!" (week 4), "For Christ's sake!" (week 4), "Good Lord" (week 5), "sort of fucks the constitution … Go in peace" (week 7), "Oh shit! … Go in peace" (week 8), "Who said [advice someone called out]? A voice from on high … Go in peace" (week 9).

Finally, regarding V's intellectual guidance of students in course dialogs, the most notable patterns are his excited reactions to students' critical observations and his enthusiastic validations of their class projects or ideas for writing. There are many instances, when viewing films in class, where students notice a detail or make a connection and V gets notably excited "water is rebirth—yes, yes!" (week 3), or helps them to find words for what they're seeing "[student: 'Dunno what I'm saying...'] No, I think what you're saying is..."

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(week 4), or validates multiple observations that qualify his own statements "Disney films all have single parents [student 1 'X film had two.' student 2: 'but they were not main characters.' V points to both students] What she said; what she said" (week 6). V also lauds multiple perspectives "[student: 'I disagree with what he said'] Yes, the beauty of argument, and film, is we can walk away with different perspectives" (week 4) and seeks out those divergent views "Anyone want to argue with me? [student: 'I disagree'] Cool …" (week 4).

He also actively appreciates and compliments students' contributions to the course, whether in their presentations "my pen ran out, I took notes on my phone!" (week 4); in class discussions "I was up all night grading papers, y'all are in charge today … thanks for helping me through a tough Monday" (week 7); in film viewings "Never noticed that; I've screened [this film] so many times, but each time people bring out things I haven't seen before … Thanks guys, I really enjoyed this" (week 8); or within his own monologs, where he invites them to provide approachable class explanations for his film terminology "Deep focus. Anyone explain? [student explains] … Diagetic. Can anyone explain? [student explains] Yes, great [V further explains]" (week 6). And when students bring ideas to him about their independent writing projects, he is likewise encouraging and flexible in letting them adjust the project for their own comfort "By all means, change!" (week 3), and talks through these ideas with them, seemingly at any time they want—in week 6, for instance, he stays after class for twelve minutes talking with four students about their writing-topic ideas.

<center>*</center>

Together, these interaction patterns established by V, as an educational leader, contribute resonantly to the atmosphere of the course learning environment, helping the group to form a progressively more predictable, dependable, synchronous flow of dialog among themselves.

Of course, more than just these dialogs contribute to the shape and progress of V's classroom culture. That culture—that reliable lattice of activity structures and resources, orienting values and attitudes, role-expectations and interaction styles—is made of and impacted by many factors both immediate and distant: from V's ordered lesson plans and his online compendium of readings and writing samples, to students' academic goals in and beyond the course and their tastes and interests regarding film and film-writing, to the larger official university structures of academic progress and differentiated accountability between faculty and undergraduates in achieving that progress.

But ultimately, it is in dialog that this course's participants negotiate together their current classroom culture; their dialog is the dynamic, living core of their educational exchange, running up and through these larger situating contexts. And pragmatically, from an educational researcher's standpoint, the direction in which these dialogs climb—toward or away from synchrony in the observable moment, synchrony in students' and teachers' narrated memories of the exchange, synchrony with the teacher's stated educational aims and with the students' expressed learning objectives—provides an *intrinsic* means for assessing the course, within the value-scales of its participants.

Above, we have explored those educational aims in V's mind (a revolt of kindness and excitement against the deluge of sternness and stress so familiar to university students, an invitation to write like a conversation and to see the world's details through a more critical big-picture lens). Likewise, we have explored his and his students' somewhat mutual sense of the course's strengths and failings as an educational exchange (a success in garnering students' enthusiasm about their writing, and to remove feelings of pressure or discomfort from that so-often strenuous writing process, but faltering in its critical feedback on those final products). Below, we take a moment to look at the actual course dialogs

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themselves: how those educational exchanges matured interpersonally an academically over the course of the term.

**Maturing Dialogs within that Learning Environment**

Heading into the final third of the term, V and his students seem quite comfortable together with the style of the course and with the manner of intellectual conversation being encouraged within that flow of activities.

A wonderful example of this more synchronous group dynamic comes in weeks seven, when the class watches clips and discusses the film *Boondock Saints*. This is a film that—V explains to me in private, a month earlier—he does not enjoy or think is that great, but has found that students in the current generation really hold in high regard, treating it "like gospel," and get excited about, so he's followed their interests and included it in the course curriculum. And that decision pays off, visibly, in week seven's classroom engagement. The conversation on *Boondock Saints* day is electric with students challenging each other, raising questions, casually mentioning their disagreements, even humorously admitting where they do not know ("don't know [laughs] I didn't read them") in a way that echos V's own self-deprecating nonchalance. They also respond to V's stated perspectives about the film honestly, trading ideas with him in an equitable way, as though—like they later describe in interviews—they regard him as on-their-level ("I would have never thought of it that way"), and they dive into his question prompts about the film enthusiastically (how women were treated, or used, in the film becomes a large group discussion).

Similarly, in week 9, when the class is discussing a Micheal Moore documentary, V offers a thought-provoking prompt that the students readily take over as an intellectual argument of perspectives amongst themselves. The conversation opens with students voicing

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their views on Texas and Arizona public schools editing history in their curricula. V is encouraging their responses, and then begins mentioning events from more recent US history, which students are not aware of. So he reassures, "The worst place to learn American history is in America." a Korean student points out that it's the same in Korea: that every country hides it's ugly parts. V follows up this comment by asking, "So what should we do? Tell our kids, or keep them in the dark?" A student argues one way, another argues the other side. Then a third, watching the film in background, extends this topic to documentary films as well: "I hate that they cut … just showing what they want you to hear." A fourth brings it back: "I'd tell my kids … I think they already understand." So V makes that comment into a further question: "Kids can and do absorb a lot, but how do you *break* it to them? [imitates some bad breaks]." The conversation continues – getting real, and going deep; seeing how film plays a role in what the public knows, or doesn't, and why watching those films critically is so important.

On both these days, late in the term, the social-emotional synchrony of the group, and the intellectual engagement that facilitates among them in dialogs, is readily apparent. Students come into class knowing what V wants them to do with the films, and feeling comfortable engaging in that amicable exchange of critical viewpoints that he wants, because the learning environment that the group has established makes that process minimally intimidating and also attractively interesting.

Looking back on prior classes, then, one can see moments from wherein a foundation is being laid for these exchanges and that environment (early on), wherein progress is being made in establishing that environment and facilitating productive educational dialogs (midway), and finally wherein—as above—the group comes together in producing

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exchanges that are fluent, personally warm and inviting, academically informed and purposeful (the last days).

Here are a few samples, to illustrate this point.

In week 3, V has a discussion with students about unwritten film rules—standard tropes and genre conventions in Hollywood—and how some filmmakers, such as Godard, go about intentionally and artfully breaking these rules. As V points to these conventions, and to looking outside of them, a student offers some information they've learned about Godard, and V replies with characteristic humor, care, self-deprecation, and commendation (Table 5.1, moment 1). One student then asks, unaware, "He's a director?" and V casually responds "I'll give a little background, I guess," then launches into an extemporaneous mini-lecture on the auteur—lots of knowledge, presented very humbly, in a casual and familiar tone, with asides for recognizing students' work, and of course peppered with some light cursing.

Later in the class, V again encourages students to adopt a critical lens, pointing out that—while the class will be watching lots of Hollywood films—they will be honoring the motive and ingenuity of films that work to subvert these conventional forms: "as we watch mostly Hollywood, you should know there's a larger world around." He explains what he's going to do with the film clips, and promises that then the class can "go early, and everyone will be happy," acknowledging and aligning w students' desire to get out and enjoy the day. And he concludes this daily briefing by doing some planning out loud (Table 5.1, Moment 2), in a way that demonstrates his open and honest ethos as well as his standards for himself in teaching, as he describes that he's only comfortable with a certain degree of improvising— and beyond that, he feels compelled to plan a little bit.

Table 5.1
*Foundation work: classroom dialogs, week 3, Monday.*

| ~ Film Rules, and Breaking them ~ |
|---|

**\*Moment 1:**

**V** "He once said, famously, 'I want to learn all of the rules of Hollywood film, so thatI can break them.' *[student laughter]* And he does. Has anyone ever seen any Godard films?"

**Student** "I'm taking a Godard class, right now."

**V** "Are *you*? Taking a Godard *class*—is that like Godard film after Godard film after—"

**Student** "Yeah"

**V** "Are you okay? *[student: yeah.]* I'll check with you after a couple weeks [student: alright.]. Geez. I can get through a Godard film, I think he's kind of cool, but I don't know if I could do an entire class."

**Student** "He's a director?" *[student: yeah.]*

**V** "He's a director, yeah. I'll give a little background, I guess. *[student: French director.]* What's that? He's a French director, part of a French film movement known as the *Nouvelle Vague*, or 'New Wave.' And there were a bunch of people who were behind it, François Truffaut, Luc Godard—there's a huge amount of names, actually—and what they were reacting to is, well, kind of the way *The Fugitive* is made as a film. Remember we talked at the very beginning about … "

**\*Moment 2:**

**V** "So what the hell am I gonna go with all my shit that I have prepared for Wednesday? I'm gonna have to push that off until—"

**Student** "Can't do it today?"

**V** "Oh hell no; I have no idea what I'm going to do on Wednesday. *[class laughter]* I mean, I know I have the schedule *[V smiles]*, I could look at the schedule, but that would be like putting it together on the spot, and I'm not comfortable with that. *[V fumbles with projector controls, turns to student who helped him prior]* I hope you're on stand-by *[student: I am]* *[V laughs]* Good. I'll be able to handle it, eventually. *[some students laugh]* Or maybe not; you'll have to be here for the—

… But anyway. Every once in a while as we go through the course, I'm gonna focus on particular tropes, if you will, in films that keep being re-done and, new films quote old films and so forth, but *this* film lays [out] an opening that went on to appear in a lot of neat films, a lot of modern films in fact, [of which] we're gonna look at … "

Three weeks later, in week 6, the classroom dynamic between V and the students

seems more fluent and comfortable. V is pushing boundaries further, both in the material he

is presenting to the class, and in the forward way he talks to them—intimating a confidence

in their understanding the course and his attitude toward them. In this particular class, a

group has just given a presentation of the horror film *High Tension*, and made an effort not to spoil the surprise ending while presenting their analysis. But then V gets excited in showing a clip from the film, as students stare curiously at the screen, and ends up playing the movie all the way to the end, watching the students together try to puzzle out the reality of what's going on—namely, that the film is shot through the perspective of its delusional protagonist. When disturbing moments arise, V diffuses the tension with humor; at the end, he lauds the presenters' professionalism in not spoiling the film for others, as he's just done; and when the students continue together trying to sort out the reality of what happened, he promotes people taking it up as a writing assignment—on the grounds of its ample substance as well as it being "fun" (Table 5.2, moment 1).

As the class moves on to talking about the big critical writing assignment, V again reiterates his open and accommodating attitude regarding the way students want to approach their papers. He begins with an ice-breaker, playfully teasing students for texting him questions, but shying away from admitting they've asked them; when one student volunteers that she has, he makes an example of her—in a positive way—by expressing relief and appreciation that she's decided to let him know (Table 5.2, moment 2), orienting himself to her and using body language that conveys familiarity and approachability. Then, when they get into more detailed questions, he focuses on how many *options* they have, how *simple* it can be, how many options online they can look at for inspiration, and that they don't need to *worry* about covering things in a certain way, as long they make a strong argument—making the assignment as familiar, encouraging, approachable as he makes himself. Finally, when they discuss the smaller screen reports (Table 5.2, moment 3), we see V being open with the students about reasons for his delay in responding to their writing, and actively applying his positive "anything to get them engaged" approach: pitching extra credit for additional movie

write-ups, encouraging students to follow their interests, including *High Tension* from class

today, reassuring them "don't anyone freak out, I've got everything … don't worry [if you

only wrote four not five], I'm not going to dock you," and repeatedly hitting the note of

encouraging forward "Absolutely … just show me you're engaging … I totally invite it … it

can only benefit you in the end."

These dialogs are making clear to students (as evident in interviews) what V's focal

goal is for them and their course work: engage and enjoy. And from their thoughtful

participation and their laughter, it seems they are getting comfortable delivering both that

engagement and enjoyment to the classroom exchange.

Table 5.2
*Progress: classroom dialogs, week 6, Monday.*

| ~ Critical watching together & assigning Critical Writing ~ |
|---|
| *Moment 1: |
|   *[film: blood-curdling scream]*<br>**V** "Anyone who is really upset by this, you can text your friends, or whatever. *[Students Laugh]*"<br>**Student** (from presentation group) "There are a lot of parallels drawn from the beginning to the end, that really bridge together the entire story … like, you don't open—"<br>**V** "Yes, exactly. It's great, if you ever watch the whole thing."<br>  *[film: chainsaw sound, scream.]*<br>  *[Female student cringes, covers mouth with jacket. Male student is laughing, shaking head at the screen]*<br>**Student** "Get out of the car! [students laugh]"<br>**V** "Remember, I have a consent form from all of you. *[student laughs]*"<br><br>  *[film ends. Class discusses for a bit.]*<br>**V** "Great presentation, guys. It was very nice of you to *not* want to spoil the ending, but now I'm here to *totally* ruin all of that *[class laughs]*."<br>**Student** "I couldn't tell, I see the alternate personalities, but, was she actually driving the truck then?"<br>**V** "Good question. What do you guys think? People who saw it."<br>**Student** "I believe so. There was some form of transportation involved—the girl was obviously detained in some form of transportation, and it looked like they were on some kind of farm, so I would assume |

she didn't get a truck from some random place. She probably took one of her family's trucks, or something like that."

V "I think that's one of the cool things you would explain, if you were doing a reading of that film, is how they managed to—how *do* they have the killer and her, the same person, in the same scene at the same time. How do they get away with it? [Students discuss] Yeah. Yeah, well I repeat, I would *love* it if someone were to write on this, because there's so much there. It's just wonderfully fun."

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*Moment 2:

V "Anyway, a couple things I wanted to touch on before we go. And that is, I'm getting texts from people, but when I come to class no one admits to *giving* me any of these texts [students laugh]. And I'm trying to figure out what you know, and what you don't know. What questions do you have? Surely to God you must have questions, because you're sending me text messages, and then pretending not to have done so—*[gestures toward student]*. Did you send me a text?."

**Student** "Yes."

V "*[sitting on desk, excited hands.]* Hey! Alright. Good – tell me what the hell you wanted."

*[Student asks: report on one or many movies?]*

V "Excellent question. With Critical papers, you're better off trying to cover as *many* films that show what you're talking about, because showing that consistency gives your argument more punch—but it can be just primarily one film, and then look at the genera to back it up. So it doesn't have to be an intensive analysis of multiple; you can just be looking at one film, with another one to back it up."

**Student** "What Genre?"

V "Your choice. It can be about what genres do, what certain film-makers do … or not even be worried about genres and just do things around representations [of race, gender, etc]. I leave it *wide open* to you. And that's why I put the suggestions on the webpage."

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*Moment 3:

**Student**: "Are you getting our [screen reports]? I'm not getting any responses on the blog."

V "Someone else said that, too. I'm not missing anything *[students laugh]*. So don't anyone freak out, I've got everything. It's just, I've got ninety students this quarter, so it's keeping me busy. But they will show."

**Student**: "Can responses be on any film we liked?"

V "Oh yeah-yeah-yeah. Absolutely! Responses are a way of, maybe even moving you toward the topic you're gonna do. But at least do things you're interested in. They can be on anything we've done. Just showing me you're engaging in the film's we're looking at and talking about."

**Student**: "Like to High Tension that we saw today?"

V "Absolutely. I totally invite it. … And I totally spoiled the ending. Forgive me, I'll stand before the great Judgment Day in the halls of film *[students laugh]*, but I *still* think you can watch it and get something. Because you watch it a second time, and you start thinking 'How did they pull this off?' Remember, she's psychotic, too, and psychosis is a wonderful thing; you can *think* you're in the room with yourself."

**Student**: "So we have just one paper left?"

**V** "And the outline, which if you look online, is very thorough, explaining your topic and what you want to do."

**Student**: "So, by end of term, five responses, an outline, and a paper?

**V**: "Yes. *[student murmers of 4]*. Or, four is fine, *whatever [students laugh]*, I'm not gonna dock you. *[in playful tone]* Stop giving me a hard time. Although I always welcome extra-credit responses, I've said that from the beginning. So if there's something you want to respond to … by all means, do so. It can *only* be benefit to you in the end. So"

*[Students start packing their bags.]*

**V** "I'm sensing by the shifting and such, we're out of time. So I'll see you on Wednesday. And thank you guys, *[V claps]* excellent on the presentation. I enjoyed it very much."

Three weeks hence, in week 9, the group comes together for its final day, where V plays for his students the surrealist film *Un Chien Andelu* by Salvador Dali. By this point, the group has developed a fluent style of interaction when discussing films (Table 5.3, moment 1): students describing what they observe and how they interpret it; V evoking more and further viewpoints in an agnostic manner, peppered with I-don't-know's and mirroring students' language; students elaborating confidently and contributing gamely their partial ideas and questions; then V summarily providing a little broader perspective on its possible intention, as grist for students' ongoing critical thinking. When one student asks V what *he* thinks about the film (Table 5.3, moment 2), V seems to hesitate for a moment on the edge of airing his own definitive view over the students' theories, but then offers a straightforward and unromantic explanation of how he's come to interpret the film, based on context: not as a deep intellectual mystery, but as two successful artists having some fun. When a student offers to pull up an animated Disney film featuring Dali's work, to compliment *Un Chien Andelu*, V enthusiastically allows her this (Table 5.3, moment 3), and sits oriented toward the screen, watching with an invested posture, through the whole piece. He then transitions

from these examples of surreal film to a nonsense-word exercise, illustrating for students

how human minds are disposed toward meaning-seeking, and adept at meaning-finding—

even in the midst of clear nonsense.

Table 5.3
*Synchrony: classroom dialogs, week 9, Wednesday.*

| ~Un Chien Andelu Viewing~ |
| --- |
| *Moment 1:<br><br>**Student** "From point to point in the film, I don't really see significant connections."<br><br>**V** "So they succeeded, then?"<br><br>**Student** "Yeah, I don't think they did on a shot-to-shot basis, because I think some of them did connect. I mean, not in a significant way. So on some level, I guess they did."<br><br>**V** "Well, there are certainly lots of *repeating* images throughout. Religious iconography is all over the place, and the animals, and—there are a lot of things that are *repeating*. I don't know if there's anything to extract from—is there anybody else? Is it a meaningless film? Is there such a thing?"<br><br>**Student** "Is the guy through it—It's the same guy, right?"<br><br>**V** "Yes. And same girl, too. Right?"<br><br>**Student** "Yeah, but I feel like the guy plays a bunch of different characters, and the girl's always the same. So, I don't know what that's about."<br><br>**V** "Mm-hm. No, I have no idea; you know, this is damn near a hundred years old, or ninety years old. Nobody wants to seem to write about it, except to say, 'Well, it was an experiment between Dali and Bunuel, where they just tried to make a film as diffuse as they possibly could, and not connect it to anything.' And, every time I watch it, I pull something out of it. As nonsensical as it may appear, at first, it seems to me that there's actually—a kind of a *story* in there. Maybe I'm making shit up. I don't know. Did anyone else see it, or was it just—"<br><br>**Student** "Well at first, it goes from she's trying to help him, to then he's molesting her, so she wants to run away from him, but then he reappears as the other character, and then in the end they're together. I mean, there has to be something between the two characters, the relationship, the evolution between the two. I don't know."<br><br>**V** "Anyone else?"<br><br>**Student** "So what was the beginning; was he cutting her eye open?"<br><br>**V** "I have *no* idea why that is. It seemed to me, especially given the time that the film was made, shock value was probably a big, big part of it...yeah"<br><br>**Student** "They used a pig's eye for that."<br><br>**V** "...you have this visceral reaction before you even have a chance to go, 'Oh wait a minute, that wasn't—' No idea why it's there. Why was it? I don't know."<br><br>**Student** "The time-frame, too, is kind of weird."<br><br>**V** "The time-frame is *bizarre*." |

**Students** "It didn't have to be there. It didn't make sense." "One year later, sixteen years later, *Spring*time. What? There was no need for it." "Doesn't Dali have watches, in every one of his? … and clocks, too."

**V** "Yeah, Dali—I don't know if he has watches in *every* one, but certainly they appear a lot. And he *loves* the melting watch; that's the idea of time falling into nonsense. Which I guess this film sort of does."

**V** "I don't know. Maybe it was just a big experiment. Maybe it was just a fun thing to say 'Hey, let's see if we can make something that says nothing. And I'm not sure if it does say nothing. By virtue of—they may have not *intended* anything, or they worked hard to not intend anything, but I think it's pretty hard to do anything without some form of intention behind it."

*Moment 2:

**V** "So anyway: I've changed your *lives* with that film, then? *[students laugh quietly]* Now you know. See, this is what this has all built up to, is understanding—"

**Student** "What did you get out of it?"

**V** 'What did *I* get out of it? Well, I think I get a little something more out of it every year I screen it. Although, ultimately, I think it—"

*[Student sneezes]*

**V** "*Bless* you. Are you okay? [student laughs: yes] {V smiles} Goodness. I'm beginning to worry about you.

I *honestly* think it was an experiment between two people who were at the peak of their careers, and well-known for what they did. And, you know, Dali's going to paint a picture that's going to be *bizarre*, it's gonna be mind-melting, it's gonna make you want to take drugs and stare at it for a long time. And Bunuel's film are also pretty challenging, in terms of mainstream. I think they got together, had a little fun.

I heard that it was all the result of a drug-induced weekend; that they came up with this thing and they wrote—*[V laughs]* not that there's much to write—they wrote the thing in fifteen minutes, had it set up for the weekend, and shot it within a few hours.

So. I don't get *much* out of it, except to say that's probably what it was. It was an attempt by two filmmakers to say—a little bit—'Screw you.' I mean, when I watch that film, I felt a little bit like, 'Why'd you put me through this? What point have you proven?' And I'm not sure there's any point that's made. Except that, if you're shown a bunch of images, you're going to do the best that you *can* to try to make some sense out of it."

*Moment 3:

**Student** "Can I check on Youtube to see if I can find a Disney-and Dali one?"

**V** "Please! Please do. Yeah, and in the meantime, I'll *[V starts writing nonsense-words on chalkboard. Looks at screen] Cool*. This is Disney and Dali, huh?"

**Student** "Yeah. Sorry, it's another boring—well, not boring, but weird—"

**V** "Well that's okay *[V points to screen]*, it's only six minutes *long. [video plays, ends]* Okay, my question is, which was longer? *[student laughs]* That was *very* Dali. Dali all over the place; it's basically

his artwork come to life. And that's the wonderful thing about film, or any artifact we look at, is we tend to try to find meaning, even if it may not intentionally have been there."

With that final lesson about peoples' innate bias toward seeking and finding meaning, regardless of a text's original intention, V then dismisses his students (as critical and creative observers) to go out into the world. In his farewell, he admits that this course was "sketchy at times" in the way it played out, but that their "requirement [as his students] is done, go in peace, and I will be here." These final words drive home the way that V sees this course's place in their current lives (a final requirement), the way he orients toward them in that educational work ("we" got through), and the way he hopes they leave ("in peace," and knowing that he's there to support them).

One could claim that his repeated playful aping of the Catholic parting words "go in peace" is just that; a joke. But after watching V for seven weeks, reassuring and diffusing stress and building up students' confidence, I see it as a deeper reflection of his personal, practical, principled educational goals: to appropriate the forms of oppressive institutions— from religions, to Hollywood, to competitive university systems—and upend them for examination, until they are more funny than frightening, more curious than controlling, and more critically interrogated that passively accepted. Though the students (in interviews) express feeling that this course could have given them more critical support regarding their immediate goals with academic writing, they all generally acknowledge, with appreciation, the experience of thinking and writing that V wants to give them, and facilitates for them, in his course environment: one where—unlike in most other courses—they feel supported in expressing and proving their own viewpoints, and feel motivated in doing writing along the lines of their own interests.

If that de-stressing and re-motivating of students' relationships with critical writing was V's central educational aim (which, by its prevalence in his course reflections, it seems to be), then by that measure, his course seems to be a success: leaving students with a thread of positive classroom learning experiences, channeling a clear and influential message about how media can be viewed and discussed, with a potentially lasting impact on their dispositions as observers and as as writers in and beyond the university.

## The Role of Sincerity in Students' Educational Outcomes

When looking back over the pragmatic arc of this course—from principled ideals (V's described educational intentions and approaches), to practical interactions (the group's gradual social-emotional and academic progress in educational exchanges), to personal takeaways (V's and the students' distinct, but dialogically coordinated, senses of what the group achieved)—much of its *success* (in terms of the group's coordinated understanding and cooperative effort in learning activities) seems to rely on V's *integrity* as an educational leader, and on the students' *trust* in that integrity.

V does not do a flawless job of executing this course, by anyone's account, including his own: he habitually fumbles with technology, runs out of energy and time when giving final feedback, and sometimes goes on excited film-fawning sprees that spoil the endings of movies for students. But he develops with his students a fundamentally shared understanding about his educational goals in the course, and his according role in supporting their learning experiences. It is evident, through observing classroom dialogs and hearing students reflect on those educational exchanges, that this understanding is forged not only by V's clear and explicit verbal communication of his intentions, but by his consistent and perceivable link between what he says and what he does: a genuineness that gives his words

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their perlocutionary power; their meaning, their utility, their reliability as a base for future actions.

It is easy to imagine an alternative reality in V's classroom: one where he encourages students to come to office hours, but is hard to get a hold of and puts minimal effort into working through ideas with them; where he proclaims that they can write about anything they want, but then responds to their proposals with a cascade of doubting criticisms; where he pines for engaged classroom discussions but only selects films that he himself enjoys, and constantly and subtly implies that some interpretations of these films are better than others. In this reality, students would not be lining up outside his door and in his phone and his email in-box to talk; they would not be so excited to write their papers, nor probably so crestfallen at his lack of critical feedback alongside their A-grades; they would not be offering up their half-developed ideas and questions, and definitely not casually disagreeing with his suggested interpretations. His sincerity, and the course dialogs' progressive synchrony, are clearly entwined.

Where his sincerity as a teacher comes from is a deep and complex question of personal biography and experience and identity, professional training and field experience, philosophical values and beliefs about what is educationally good and effective given the current-and-coming reality of our world. So I will not attempt to answer that question of origin in full, only to emphasize once again that such integrity is inexorably tied to the personal, the practical, and the principled elements of his teaching together—as my previous, synthetic explorations of his idiolect bare testament to.

What I think is useful, though, at this juncture of final evaluation, is to look at V's own explanation of the term *Sincerity*, as it relates to his teaching, and at one of his students' explanations—in dialog, in synchrony, with that—describing the impact that V's promises

and their follow-through have had on that student's educational exchange with him, over the years.

V says the following, to the prompt of "Sincerity" as it relates to his teaching:

"Jesus I don't know—[I] feel like I'm sincere when I offer things to students. The one thing that's important to me is never [to] feel like "I'm wasting your time or my time or our time together."

Usually when I present stuff, I do it in earnest. So—but I think that ties back into the overall teaching philosophy: I enjoy teaching, I like teaching what I teach, and so—by definition—I think there's already a certain sincerity built into that.

… I think it's actually a good question. I smiled because, in a way, part of me wants to answer, "Well, I wouldn't *be* here if I weren't sincere."

You know what I mean?  It's like every class I go into – it may just be a Writing 1 or just a Writing 50 or whatever, and they may be just checking off a block on their sheet – but nonetheless, "You have to take the class, I have to teach it." And I think the core thing that we're teaching here is probably a good thing to try to instill in people and that is: a critical eye, the desire to ask questions and, all the rest of it.

So on that level, I feel pretty sincere. But it is a good question, though. It is a very good question though."

A few times in this response, V turns to address the students—in spirit—directly: to reassure them that he is not there to waste their time, that he recognizes both of their official obligations to be in that room together. But above that base of requirements (his job, their degree), he points out that he likes teaching, and beyond this, that he sees real value in the

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core transformations he's nurturing in students (e.g., critical awareness, a curious disposition). These are deep and meaningful personal changes that V's mind has already been joyfully "poisoned" by, through his learning experiences in higher education, and which he is happy to see signs of, in students who have taken his courses, and keep in touch.

To V, it is that combination of feeling this joy and valuing this purpose which brings him to see himself as a sincere teacher. And, all said and done, it is that same underlying sincerity that makes his teaching practice sustainable, in the face of exhaustion and fatigue and personal stress: "I wouldn't *be* here if I weren't sincere."

Complimentary to V's sense that sincerity stabilizes him as a teacher, his students also describe his sincere dedication to his work—and the gradual outcomes of that consistent effort (e.g., being aware and responsive, well-informed and thoughtful, insightful and effective)—as the element that distinguishes learning experiences in his course from those in other educational exchanges at the university. Beyond appreciating V's approach and remembering V's central lessons about writing, students expressed feeling trust for V as both a resource for knowledge and a support for their personalization of that knowledge.

At the end of the term, I ask Mike Hunt candidly where V's credibility in the classroom comes from, given that V presents himself so casually—in the student's own words—as a "tour guide" and a "cool teacher." Mike explains quite eloquently, in response, that V embodies a dedication to the field of writing, and shows his care for students' learning, and that *this* evident experience and commitment are what lend him his credibility as an educational leader:

> **Mike Hunt:** Because he's not an idiot, you know? If he was up there and he
> was cool, and he was an idiot—didn't have a good opinion, couldn't express
> his opinions, couldn't conduct the class, couldn't *help* you with your writing if

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you went in and talked to him or couldn't help you with something if you asked him for help—then he wouldn't have that credibility.

But he has all those things. He will help you. He gives you his *cellphone* number so you can text-message him for questions, and then when you actually text him, he texts you back an answer usually within a couple hours. That's building credibility right there. Right? I know *friends* that won't text me back that quickly, that accurately. So the fact that he does that—he's there to *help*.

And so you accept that. And I feel that that's the big credibility you need with a teacher, is them being there to help you, rather than want you to fail. A lot of people always think, "Oh, that teacher hates me." I don't think anybody thinks that about V. I can guarantee people have said that about— you've heard millions of people say that, you may have even said it yourself, "Oh, that teacher hated me." And I have teachers that I *know* hated me, for a fact. And whether my grade reflected it varied. But I don't think anybody goes to V and is like, "Oh, he hates me," because he doesn't. He's really just a nice guy to everyone and he's—credibility, yeah, I take as responsibility—he's a smart guy and he comes in, and he presents his opinions well, he talks about what he's gonna do in the class. You know, you don't necessarily want him to touch technology, because he struggles with that so much. [laughs] But he's got his stuff together. And the fact that he is reachable, I think, gives him credibility.

So according to Mike, V's credibility has naught to do with his "cool" personality, or lack thereof. V demonstrates, in classroom exchanges, that he is a competent thinker and leader

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in his subject, motivated and dedicated to helping his students. It is simple, and direct: V's course structure and interpersonal manner, V's guiding words and supportive actions, V's personal values and professional efforts in educating, function together as an integrated whole in practice. And the result, reflected in the narratives of his students, is an educational experience that is persuasively enjoyable, memorable, useful—not perfect (in theirs nor the teacher's eyes), but definitely appreciated.

CHAPTER 8


AN EXPERT BECOMES A LEADER (B):

FROM CLEAR VALUES AND CONSISTENT SELF-INVESTMENT TO

SYNCHRONOUS EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES


**B, as a Teacher and a Course: Educational Values and Implementation Intentions**

Although B is teaching in the same university, same department and discipline, as V, her description of her work as a teacher is distinct from his. Her sense of reason and values as a writing educator—what she teaches and why—centers around its own "core purpose" which brings meaning to her work, and consequently compels its own version of that "core content" which she sees herself sharing with students through her writing courses. Her statements about academic education broadly, and the role of writing therein, point to this distinction (below). Her personal dictionary—as made visible through the word-web of 21 teaching terms—help to show how these core values and reasons then pervade her integrated structure of principles for teaching university writing (thereafter). Finally, her educational exchanges with students—in the learning environment that she leads and responds to, in dialog—demonstrates how she applies these personal reasons and professional principles in dealing with the practical challenges of teaching her current class: working within the tight time-constraints of a quarter-system, the workload limits of a busy course group, and the community-resistant disposition on one unhappy philosophy student.

**What I Am Teaching, and Why**

When I ask B about her vision of herself in academia—her role as a teacher with these young adult students in university—she describes that purpose in flexible, student-centered terms: she goes in to her classes aware that she *cannot* know or control how students are going to grow during the short time they're with her, so she aims to create a learning environment that supports that growth (in whatever form it comes for each student). As a newer teacher, she used to worry about covering all her topics and controlling the environment. But now, she sees that part-wild unfolding of her classes as exciting; getting to watch students grow and address their needs, as they come, person-to-person:

> I want those ten weeks [I have with them] to be the best, most growth-
> producing they can be. In whatever way that student is ready to grow. And
> again, I can't predict necessarily what that's gonna be – it may be as a writer,
> it may be as a friend to someone else – who knows. I don't know, and I think
> that's the adventure: I don't think I have to control. … when I was a new
> teacher, I was worried more about getting everything done and—controlling
> the environment. And I don't [worry about] that anymore.

She applies this same flexibility to her vision of writing within the university: that thinking and writing are done differently across disciplines, that her field now recognizes the various discourse communities and writing styles and communicative purposes which compel "college writing" to be much more complex and contextualized than a single static model, and that she is "very much at home with that" diversity and responsiveness-to-situation (beyond the bounded walls of the English department). Because thinking and writing are connected processes, B sees formal constraints on writing as constraints on students'

thinking as well. So she much prefers this brave new world, where writing begins with getting students to think about their purpose, their audience, and their tools as writers in realizing those goals:

> I love the interaction of how different disciplines think and how writing happens in that discipline … And I think as a profession we recognize that. [It's about] the construction of knowledge socially: in writing, as students sit there in the middle of the night, as they talk, in all sorts of ways. … I would be very uncomfortable with the notion of one way to write. The five-paragraph essay is something I can't relate to; it's just too constraining. It just shapes thought in such a narrow way, that I'd rather have students thinking about, 'What's my purpose, what's my audience, how do I accomplish what I'm trying to accomplish?' Let's look at all the tools you have as a writer and go from there.

This, for B then, is the core content in his course; the educational ends that she most values. Through her classes, she is working to give students a rich social environment that will support and fuel their personal growth: exposing them to various ways of thinking within communities and various tools for developing and conveying their ideas through writing.

**How Am I Teaching: A Personal Dictionary**

The way that B defines and explains the 21 teaching-related terms help to clarify, then, *how* she intends to nurture students' growth in her classrooms through writing (with a values-emphasis on Writing Across the Curriculum / Writing In the Disciplines). Together, B's personalized understandings of each term's educational significance (as an ideal) and

practical implications (as a reality) provide a simple and comparable image of her more complex and unique framework of internal principles for teaching university writing.

In the word-web below (Figure 13), illustrating how these topic-terms are associated with one another in B's personal dictionary for teaching, several ideas can be seen playing structurally integral roles in that framework of teaching principles. First, B shows-by-example the acceptability of **I Don't Know** and uses **In-Class Correction** (with awareness of contextual causes for some individuals' Apathy) to assert a 'culture of teachableness' that stimulates students. Within that context, B uses **Good Questions** and **Basics / Review** (with Sincerity and Friendship) to explore honestly what are students' views and needs in the course, seeking their questions in return as an "invitation to teach." Along that path, during classroom Discussions, B **Models** both the interpersonal and academic processes of the course while encouraging productive **Peer Relationships**: pursuing her goal of a socially respectful and supportive, intellectually curious and interested classroom community. And the student-centered means to that educational goal, consequently, requires a teaching style involving **Improvisation** and **Apathy-awareness** (along with a sense of Order, right Tempo, and genuine Enthusiasm): "reading the class" to figure out students' needs, and relying on professional experience to "see openings" for responding to those, and moving the group's activities in right directions.
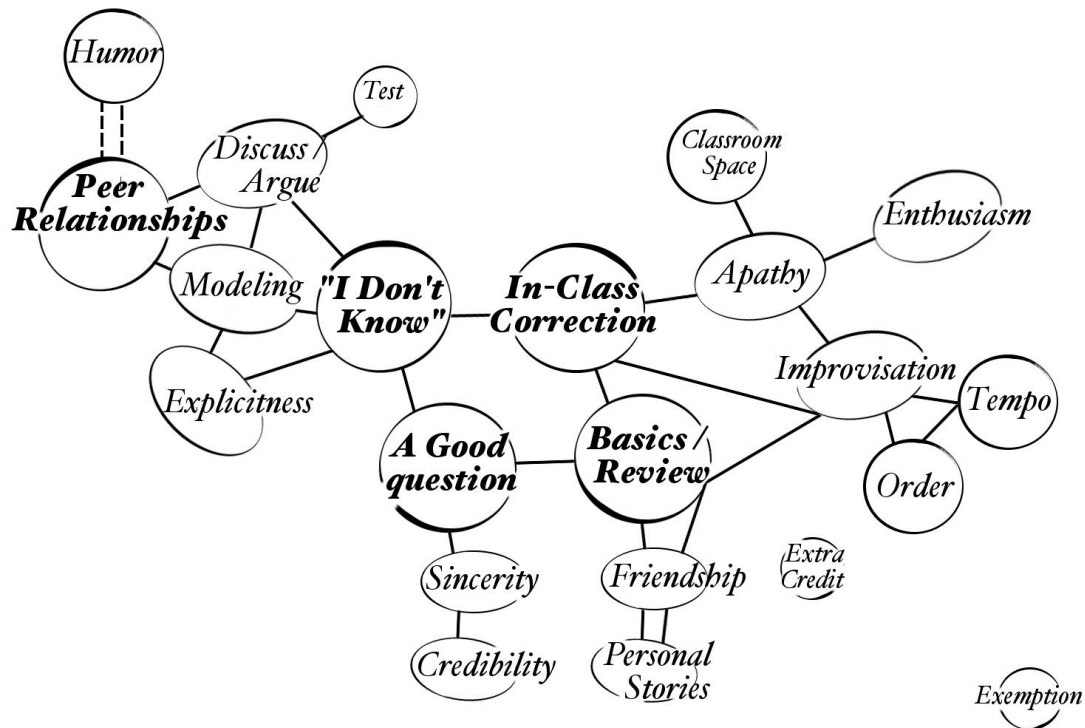
*Figure 13*. B's Personal Dictionary – a principled framework for teaching. Illustrated as a 21-word web.

**"I Don't Know" and In-Class Correction:**

These two topics lie at the center of B's approach toward creating a "culture of

teachableness" in her classroom; a supportive community where everyone is learning

through-and-with everyone else. In defining **In-Class Correction**, she recounts how she

teaches in context to further a lesson: responding to what students share and helping them

see what's working and what's not. In this way, her practical description of In-Class

Correction ties in both with her described approach to **Basics / Review** (choreographed as a

direct response to students' explicit needs: "I did it in a way that was not 'what I think they

ought to have'; it came as a result of their questions … that's what we based the class on, and

you also saw them adding to that as we went along") and with her approach to student

**Apathy** (focused on building up a suitable culture for student learning: "I try and construct

an environment that's stimulating … [but] I keep that in mind too, that it's not just about my classroom, they're also in a context of their own culture").

In defining **"I Don't Know,"** she then recounts how she leads by example to create that classroom culture: encouraging students beyond the "facade of perfection" (mentioned in In-Class Correction) by openly admitting for herself where she doesn't know something ("You heard me say that today … I think it's sometimes healthy; it models for them that they don't have to know everything") and inviting them as a group to help her in that learning ("sometimes I'll use that as a moment for all of us to—for them to figure it out; tell me"). In this way, she connects the idea of "I Don't Know" to **Modeling** (a mode of teaching she tries to "do a lot of": giving students meaningful examples through demonstrating her own processes of thinking or generating writing) as well as to **Discuss / Argue** and **"A Good Question"** (where she reasserts the value of being "honest" in seeking students' contributions to the class learning experience: "real questions are ones I don't have the answer for. Those are the ones that really matter").

Thus the topics of "I Don't Know" and In-Class Correction compliment one another, connecting the more communal/collaborative (upper-left) to the more leading/guiding (upper-right) aspects of B's teacherly approach in fostering a healthy learning culture in her classroom.

**"A Good Question" and Basics / Review:**

These are topic-terms wherein B elaborates on the practical details involved in building a culture with students. She defines **"A Good Question,"** when coming from the teacher, as one which goes beyond checking students' memory of what the teacher has said, and rather seeks students' own thoughts. B clarifies that those first basic types of seeing-what-students-remember prompts are "not really a question"; they can be useful, but are not nearly as

important as are genuinely open-ended questions. These are tho ones that she says "really matter" for building the course as a learning community, and for drawing out students' questions—which she regards as her "invitation to teach." In this way, her notion of a good question ties to the value she places on teacher **Sincerity** (by the idea that students adeptly perceive Honesty: they know what a real question sounds like, and can differentiate true from insincere feedback), which in turn she ties to the teacher's **Credibility** (by the idea that students Trust teachers whose methods effectively support them: "I gain credibility with them when they start seeing the growth in themselves … when they start seeing value , in what they're doing").

B's definition of **Basics and Review** then further describes these ideas-in-practice: that effective teaching plays out as a timely response to students' questions ("answers that are given before the question is there, usually aren't effective … so, basics and review: if I'm doing it right, it's coming [from them]—the need is recognized by them, the questions are asked by them and I'm ready to fill it in when it does [come]"). This approach to basics and review in teaching, then, ties directly to B's notion of **Friendship** (by the idea of seeing and addressing students' Needs, one human being to another: an exchange which lends itself naturally to an element of friendship evolving) and to her approach with **Personal Stories** (by the idea of Invitation: that she will share her life with students, where it is relevant to the course, but does not *impose* it on them; it is a response to their interests, needs, and questions).

Thus, the topics "A Good Question" and Basics / Review connect B's general educational ideal of fostering a supportive classroom community with some of the finer practical details involved in being part of—and guiding as a leader—that dialogic learning exchange.

**Peer Relationships and Modeling:**

 **Peer Relationships** is the topic in which B describes most comprehensively the goal of her manner in teaching: to Model a way of relating with others in the classroom that is "respectful" and "supportive," "honest" and "natural," "interest[ed]" and "thoughtful." In this way, B's sense of her role related to Peer Relationships ties to many other terms in her personal dictionary: most explicitly to **Modeling** (mentioned twice) and **Discussion** (mentioned once) and away from **Humor** (which creates a "raucous" classroom atmosphere that students like, but which she contrasts with her "gentler presence"; a "strength that's not intimidating" and a "calmness" that allays student anxiety), and then more subtly linked back with **"A Good Question"** and **Sincerity** (via aforementioned Honesty) and **"I Don't Know"** and **In-Class Correction** (via Naturalness, that willingness to show fallibility in learning, and Respectful Support for fellow learners).

So the phrase Peer Relationships becomes a nexus for the family of topic-terms wherein B describes her teaching role's communal/collaborative aspects with students.

Particularly illuminating is the way she ties the more personal idea of **Peer Relationships** in with the more scholastic topic of **Discussion**. She describes her manner as modeling an emotionally positive and educationally productive interpersonal style that she hopes will color students' relationships in the classroom, but she also recounts talking explicitly with students to make them aware of how their manner in communicating impacts the classroom community:

> *Hopefully*, if I'm interactive *naturally* with them—if I'm *modeling* a way to
>
> relate with interest, respect, curiosity, support—that will also color the *peer*
>
> relations as well. Oc*casionally*, somebody is obnoxious, and the class
>
> ostracizes *them.* But *when* I work with discussion, in the beginning with my

freshman, we talk about non-verbal stuff that hurts: rolling eyes, making eye

contact with somebody else and going "R-r" – you know, and all of those

things that *hurt* peer relationship.

This narration (in "Peer Relationships") of how B prepares students for talking with one another, as persons, then parallels her previous description (in "Discuss / Argue") about how students—when educated about these interpersonal nuances that support and sustain discussions—can expand beyond egotistic debates into mutually productive intellectual exchanges:

[Discussion is] the means of constructing knowledge, testing their ideas. …

in my freshman classes, I work explicitly on discussion skills. … I really

believe in discussion. But I also recognize it's a skill not taught. And just to

say, "Let's discuss," when students aren't always skilled, and they may think

a discussion is about debate, and it degenerates into two people going back-

and-forth: that's not a discussion. … If it's well-done and it involves more

than just two people going at it, it can help students develop arguments, and

learn reasons and backup and how to challenge others' thinking. I don't do a

lot with debate. But I do do a lot with discussion.

Together, these topic-explanations paint a more full picture of B's discussion-centered classroom community, and how its community focus functionally supports its intellectual progress. As she describes under the related topic-term "**Test**," students course-related ideas in writing can be expressed and assessed productively—"and that happens in discussions, it happens in revision workshops, it happens in peer response"—by orchestrating situations where peers converse in a structured and purposeful way.

**Improvisation and Apathy(awareness):**

Complimenting "Peer Relations," the topic-terms **Improvisation** and **Apathy** help link together B's ideas about the leading/guiding aspects of her role in the classroom: taking charge proactively to create a stable and stimulating environment for her and her students' learning community. B's explanation of **Improvisation** is tightly linked with that of **Order**—each one referencing the other—as she describes how being organized, going into the classroom with a plan for the day and a sense of how a course will proceed, gives her a sense of comfort and frees her up to be spontaneous: reading the class, recognizing familiar scenarios from her past experiences, and responding to those needs and openings as they arise). This then ties both terms with her description of **Tempo** (an experience-based reading of the course's real-time flow: "which things do you slow down on – is it steady, … and then it speeds up. I think that that's always important for a teacher to think of that idea"), and links Improvisation to that idea of **Apathy** (via the idea of Reading the class: "I see it in their faces and their body language").

Importantly, here, B's description of **Apathy** focuses on her approach to reading it: working to understand those students' attitudes in context (their generation, the world through which they are growing up) and then to draw them in to the class community ("I try and construct an environment that's stimulating; sometimes I'll challenge them directly, 'This is your choice, but, you know, ten weeks of not-caring is harder than caring'"). This links B's idea of Apathy—via the idea of creating a stimulating Environment—to her practical conceptions of **Enthusiasm** ("if you're enthusiastic about what you're teaching and what you're doing, it's much easier for students to catch that spark … last class , I said, 'Okay, you've gotten through the hard part now; this is the fun part'") and **Classroom Space** ("When I'm not using the board in my classes generally we're moving around a little bit

more – small group, circle conversation … I think it's helpful to keep them changing space").

Also, it is worth noting that the way B illustrates her idea of **Enthusiasm**—specifically, the attribute that makes it convincing or persuasive, as a "spark" for students to catch; that she actually feels enthusiastic about her teaching—ties it directly to her conception of **Sincerity**:

> **Sincerity** (in teachers, perceived by students): "It has to do with honesty. I think students pick up on whether you're sincere, both in your feedback—if you say, 'Good job.' And it's lousy. You know, they know that."
>
> **Enthusiasm** (in B, presented sincerely for students): "But I've also told them from the very first class that I love—I love this class. I love teaching this class. I love teaching. But, you know, I could say that about all the courses I teach. Well—maybe not 50, but, you know—I do love most of the classes I teach. And I don't teach 50 very often. I'm grateful."

In B's personal teaching dictionary, being natural and honest is crucial for effective teaching—partly because students are so *adept* at sensing when a person is not being genuine, in their critical feedback or their self-expression—and so, when she describes how her teacherly enthusiasm works to stimulate the class environment, she closes that explanation by recounting how she expresses to students her love for that course, and then expresses to me the genuineness of that internal gratitude for her work as a writing teacher (except, maybe not Writing 50).

**A Unified Statement of Ideas-for-Principled-Practice**

So again here, as with V in the previous section, B's expert understandings of teaching show a cohesive unity and a principled organization. Many of her ideas and their interconnections are borderline tacit (clearly perceived but never definitively stated). Furthermore, as the word-web helps to make visible, these interwoven definitions are complex in ways that would make a linear listing of her concepts and their practical translations misleading; placing a Top and Bottom on that fluent whole, where in truth her "Primary" principle shifts in priority depending on the scenario, the individual, and the moment:

> "I try to do a lot of modeling" and yet "I'm conscious of my position not
> being just one of the students"; "I prefer sometimes with questions, to have us
> construct knowledge together" but still "I do think they oughta know when
> it's working, when it's not"; "I go in with a plan … but sometimes I don't
> follow it. I'm reading the class"; "It can happen a lot of ways" and "I can
> think of a lot of different instances where I do it differently."

Nonetheless, B's ideas—in her personal dictionary about teaching—are *ordered*, through a hierarchy of educational values (what a learning environment should be: e.g., honest, contextually aware, personally respectful, reassuring, supportive, research-informed, open-ended, a collaborative community), and are *organized for use*, grounded in familiar scenarios and key turning-points of the educational exchange (patterns that can be recognized and responded to quickly, in a moment of teaching). By rooting these values-based ideas in those resonant patterns of experience, B provides a glimpse of where her "should be" statements rise to primacy, when deciding her actions as a teacher: Discussion and Enthusiasm on day 1, Modeling and In-Class Correction as the class begins to cohere, Peer Relationships and

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Organized Improvisation—with a little bit of requested Basics and Friendship—as the course dialog matures.

With that principled framework in mind, we now have a touchstone for examining the social-emotional foundations and the academic-intellectual progress of B's upper-division university writing course: how she connects with her students (as a person) within a shared learning environment, and how she then leads and facilitates students' educational progress (in writing) through that environment.

## B, as a Learning Environment: Social Foundations of the Educational Exchange

The regular verbal feedback that B elicited from her students in the classroom gave me a more clear and explicit sense of their educational exchange, from the beginning of my observations, than I had found with V and his students. The details that caught my ear and eye were individualizing moments where she addressed students by name, or walked over to them during work sessions, offering specific advice or reassurance about their unique projects; asides where she would take on the students' perspective in order to allay their potential worries about their own writing progress or their doubts about the purpose of activities themselves; dedicated time that she set aside between activities for students to share their experiences and ask questions. The course seemed quite obviously "successful," to my observer-eyes, by measure of students' busily writing pens and participating voices, and B's unfaltering readiness to describe (almost presciently) what students would be experiencing in their writing process and to answer knowledgeably whatever questions they raised along that well-orchestrated path.

But understanding operationally *how* those educational dialogs played out so cleanly in B's classroom, and what that meant to the students as a learning experience, required that I

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explore more deeply my classroom notes and teacher / student interviews about those observable exchanges. With B's stated intentions as an educator in my mind, from our interview, I could see more readily in my notes about classroom dialogs the reliable patterns related to those intentions: B's repeated use of inclusive community language, her elicitation and discussion of student examples, and her explicit justification of each course activity's educational purpose and process, with room for students to voice their own feelings about those activities. Likewise, with students' stated course experiences in my mind, from our reflective interviews looking over their writing from the term, I found myself seeing with more informed eyes how B's work beyond the classroom was contributing to the synchrony of dialog within the classroom, and vice versa: how her private meetings with students early on encouraged their confidence as they began their projects, how her written comments on individual papers and her general guidance in revision workshops combined to give students a sense of definite steps toward improving their own papers independently, and how B's gentle and knowledgeable manner made her direct feedback to students feel non-intimidating and her sometimes-strange writing/revising activities feel worth trying out.

In looking at B's course through the lens of what she intended to do for her students as an educator, and what her students described being done for them educationally, I could see in clearer detail how the structure and manner of B's course reflect its pragmatic core aims (described above) as a learning experience: sustainable, reliable, and meaningful for her; enjoyable, memorable, and useful for her students.

Whereas my notes for V's course are littered with shorthand-symbols of dunce-caps and students' laughter, B's course is characterized by symbols of highlighter-pens and students' question-bubbles, reflecting a class where time and effort are consistently dedicated to students doing hands-on drafting, critical reading, and peer-supported revising activities

on their own writing. Alongside these activities for building personal autonomy and community support among student writers, B also sympathetically enacts students' questions and concerns from the past and present, and shares their writing, as a validating foundation for offering them general principles, targeted guidance, and personal reassurance in their writing.

Of course, to combat the limits of her own time and energy—in a quarter with only 10 weeks and fifty writing students under her wing—she does compromise on her ideals: meeting with students in pairs to save time, having only one meeting during the term, cutting down on lessons about writing style and social science data-analysis. But she also plans shrewdly, to maximize the educational value of these rushed and limited exchanges: having students write at the tops of their papers what they would like her to pay specific attention to, having them come prepared with questions since she can't read all their full drafts before a meeting, and asking then at the term's end what worked best and how they might change the course to serve their learning better, as they familiarize themselves with inhabiting the mindsets and practices and discourse communities of social science writers.

Below, I will draw on selections of data from surveys, interviews, classroom notes and video-recordings to highlight the defining details of B's progressive educational dialog with her students in this writing course: their views of one another personally and scholastically, their motives in the course, and their pragmatic arc toward a more synchronous dialog together in pursuing those aims.

**The Personal (intersubjective): Who "We" are in this Dialog**

When looking at the social-emotional dynamics among B and her students, it is useful to keep in mind the way that she describes her teaching style – an intentional manner that is distinct from the other teachers in this study. Like V, she pursues open and

comfortable communication with her students, with the educational goals of building their confidence in academic writing and also enjoying the rewards of writing well about something they care about. But B's approach for fostering that interpersonal relationship with students is distinct: rather than using humor and radical front-end encouragement, she adopts a "gentler presence" marked by overt empathy and reassurance, seeking to understand students individually on a personal level and to provide them with the specific guidance that they ask for and will appreciate, based on their active feedback.

In our interview (see previous sections), B describes herself as embodying a very gentle, attentive, and responsive personal presence with students. She describes supporting students on a personal as well as academic level, asking them about their experiences and understandings as the class progresses, and looking for opportunities to teach in response to students' expressed needs and curiosities. She also emphasizes her intent to bring students' voices into her decision-making about the class, connecting with them through mid-term evaluations and explicitly bringing up those perspectives as she fine-tunes the course with their feedback. So this is the image she describes for herself: a person who values her students' broader lives and motives as individuals, who validates their viewpoints and experiences as fundamental to the way she constructs, teaches, and justifies her class with them.

Knowing how B intends to think about and interact with her students, as a relational foundation for her ideal educational exchanges with them, then helps in making pragmatic sense of her apparent attitudes and manner toward her students—and consequently their experience and interpretation of her presence as a classroom leader.

For example, when I ask B to place her students on a Performance/Attachment Grid—from "problematic" to "high" in their academic performance, and from "challenging"

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to "aligning" on their social orientation toward B's course ideas and aims—she interacts with the exercise in a manner distinct from V and M; a manner that seems to reflect her distinct beliefs about how best to relate with and educate her students. Whereas V places all his students as High and Medium performing (resistant to judging them), and distributes them pretty evenly between socially aligning and neutral (with two challengers), B has a more evenly distributed view of her students' performance (based on specific issues she remembers in their writing), and a more intimate view of their relation with the class. Performance-wise, for this class, she sees her students as falling into somewhat a bell-curve, with seven in the medium performance range and four in both the high and the problematic range. Socially, she places all but five students in the socially aligning category, or along the soft border between aligning and neutral.

B's move of placing students along boundary-lines on the grid I provided is unique to her response for this student-grid activity. Both M and V "play within the lines" when placing students, and so change their minds about where individuals students should go (V six times, M once). B's response to this same impulse, however, is to blur those lines into a spectrum, and place students exactly where she sees them, rather than forcing them into a pre-defined box. This approach falls in line with her view of pre-defined boundaries in general: that they are confining and stifling for individuals, and that she prefers to allow some level of creative leeway in the learning environments she structures. The way she places students socially, with most aligning with the course to a greater-or-lesser degree, also falls in line with her stated vision of the educational environment: as a culture, a community, where she works to form genuine human connections with her students and model respectful understanding among them. Only one student is a hard exception to this: the "unhappy camper" philosophy student who she has mentioned several times in the interview as one

who struggles to adjust to the academic mindset of a social scientist for the purposes of this course.

Nonetheless, B places this contentious student relatively high (fourth in the class) on the performance scale, recognizing his promise as a writer despite his resistance to the course protocols. This is a student whom M had flatly refused to allow into his course, and whom another writing teacher had essentially guaranteed a failing grade to if he added—yet B sat him down and talked him through the social contract of her course, then allowed him in. Furthermore, when I ask her to recommend students for my interviews, she suggests him, along with two high-performance females (one neutral and one aligning) and a medium-performing socially neutral male, to give a representative span of perspectives on the course. So this student, and this grid, provide an excellent example of B's nurturing and inclusive view of the classroom, evident in her attitude toward the course group: students who have difficulty with their writing in B's class can still find a place there as actively connected community members (B regards 3 of 5 of her problematic performers as aligning), and conversely, a student who resists the classroom community can still be encouraged as a promising writer and left an open invitation to join in.

When I ask B about the ethos she wants to project, as a person, with her students in the classroom, she—like V—states a clear awareness of the distance that seems to form socially between students and teachers in this large university environment, and a strong desire to break down that barrier and form a learning-centered community, where they see her as a fellow writer and learner with them:

> [I intend students to see me as] knowledgeable, caring, kind, insightful, communicative, interested, sincere. Honest. A real person; not just an icon of a teacher. …

[When I was working in a small, residential college] I would have students

over for dinner; I'd have whole classes over for dinner. We'd sit in my living

room and do writing critiques. It was much more interactive. [But when I

came here, I realized that] these kids are socialized to see the teacher as

distant. They're in a Lecture Hall and the teacher's up there on the stage.

They don't relate to that person. And so I inherit the residue of that distance;

that gulf.

And I think all writing teachers have to work hard to break that *down*. If

we're gonna try and create a community of writers, you can't have that

"Teacher" – whatever that means – in a distant sense. You know, I'm a

writer: I'm a *writer*, helping them and learning with them.

She is careful, however, not to presume her success in this self-presentation, and relies on

the students own voices directly for understanding their perspective of her relationship with

them. So when I ask how she thinks the students see her, she cites their anonymous course

evaluations in paraphrase, describing her approachable, caring, knowledgeable and prepared

persona:

Judging from what they write on my evaluations, that's what I would have to

go on … Helpful, knowledgable. Not intimidating. "Cares. She really wants

us to do well – she really wants us to learn." Those are some of the things that

come up over and over again. "She really knows what she's doing." Those

sorts of things.

Students' responses on mid-term surveys (Table 6.1) and in course-end interviews about the

classroom experience, then, corroborate this intersubjective reality. The survey responses

below show strongest explicit consensus around B's respect for students' opinions and desire

for their input, her liking of and trust in them as people, her interest in their ideas and belief

in their abilities as writers.

Table 6.1
*Student mid-term survey responses, "What the teacher thinks of you." Ordered by consensus, high to low.*

| | |
|---|---|
| The teacher disapproves of my opinions. | (7/7 = False) |
| The teacher dislikes me. | (6/8 = False, 2/8 = neutral) |
| The teacher is uninterested in my ideas. | (4/5 = False, 1/5 neutral) |
| | |
| The teacher believes in my abilities. | (2/3 = True, 1/3 = neutral) |
| The teacher feels that my input enriches the class. | (3/5 = neutral, 2/5 = True) |
| The teacher trusts me. | (3/5 = neutral, 2/5 = True) |
| The teacher does not really notice/interact me. | (3/5 = neutral, 2/5 = False) |
| | |
| The teacher wants to be my friend. | (4/7 = neutral, 3/7 = True) |
| The teacher respects my opinions. | (2/4 = neutral, 2/4 = True) |
| The teacher wants to hear what I have to say. | (2/4 = neutral, 2/4 = True) |
| The teacher does not think my writing will improve. | (3/6 = neutral, 3/6 = False) |
| The teacher is not impressed with my effort. | (3/6 = False, 2/6 = neutral, 1/6 = True) |

Students' reflective statements during individual interviews at the term's end also

reflect this sentiment. In those interviews, looking over B's comments and their work from

the term, all four students who talked with me describe her as a uniquely[23] "approachable"

and "friendly" teacher, mention her "caring" about them and their peers, and in various ways

tell about her supportive and personally affirming style of educational leadership in the

classroom. Simon deems her approach with students "very fair the whole time, and even

very forgiving, … if you went in and talked to her, about anything, she was more than

willing to help you." Betty Boop cites this kind and inviting personal manner as what makes

her feel comfortable as a student going in to talk with B about the class.

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23   (i.e., "definitely" "absolutely" or "one of the most")

Furthermore, both Johnny and Simon allude to the way B's reliably positive support influences the way they interpret her written comments on their papers. When Johnny writes a somewhat foolhardy organizational plan for using his literature review in his final paper, B teases him about it in her comments, warning him in a playful way that relies on their trusting rapport together—and it works; he takes it very positively: "she said, 'Well that's a little cocky, blah-blah-blah" [laughs] it was funny." In Simon's case, I notice a similarly forward comment ("You have one more chance to get this correct!") on his literature review, and point out to him that there are lots of ways a student might read that tone, depending on the teacher. In reply, he explains that B is so convincingly on their side as students, that— like Simon—he sees the comment as funny, and the possibility of an aggressive interpretation doesn't even cross his mind:

> Just from knowing her. I guess if it was another teacher it would be different.
> But she's very friendly and approachable. And you can definitely tell she's not
> out to get anyone. So, I wasn't worried about that [comment], I guess. It *was*
> funny. … I definitely would have thought [of her saying it with a] smile on
> the face.

Avay describes the cumulative effects of B's positive and encouraging interpersonal style on both the classroom group's social energy, and her own individual sense of self-efficacy as a writer within that learning environment. Avay has had B for three writing courses at this point, seeking her out twice more after the experience she had in Writing 1. She re-tells her experience as a learner who entered into B's class feeling "dumb" about her writing and extremely uncomfortable with sharing her words publicly, but who finds confidence is her own ability and comfort with sharing because of B's consistent individualized reassurance,

and the persuasively encouraging social atmosphere that creates for all the students when they join together:

> She didn't tell me I'm a bad writer, even though I *felt* like a bad writer? Every time I went in her class, I felt like I was a good writer. … And before, I would *hate* people reading my papers, or even reading lines out of my papers out loud, because I felt *so* stupid. But after a while [in B's class] I got used to it, because I felt like everyone in the class was the same level, and she made it so comfortable that I was able to express myself more easily than I would have in any other class.

Avay says that B's courses helped her develop as a writer, but attributes her inner courage now in that writing mainly to B herself, as a person: a teacher whose patience, kindness, and willingness to understand students as individuals makes her words of reassurance convincing and emotionally resonant. When I mention that I saw Avay giving B a hug on the last day of class, Avay explains the meaning in that moment by drawing a direct correlation between B's personal connection with students and B's effectiveness as a writing teacher; between her individualized attention and the lasting educational impact of her message to student writers in her classroom:

> That's one reason I recommend her so much: she very much gets to you one-on-one. If you really want to get something out of her class, you will. And as a person, too, she's a really nice person. And I think she's taken the time to give me that confidence to, "You're not as bad as you think you are. You're not bad; it just takes time. You can't compare yourself to every person next to you."

These detailed individual-level insights help to make sense of general trends in students' responses to the the mid-quarter surveys, where they assess the experience of learning with B as a leader in an educational environment.

Regarding B's character, her beliefs and values in and beyond the class, students reported sensing most notably her supportive and professional demeanor, driven by "high moral fiber [that] values sensitivity and respectfulness" and a "nurturing nature [that made her feel] approachable, and like someone who wanted her students to succeed." They reported perceiving these attributes through her clothing (an unassumingly "plain," "conservative," and "put-together" overall appearance), her polite language and "gentle tone of voice," her "calm and collected" gestures and movements in class, her "strict but still patient" facial expressions during office hours, and her discussion both of her children (making her seem like "a loving parent") and of her academic conference experiences (making her seem "smart and experienced").

Regarding her personality, students likewise describe a supportive (nice{2}, kind{2}, nurturing, warm, caring) and gentle (calm{3}, quiet, approachable) presence that would nurture group engagement (positive, respectful, energetic) and encourage academic growth (intelligent, interested). They describe her teaching style, also, as a seeming extension of this gentleness (laid back, calm, relat[able]), community orientation (elementary school, varied in activities, interactive, collective), moral fortitude (trustworthy, direct, straightforward, clear), and  professionalism (hardworking, informative, organized, structured, useful, boring).

This overall personable, prepared, and positively guiding social presence that B exudes with students, then, helps in explaining how students describe the feeling of interacting with her during the course. A few students seem to find B's professionalism and

directness a little intimidating, and so report feeing some anxiety when talking with her ("a little intimidating," "racing thoughts, excited, nervous," "that I'm lazy"), but all the rest characterize their interactions with her largely as a pleasant (relaxed, comfortable{2}, approachable), efficient (easy{2}, quick, correct), and positively influential exchange (engaging, empowering, constructive). Metaphorically, the animals to which students compare M seem to highlight these essential aspects of her presence: her gentle energy (mouse, lemur), her knowing and ready insight (an owl, a giraffe{2}), and her nurturing support as a leader (a mother hen).

Ultimately, the students all had unique experiences of B's course: whether they interpreted B's professionalism and organization as conservative and a little intimidating or laid back and respectful, her organized readiness as boring or engaging. But underneath this span of perspectives, all the students interviewed and surveyed seem to agree largely about the caring, helpful, invested, and supportive personal manner of B's teaching approach, and about the warm, comfortable, encouraging, and inclusive community learning environment that emerges around that style of classroom leadership.

**The Practical (learning-centered): How "We" are Connecting with Content in this Dialog**

As personal and nurturing as B's manner is—and as enjoyable and rewarding as that is in its own right—both B and her students express a clear understanding that her driving purpose is educational: she is fostering this supportive and inclusive social-emotional environment in the classroom as a foundation for persuading students to be more accepting and confident about their own thinking and writing processes, to feel more familiar and competent in contributing to scholarly conversations, and to find for themselves among the various drafting and revising techniques a few methods that work for them personally—so

that they can compose and edit their work independently, with a better sense of their organizational strategy and a more detailed awareness of their writing style.

In the space of the classroom, B explicitly and continuously lays out her reasoning as she leads course learning activities, describing the purpose of each and how they link to prior and upcoming activities to support the ultimate aims of the course: facilitating students' process of drafting, researching, writing, and revising in the mindset of a social scientist. Whereas V tends to communicate his motives and intentions in a characteristically more informal way during educational dialogs with his students, B communicates her practical approach in a way that reflects her own personal beliefs and character. She shows herself (through stories and explanations) to be a participating member in a scholarly community of writer/educators. Likewise, she establishes with her students in the classroom (through activities and reflections) a learning community informed and empowered by—even potentially contributing to—such scholarly discourse communities. And ultimately, she uses this cycle of open and critical dialog to guide students through the stages of writing with and for a community, making their own decisions about what works for them and what they need to improve, and so owning with authority and confidence their voice (from process to end-product) in those research papers.

So B's focus in course exchanges with students is not to be a mother-figure, nor a deferential servant of their whims; not to be unconditionally nurturing, nor indulgently attentive. Her practical goal is to use these interpersonal elements (calm caring, gentle kindness, attentive listening, supportive responding) to empower students in their writing and their view of themselves as writers. B's students clearly receive this message, as evident when they reflect on the course and respond to the survey: they recognize what B wants from them as writers, and how she has organized the course to move them progressively toward

those end goals. This understanding, consequently, shapes their expectations of her and their efforts in the course: what they trust her to do and rely on her to give, and so what they produce independently when preparing for each coming day, and how they imaginatively project she will respond to and use their offerings—classwork, independent writing, their perspectives and honest feedback—to further this course, as well as B's future writing courses.

When I ask B about the way students generally respond to her teaching style, she describes their learning experience as one of productive discomfort and insecurity: struggling as they move from the relative comfort of writing for teachers who tell them exactly what to do, to writing for a teacher who *wants* them to wrestle on their own with the complexity and ambiguity of composing thoughts into language for an audience—making their *own* decisions about what topic to write on, how to organize their ideas and evidence together, and how to present each point clearly. Within that discomfort that all of her students wrestle with (and that, again, she *wants* them to encounter and to learn through), B describes two archetypal ways that students respond. Some of her students respond by resisting this unfamiliar autonomy in the face of complex choices, and blame B personally for not providing them with clear right-or-wrong steps to follow, which is the path they know and have succeeded on previously in writing for teachers:

Occasionally I'll get a student who … [has] figured out how to write, the way a teacher told them to write. And they achieved some measure of success with that. And so when they get to *my* class, and I'm saying, "That's fine. But there are these other ways. And I'm not gonna critique your writing and tell you how to correct it; we're gonna deconstruct your writing in class. And we're gonna use markers and—" … It disrupts their sense of "Wait! I'm secure with

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this one way!" [So they react as if] "You're complicating this. And I don't

like that. And it must be your fault, because I'm uncomfortable."

Students who want to see it one way, and don't like the complexity, I think,

probably would have a harder time with me. Because I'm all about not

reducing things to simplistic terms, but to embrace that complexity … And I

sometimes create situations where there is ambiguity, because I think that's a

prime moment of learning … That's why I don't choose an area for them to

choose there topics in: I want them to grapple with what it feels like to be

choosing something when it could be anything. "Ah! That's uncomfortable."

But I want them to work through that, because I think it's a prime moment for

learning.

[So] those students who want it really much more prescriptive, and much

more, "Tell me how to do this, and I'll do it," are less comfortable with me.

Because of this impulse in students to resist once they've done well with prescribed writing

approaches in school, B explains that the students who do best in her classes are those who

did not enjoy or understand or succeed in those controlled, reductive writing situations.

Students who feel disappointed with more limited and limiting approaches, B explains, seem

more willing to let go the monolithic notion of being perfect writers (of doing their papers

the prescribed "right" way) and to give B's generative, critical thinking-and-writing methods

a chance. Such students also seem to prefer the creativity and self-discovery of writing in

this way, once they try it, and to do well in B's courses. She asserts that most of her students,

over the years, have fallen into this latter category.

[Students who get the most out of my classes are] the ones who are willing to

take a leap of faith and try first-order writing. They're the ones who are

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willing to try something. Or ones that didn't relate to that prescriptive thing

… [who thought] "That writing was boring. Writing didn't matter. Writing

was paint-by-numbers. Why do you want to care about that?"

But then they get to [my class], and … I'm having them write to discover

what they think. And it breaks them out of that perfectionist thing, out of

thinking that there's one right way to do it. And suddenly, "This is writing?

Huh! Who knew? This I could do. This I like." Those are the students, who

do well. Those are the ones who get excited. And, fortunately for me, that's

most of them.

When students describe how B applies her personal manner to the practical aims of the

writing course, their course-end reflections clarify how B's teaching approach actively works

to guide students away from any impulse to resist the discomfort, and helps them navigate

the process of developing and organizing their own ideas, research, and voice in writing.

Namely, their comments on practical details of her educational exchange with them point to

(1) her dedicated focus on providing students with individualized feedback (which helps

them to self-direct with more confidence when dealing with the ambiguities of writing and

revision); (2) her refined approach for breaking down and spreading out the stages of writing

a research paper though a series of progressive lessons and activities that build on one

another to form the students' final paper (which helps them to navigate the complexity of

brainstorming, literature reviewing, surveying, data analyzing, organizing and revising their

research paper in an orderly, productive way).

The first distinguishing pattern I noticed, in looking over student reflections from B's

course, was  the language they used to discuss their own writing an revising. Students Avay

and Simon both used terms like "wrong" and "fix" when discussing their paper drafts and

revisions (e.g., "[B's] comments were good. And she definitely pointed out things that were wrong, and majorly wrong, so that you could go back and fix them"). Judgmental terms like this are conspicuously absent in V's students' reflections—a detail which lines up with his style of course dialog, intended to make writing feel enjoyable rather than punishing for students—but despite B's students using such critical descriptors about their own writing, their describe the process of revising their papers in dialog with B as positive and affirming. Student Betty's reflection helps to clarify how B manages to do "a good job of pointing out the things that each person was doing wrong" (Simon) while still building their confidence as writers:

> A lot of teachers just say "Edit your paper and proofread it," and you have no idea *how* to edit it. Because when you read it, obviously you read it and it was *fine*. That's why you turned it in the way it was. So when she goes through, and gives you six or seven elements to make sure you have? You become aware of what you actually, objectively, need to look for and make sure is okay. … like, "This is missing, this is not; this is too much, this is too little."

So B's guidelines help to build students' autonomous awareness as writers: by pointing out relevant principles where she sees students needing to attend, she helps them to see more specifically, for themselves, the elements that will make their writing clear, coherent, and persuasive to their audience. Whereas point-by-point corrections would train focus on the presence of errors, B's workshop guidelines and personalized feedback focus on empowering students to look, see, consider, and decide for themselves what needs to change to improve their writing. As student John notes, her comments accomplish this in a respectful and assuring way—by asking and pointing, not telling—and the distance she leaves between paper deadlines allows them the time to actually do that reflecting and revising.

A second related theme, distinguishing B's students' reflections about the writing course, is the way students describe her aforementioned feedback and guidance on their writing: They all emphasize commonly that her comments are personalized (aware of their individual interests, progress) and specific (addressing their current needs in constructive ways), and how much they appreciate that effort on both an interpersonal and academic level. Avay and Simon both interpret these aware and focused comments as a sign of B's care and willingness to help. Regarding that willingness, Betty points out the many opportunities for feedback that B provides her students: in office hours (where B talks in groups with students), on papers (where B invites students to write specific questions or problem areas that she can then address), and in class (where B's whole-class workshop discussions give students a clear sense of what she values as an expert reader, as they look back over their own papers). Betty used these opportunities multiple times during the term, and all four students describe these one-on-one discussions as building  their sense of clarity and confidence about their work. John describes in specific detail the gentle, empowering manner of B's individual comments: the way that she uses questions and suggestions (rather than corrections and demands) to guide a writer's attention and expand their awareness as they read through their paper, leaving them in control of reflecting and deciding for themselves what to change. He points out that she uses this approach effectively not only in her individual comments, but also in her synthetic guiding comments for the whole class about their writings:

> See all of these marks [on my draft]? All of these marks that *I* wrote on here
> were not written on here until I got to class, [where] she would have us
> underline stuff and then force us to ask *questions*. And I could discover
> corrections that I need to make, just based on what she was *saying* in the

class, and it lead me to discover things that needed to be changed, that were

more concept-oriented rather than grammar-oriented. …

In those cognitive revision workshops, she would literally just ask questions

[like] 'Does your paper do *this*? Does your paper do *that*?' And through

asking us, and forcing us to look at it, we're proofreading our own paper. She

doesn't have to read *all* these drafts herself, *and* if you're paying attention, you

get the benefit. If you're not, you don't. So it's different than if a teacher just

grades a draft; you have to take some action, to participate. Rather than just a

teacher reading a draft, and giving it back to you."

So B delivers guidelines and feedback in a dialogic way, by stepping into students writers'

perspectives at each stage of their project and helping them to look at their own work with

more expertly attuned eyes as it develops. As John describes, this not only saves her the time

and energy that other teachers spend micro-managing students' revisions, but also affords

him as a learner the opportunity to *participate* with her in assessing his writing: both sides

listening and asking each other questions, so that he can figure out how look at his own work

using her more experienced critical approach to seeing writing. Additionally, all four

students interviewed assert that B's patient and assuring (social-emotional) manner in

delivering her specific and helpful (academic) guidance, builds their confidence in writing—

as did V's enthusiastic encouragement draws out students' comfort and enjoyment in

writing—in each case, achieving some synchrony between the teacher's educational intention

and the students' learning experience.

A third related pattern that distinguishes B's students' reflections on the writing

course, as opposed to V's or M's students, is their immediate ability to state specific areas of

their writing style that they want to improve. Because all of the students mention how

personally useful B's activities and comments are, I asked each of them what areas of their writing the course had helped them to work on (to see how specific and individualized these interactions actually are). In Avay's case, her dialog with B helped her to attend to her ongoing battle with comma-splices, to work on her clarity ("getting across my point … I've gotten better at atomizing data, but it's still really hard for me to be clear in my writing"), and to improve her self-concept as a writer. For Simon, metacognitive reflection workshops and peer reviews helped him to home in on his overzealous repetition of certain words, and to practice finding areas to down his run-on sentences and lengthy writing:

> I sometimes write the same word a lot, if I think it's a good word. And I need
>
> to work on being concise. My final paper was 21 pages, just to get all my
>
> stuff in there, and then had to cut 6 pages. So that was difficult. But I
>
> probably do write things I don't need, so it was good to go back … get it all
>
> cut-down and clear, because I do think that's better writing.

In Betty's case, B's general advice and workshops gave her a more specific vision of what elements make her writing more "legitimate," and so a more "objective" internal checklist of what to include, and where to add or cut (as opposed to more vaguely skimming her paper for a subjective sense of whether it seems "good enough"). For John, the set series of due-dates, along with B's comments and in-class discussions about those progressively arranged assignments, helped him to narrow down his topic-focus. Additionally, the final written metacognitive reflection, at the end of the paper, helped John to see how that process of organized steps and proofreading helped him to develop that focus in his paper.

So B organizes course activities for students in a way that supports her unique educational dialog with the students: providing them with time to think and explore openly in the way that she describes, methods and technologies for searching literature and

conducting research with the social scientist's mindset that she coaches them in, incentives and tools for seeing their own writing's structure through the expert principles that she explains, opportunities to be a supportive discourse community for one another in the way that she models, and direct personalized encouragement to asking themselves questions and to make reflective decisions about their writing with the confidence that she is talking them toward.

These student descriptions of B's caring and responsive manner with writers, and of how integral that manner is to her organized and empowering course structure, helps in making sense of the midterm survey feedback students give about B's delivery as an educational leader (Table 6.2) and about the course itself (Table 6.3). In both B's and V's classrooms, students wrestle with feelings of discomfort and uncertainty regarding the freedom and control these teachers give them in their writing: what to write about, how they're going to get to create a unified paper from their jumble of ideas. However, whereas V generally renounces these concerns through a tone of "Don't take this so seriously" and a handful of examples for inspiration, B prefers almost to celebrate this discomfort as a natural part of the writing process: she acknowledges, describes, and validates those feelings with a reassuring and knowledgeable "This might feel uncomfortable – and that's okay, that's normal" tone, and asks students to trust her that their work will come together, as they wrestle through the uncertain early stages with her unfamiliar thinking and drafting and reflecting exercises.

So it makes sense that, at the mid-term stage, students agree most clearly (Table 6.2) that her delivery style acknowledges the usefulness of various ideas and methods, demonstrates that she knows her subject well, and communicates in a way that is understandable to them. Yet, at this midway point (as she expects them to do, from past

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experience), the students do not yet fully agree about whether she is connecting activities

together well or whether she is explaining persuasively her reasons for conducting the class

as she does.

Table 6.2
*Student mid-term survey responses, "Teacher Delivery, on the Scale (1-5)."  Ordered by consensus, high to low.*

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1 = "very little" | 2= "little" | 3 = "somewhat" | 4 = "much" | 5 = "very much"

Acknowledges alternative ideas/methods.                          (5/8 = "4", 3/8 = "3")
Knows the subject well.                                          (5/8 = "5", 2/8 = "3", 1/8 = "1")
Communicates the subject so that I understand.                  (2/8 = "5", 5/8 = "4", 1/8 = "3")

Uses effective and appropriate language.                        (2/8 = "5", 4/8 = "4", 2/8 = "3")
Maintains awareness of the students throughout the class. (3/8 = "4", 4/8 = "3", 1/8 = "2")
Makes clear the purpose of the course.          (2/8 = "5", 4/8 = "4", 1/8 = "3", 1/8 = "1")
Enjoys the subject.                                             (4/8 = "5", 3/8 = "4", 1/8 = "3")
Fluidly orders and connects activities within each class.   (1/8 = "5", 3/8 = "4", 4/8 = "3")
Maintains, develops ideas/activities from one session to next.     (1/8 = "5", 3/8 = "4",
                                                                            4/8 = "3")

Uses stories (examples, personal anecdotes) constructively.    (2/8 = "5", 3/8 = "4",
                                                                            3/8 = "3")
Encourages the voicing of other positions in class.      (1/8 = "5", 3/8 = "4", 3/8 = "3",
                                                                            1/8 = "2")
Persuasively explains his/her own positions.           (3/8 = "4", 3/8 = "3", 1/8 = "1",
                                                                            1/8 = "1")

</div>

As Simon, Betty, and John point out (all taking B's course for the first time), the

mindset and approach to writing that B is asking them to try out is unfamiliar in the

university setting: some combination of too-basic (with colored markers, drawing, free-

writing, and grammar exercises) and too-challenging (with research literature reviews,

survey writing, data analysis, and metacognitive reflections). This may be why there is a

notable lack of consensus about her encouraging the "voicing of other positions" in class –

because while she continuously seeks out and validates students' honest feedback about their

618

learning experience, she nonetheless holds firm to her plans and understandings in these beginning and middle stages.

Each of them points out, however, that by the end of the course they understood and appreciated the way she organizes the stages of the writing process for them and attentively helps them through those stages. Simon says that having a free choice of topic for his paper was "a little intimidating" at the beginning, but that B personally helped them pick topics, and gave them a couple of chapters in the reading about how to pick a topic they like and turn it into something they could study. Likewise, Betty says that she wasn't into B's course at the beginning, but got more into it as she saw how it progressed, with writing assignments that were "very clear, very well-organized, and again progressive because they helped me with the final paper; because there were steps to it, instead of just: 15-page paper." And while John still thought, by the end, that doing first-order thinking activities or drawing a physical picture of an outline was "kind of a waste-of-time," he felt that writing at the end of the course about what he'd revised to bring his paper together and make the final product was "very helpful." Avay, who had already experienced B's style of teaching, knew what it would be like from the beginning, and so enjoyed and appreciated the entire arc of the course, including the messiness and uncertainty of the middle stages.

Students' mid-term feedback regarding the course itself (Table 6.3) again seem to reflect quite clearly the arc of that learning experience that B is working to guide her students through: something messy and rewarding, confusing but interesting, challenging but ultimately genuinely productive and even fun. By the middle of the course, students' assessments of their learning experience with B are rife with ambivalences that someone unfamiliar with B's goals and approach might regard as negative, but which actually seem to reflect the kind of "wrestling through discomfort" that she wants them to learn and grow

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through. They regard the course as challenging, but also quite flexible and conversational; some see the work as highly boring, but about the same are regarding it as markedly interesting; a few students struggle to see the structure or the use of the course, but more are beginning to recognize how clearly B organizes her activities and how valuable this approach might actually be.

Table 6.3
*Student mid-term survey responses, "This Class, on the Scale (1-5)." Ordered by consensus, high to low.*

1 = "low" | 2= "below average" | 3 = "average" | 4 = "above average" | 5 = "high"

Offensive?         (1/8 = "2", 7/8 = "1")
Entertaining?      (2/8 = "3", 5/8 = "2", 1/8 = "1")

Challenging?        (2/8 = "4", 4/8 = "3", 2/8 = "2")
Flexible?           (2/8 = "4", 4/8= "3", 2/8 = "2")
Conversational?     (2/8 = "4", 4/8 = "3", 2/8 = "1")
Confusing?          (1/8 = "4", 3/8 = "3", 4/8 = "2")

Relevant / Useful?   (1/8 = "5", 4/8 = "4", 2/8 = "3", 1/8 = "1")
Interactive?         (1/8 = "5", 4/8 = "4", 1/8 = "3", 1/8 = "2", 1/8 = "1")

Clearly Structured?   (2/8 = "5", 3/8 = "4", 2/8 = "3", 1/8 = "1")
Boring?               (2/8 = "5", 3/8 = "4", 2/8 = "3", 1/8 = "2")
Interesting?          (2/8 = "4", 3/8 = "3", 1/8 = "2", 2/8 = "1")
Intimidating?         (2/8 = "4", 1/8 = "3", 3/8 = "2", 2/8 = "1")

By the end, the students interviewed all report having a definite understanding of B's goals for them as writers: to recognize that everyone writes as an individual, to see those aspects of their own writing that they can improve, and to work on those so that they feel more satisfied and confident with the writing they do. Furthermore, they point out that the aforementioned way B structures their writing activities provides them with a memorable experience of how much easier the process of writing—and how much better the ultimate written product—can be when they address the stages of that complex task in an organized

progressive fashion. As John says, even if he forgets many of the steps and strategies that B helped them through, he intends to hold on to his paper from B's class as a model, and come up with his own personal version of B's composing process:

> To be honest, I feel like a lot of [what B coached us through] might get lost after this quarter. But during the quarter, it was very helpful. If I ever write another unique research project, I'll definitely *reference* this one, and look at what I did and how I did it. I definitely would not repeat some of the same steps, but I would outline specific parts, and do it the same way she taught the class."

In a way, this is exactly the kind of educational outcome that B describes wanting for her students. She recognizes that they have larger lives and concerns, that not every strategy or tool she shares with them will work for them or suit their purposes, and that—like plants in a garden—the lessons and principles and experiences that she lays down for them (active verbs, clear and concise organization, metacognitive awareness of their own composition process) may not show visibly until well after her course is done. She has structured her course and refined her manner of talking with students in a way that serves these goals of slow but deep impact. And by course's end, her students show both subtle and clear signs of being in synchrony with B's educational aims: understanding consciously what she has intended to do with and for them, and personally integrating some of those core lessons into their own attitudes, understandings, and practices as writers.

As mentioned before, Simon comes to trust in B's steadfast support of her students, and so perceives that "friendly and approachable" manner even in pressing written comments like "You have one more chance to get this correct!", which he interprets as funny, and as being said with a smile. Also, his conversations with her in office hours give

him a confident sense of being on-track with his paper, so that despite the troubles he'd had with run-on sentences and conciseness, he seems comfortably sure that he will earn an A even before he receives his final grade. Likewise, Betty reports having confidence about the quality of her paper, and a clear sense of what B wants from students' papers in general, based on conversations with B that were encouraging and showed Betty that B really noticed understood her work ("she told me that she really liked my topic, … was attentive to all the corrections that I made, and gave me a very good grade on that paper, for being aware of what she was asking"). Betty even gets invested enough in taking on the sociologist's mindset that she critiques the writing-course add-ons that B makes a part of the final assignment, even though she understands B's educational purpose in including them:

> The cover letter that we had to put at the beginning of the folder was difficult, too. I can see why she would ask for it, but I felt like it "de-mature-ized" too, like it took away from the legitimacy of our papers. Like, trying to write like a sociologist: they *never* put that in their articles; there's no letter when you're looking at their stuff.

John also critiques parts of this course in language that implies he has listened to B justifying her educational approach (i.e., 'try out this buffet of strategies; use what you like') and has attuned his attitude toward her assignments accordingly: "I thought that was kind of a waste of time. But that might just be the way that I learn. You know? Some people learn differently." As quoted above, he also states explicitly that he genuinely sees value in B's approach organized, progressive approach to writing a research paper, and intends to adjust and personalize that method for himself in the future beyond this class.

Meanwhile Avay, who never felt she was a strong writer and has worked on her writing abilities with B in several courses now, expresses a less academically but more

personally profound impact that she carries with her beyond the course: a belief in her own writing ability and her capacity to improve as a writer, because "every time I went in her class, I felt like I was a good writer … she's taken the time to give me that confidence, to[say] 'You're not as bad as you think you are. You're not bad; it just takes time." After so many rounds of listening to and talking with B, Avay seems able to voice B's personalized comments about her papers and B's reassuring from the course almost verbatim, as she thinks aloud about her own writing:

> You need to express yourself more … add more [from] the author … say
>
> what *he* needs to say, [don't] take away your commentary …
>
> I have a different way of writing, a different way of thinking. And when you
>
> think, you write. So, I've learned from her that I can't be always comparing
>
> myself to the person next to me, because my writing is never gonna be the
>
> same as that person. It's gonna be unique. My writing is different than
>
> anybody else's. And it's *fine*.

These moments in the interviews point to the intentional and effective practical impact of B's personalized approach to educating students as academic writers.


**The Principled (goal-directed): Why "We" choose to Participate in this Dialog**

B's writing course, for her, is a pragmatic negotiation: an attempt to fit her ideal vision of an educational exchange with students into a less-than-ideal learning environment, with too little time to cover everything she wants to teach them (e.g., other style lessons) and knows they want to understand (e.g., research data analysis techniques), too many students to give them each the focus that she and they would both feel more comfortable with (e.g., a second one-on-one meeting about their papers), and too little feeling of community among

teachers and students in the larger university environment for her to nurture an intimate learning culture like she'd had at her previous college (e.g., having revision workshops in her home, around a table).

Nonetheless, these ideal visions have a clear and present influence on her actual course and her manner, as it plays out over the arc of the school term. Her experience-based understandings of what a writing classroom can (and should) look like, how it can (and should) feel as a learning experience for students, and how she as a teacher can (and should) work with students toward those educational goals are present in myriad details of her teaching: what lessons and activities she chooses to prioritize, how she involves students actively in informing such decisions about the course, how she adjusts her methods and her language to make sure that that which she feels is most important for students to hear and experience—conversations that build their informed understanding, technical self-awareness, and internal confidence about writing; those activities that make them part of a supportive learning community, owners of their own writing process, and genuine contributors to a larger academic discourse—gets to them, and roots in as deeply as it can.

It is important to recognize that B's action-guiding ideas, her unique principles about *right* ways for providing students what they desire and need as learners, are dialogically constructed. A blend of her students' voices and her own memories, distilled and organized into archetypal patterns and poignant moments, support B's idiosyncratically unified network of constantly refined notions about her teaching: that it is about character development, it is human and intimate, it is more about gentle persuasion than entertaining humor, it is communal and supportive, it is informed by scholarship and direct feedback, it is organic like planting a slow-growing seed, it is a brief part of students' much larger lives. B's own biographical learning experiences, and her sense of students' experiences, provide an

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emotionally-resonant and practically-justified warrant for these attitudes and related approaches, from her planned course structure to her responsive manner with students: they are shaped in service of students' apparent needs, reasoned by personal analogy, supported by interactive experience, and refined in dialog with each new group of writing students.

So, as was done with V, let us look at the principled stances that bring B as a teacher and her class as a student-group together into this personal, practical educational exchange. Explicitly recognizing a teacher's and their students' core motives and goals in the course provides an essential foundation for interpreting their pragmatic progress together in that course: from what positions (what needs, expectations, and hopes) they are negotiating toward a synchronous vision of the course aims, its day-to-day path, and its ultimate outcomes.

As described before, B sees her university teaching role as a passing moment of contact within students' larger trajectories of personal growth: more than teaching them technical skills of feeding them information, she is concerned with providing them a learning environment where they can explore and expand the way they think about and interact with their worlds. In this course, writing provides students that means for recognizing and developing their ways of thinking, and social science research provides the material opportunity for them to observe and participate in an alternate, academic mindset. But B's larger educational goals transcend the subject matter: she wants to open up students' minds, to kindle their curiosity and validate their intelligent creativity, making them more confident and active-minded participants in whatever communities they become part of. When I ask her specifically what her educational goal with students in this class looks like, what development she expects to see over the term in students' thinking and writing, her answer focuses directly on these ideas of contributing new perspectives and insights to a community

and, in the process, nurture their disposition to question what might be missing in a group's current ideas—and to seek information and answers in those spaces—with an open mind:

> You were asking about an arc of a class of the class, and there's this real shift, right where we are now … Up until now it's been like they've been listening to the conversation: "What have other scholars said? What haven't they said? What's missing? What questions do you have?" And now we're moving into their being able to answer some questions, and discovering something that no one else has seen yet.
>
> [So I think my goal for their development] is that balance between critiquing and analyzing what others have said, and joining the conversation: discovering that they have something to add, that's unique, that's new, but also the importance of anchoring that in a context … of what other people have said.
>
> Learning to think as a social scientist is huge … making that shift, from trying to prove something that they believe or they assume, and moving to the discovery of something-we-don't-yet-know. Testing ideas. Wondering – that sense of *wonder*.
>
> I talk in terms of "community of scholars." You know, they read studies, and that's why I'm having them de-construct the study: to figure out a little bit of how they're going to construct their own. They're joining a discourse community. So, potentially, this study could be published. They're writing for other scholars, other social scientists. So they have to gain *credibility*, for those in this field. So they have to situate their work in previous scholarship. I talked about that, periodically.

These sections of her response focus on how the course—the practice of reading, conducting, and writing social science research for a community of scholars—nurtures that "shift" in students' thinking. Yet, in the middle of this description, she breaks into an equally long narration of her first-day class activity, which is not directly about social science but rather about stimulating students' dispositions to be open-minded dispositions and to see learning as a community act. In it, she cuts up pictures into pieces, and gives each student a piece of some picture to observe and question. Then she lets them find others with more of that picture, and observe how their questions change and understandings expand as they see more of that picture-piece's context:

> And it's wonderful, the sorts of things that come out. You know, sometimes
> it's, "The more I see, the less I know. I thought it was this –," and they're
> moving from prediction to open. … *That* activity is really a microcosm of
> whatever else comes in the course, that notion of: looking at something
> closely. Asking questions. Trying to figure things out "What could this
> mean?" Looking at something in context. Situating it within a larger context,
> and noticing what happens when you do that. And then having something to
> say about it."

So B's core educational goal is about more than learning to do social science writing. Her goal is that "shift" in how students understand what thinking and writing are about: not about proving your current view of the world, but about discovering and sharing with others something that you  could not see without seeking to understand what other people have seen.

When I ask students on the mid-term survey what B wants them to get out of this course, their brief answers focus on the most apparent, surface level of her goal: that she

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wants them to develop as writers. Some describe only the most technical details ("formatting, following directions"), while others allude to the communicative purpose behind those structured guidelines ("She wants you to be clear and organized" "she wants our ideas to come through clearly and professionally"). Still others include terms that B uses to connect her writing aims for students to her goals of character-building ("clarity, confidence" "clarity and powerful"), and personal development in-step with the individual's particular interests and sense of what is "good" ("to improve" "improvement and focus" "improvement so that it can be at its best"). And by course's end, students like Betty form a more synthetic conception of what B is looking for from them ("A Sociological paper, with your own primary data pushing and driving the research, on a topic of your choice? {smiles}") which reflects both B's surface and core goals together: to have students write professionally, but also to contribute informed personal insights to others about something they see as important.

In addition to seeing her goals, they also state their own reasons for taking the course: mostly to "fill a general education requirement" for graduation (5 of 9 responses) and/or to meet a pre-requisite for the writing minor (4 of 9). Two students also mention the relevance of the course to their lives either in academia (a Social Sciences student) or in life beyond the university ("to become a better writer for my profession"). So clearly, in this educational exchange, the onus lands on B to persuade these students that the work she desires from them—and the learning process that she would like them to invest in—will be relevant in their lives, interesting enough to be worth the challenge, and even somewhat "fun" as they begin to see the fruits of their academic effort.

B seems to recognize, at least tacitly, this pragmatic challenge of persuading students' interest and engagement in a course required by the university. She does not talk about this

challenge specifically in describing her teaching approach, beyond saying that she works to understand students' feelings of apathy in the context of their larger lives and to show enthusiasm in a way that they can catching. Yet, in watching her teach, one can see consistent signals that she perceives that exigency: from preemptively addressing students' potential misgivings about assignments, to bringing in candy on the days when coursework will be tedious but necessary, to pointing out with enthusiasm where the work becomes rewarding ("Now is the *fun* part"), she proactively seeks to bring in and maintain students' investment in the course's interpersonal community and its educational activities.

This final section on B will describe some general patterns that I noted in her teaching style and manner, followed by a few examples of dialogs that occurred near the beginning, middle, and end of the course. This juxtaposition will highlight the idiosyncratic character of educational dialogs within B's course: how the synchrony that arises between B and the student-group reflects her personal, practical, and principled approach as a teacher—what social relations and attitudes she establishes, what ideas and actions she encourages or discourages, what motives and values she disseminates as a leader in those classroom interactions.

## B as a Course Leader: Academic Progress in the Educational Exchange

B runs a writing course that is observably quite distinct from V's. Analyzing the personal, practical, and principled factors contributing to her course helps to interpret those differences meaningfully. Had I revisited my classroom recordings with V's approach to teaching—his idiosyncratic methods and reasons—in my mind, I might have interpreted B's classroom environment as overly structured, lacking those engaged bursts of laughter, and with too little wiggle room between the teacher's verbal prompts and the students' fill-in

answers for intellectual exploration. But after listening to B describe her slow-grown, student-informed path for refining her current way of teaching, and hearing students describe their candid appreciation of that experience by its end, I can look at those observation-notes and review those recordings with a much better understanding of the intimate and engaged educational exchange taking place between them.

This following overview of patterns that arose in my field notes from the classroom—followed by more detailed descriptions of a few recorded classroom exchanges—is meant to highlight the dependable style and manner of educational leadership that B establishes in interactions with students and, within that social-emotional environment, the academic progress that emerges as their exchanges mature across the arc of the course.

**Reliable Patterns in B's Teaching Style and Manner**

Where my notes on V's classroom interactions are littered with shorthand-symbols of dunce-caps and students' laughter, my notes on B's are characterized by symbols of highlighter-pens and students' question-bubbles. These shorthand-symbols reflect a class where time and effort are consistently dedicated to active student thinking/writing, punctuated by the teacher's guiding explanations of that process (both the operational details and the subjective experience of doing each stage), and elicitations of student input (both as text writers/editors and as students assessing the course). Defining patterns include students doing hands-on drafting, critical reading, and peer-informed revising activities for their own writing; B asking about students' questions and concerns; and B sharing or getting them to share their writing as a foundation for her offering general principles, targeted guidance, and personal reassurance to the students (as they familiarize themselves with inhabiting the mindsets, practices, and textual discourse communities of social science writers).

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Viewing the classroom educational exchange as cycles of dialogic interaction—and so focusing in my field-notes on the patterns of teacher and student behavior that might shape expectations, motives, and habits in that learning environment—I notice several types of actions and interactions repeating in my field-notes, regarding the way B conducts these dialogs. These reliable patterns can be sorted roughly into categories of attuning to student perspectives, cultivating a community of writers, and connecting personally with the class.

Regarding B attuning to student perspectives, the most notable patterns are those of B teaching responsively based on current students' direct inputs and B teaching proactively in a way that intuits students' concerns or struggles (drawing on a knowledge-base of past students' input).

In the first case, B teaching responsively based on current students' inputs, one eminently observable pattern is that B seeks feedback about students' experiences with course activities, as regular class-day introduction or activity wrap-up: checking whether students are having difficulty with specific work assignments ("Any problems with … [students: no] Good." Week 1) and whether they could be done in more beneficial ways ("So you'd recommend I continue assigning both? Okay" Week 4), explaining why she values those responses ("[I collected midterm evaluations] because if it's at the end, I can't change anything, and if I have a question, I can't ask you" Week 6) and encouraging their ongoing feedback ("Good questions! Questions that make me think. … If you have questions, please use my office hours. Any other questions?" Week 7). B also uses students' questions as an invitation to teach, and an opportunity to justify her methods ("Someone said they're confused by the lack of order in the course, … [but] a little disequilibrium is good for productive thinking" Week 1 "[Student: 'operationalize' means what?] Turning things e.g., the idea of a political party] into actions. … important because " Week 5). In addition, B

asks students about their habitual approaches in writing-related tasks, and then offers tools to expand those approaches ("How did you take notes on this reading, by the way? [student responses] I do it with three highlighters [student response]. Remember, it's important that notes are accessible to you. Saves you so much time later." Week 1 "How are you doing surveys? [students: questionnaire, interviews] writing survey questions – problems, issues, questions? [hands] Think about social exchange theory – establish trust, low cost, and incentives makes people more likely to respond" Week 5). B also takes verbal poles about students' current knowledge, progress, and so forth to make sure she's attuned to their current states of development ("How many have training in first-order—oh good. Sometimes I don't get any" Week 1 "Textual analysis. Have you done before? [Student: yes] Do you need coaching? … If you have questions later, ask me, so I can do some coaching" Week 5).

In the second case, B using her knowledge-base of current and past students' experiences to proactively address their concerns and struggles as she teaches, one notable pattern is that she states the goals of current writing activities in terms of each one's future benefits to the students' writing in later stages ("At this stage, our concern is about purpose, audience, context … 'Writing from plentitude.' Students who do first-order write better, clearer, with more voice and development" Week 1 "If your questions are still a little fluid, changing, that's okay—by the prospectus, you'll nail it down … here's what the literature review is doing: showing you are part of the discussion" Week 3). Also, complimentarily, B often addresses students' potential misgivings about assigned tasks preemptively, justifying those activities' value and reassuring students that their feeling at those moments are reasonable ("This is not fluff … See that there is a creative process to academic writing, and you will find your own path from there, yourselves." Week 1 "This is the hardest part of the course, the literature review. I don't know why, but every quarter, people struggle here. As

long as you don't give up, you'll be okay" "also, because I know this [peer response] can be really tedious, I've brought you candy" Week 4). If anyone then voices residual concerns and questions after B's general explanations, she also uses her experience-base to validate and respond to these as they arise ("[Student: second-order thinking is privileged in university because that's what you get graded on] Except in this class. It is graded, but first-order is also emphasized." Week 1) "Watch your subjects and verbs. It's a little thing, but makes a big difference. [Student: The literature we read sounds just like these 'incorrect' examples] Yes, {smiles} I'm trying to raise a better generation. In a discourse community, there are good and bad writers. Try to model the better ones." Week 7).

Regarding B cultivating a community of writers, the most prevalent pattern is that of B leading generative activities where students supply content—either from their own writing, their literature sources, or their edits of text that B has provided—while she guides and explains. This type of dialogic interaction occurs in almost every class (e.g., "We call this text rendering, where we analyze together and make sense of text. [students share passages, B offers guiding ideas] Keep in mind that literature reviews are *comparative* exercises … critical compilations … guide your reader with a strong thesis statement … not the whole article, but *relevant* parts … summarize and review in a way that leads your reader toward your study" Week 4 "What are some words you had to operationalize [students: 'political engagement', 'altruism', 'self-concept', 'abstinence'] How did you operationalize and define your terms? [each student responds… at 'abstinence'] Is there agreement in the literature? [student: 'No.'] So you can *see* the importance of specifically defining these terms for your research." Week 5). In addition to leading these discussions, B also facilitates group discussions among students and prompts them to offer supportive feedback to one another (e.g., "That [topic is] really big. How would you help her focus it? … Oh, see, now we're

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really getting more specific! … [to the  class] what would you ask her? [students respond]"

Week 1 "Take each others surveys and give feedback on how you react to these questions"

Week 5 "Today, I think it's important for you to get another pair of eyes on your paper …

Let the reader know if there were any places of confusion, or places where you were drawn

in. … You're not editing, you are giving a reader's response. … When you're done, you can

trade back with your partner and talk about how you read the other's paper." Week 9)

Within and around these communal learning interactions, B often uses inviting,

community-oriented, empowering language: to put students in a healthy and productive

mindset ("I encourage you to silence the critic [inside of yourself] as you begin" "this

research is where you listen. Find a place to jump into the conversation" Week 1), to treat

them as capable participants in communities of scholarship ("These [academic articles] seem

really dry on the surface, but these are—from the beginning—very *persuasive* articles. The

literature review [is what gives you] your credibility, your voice" Week 3 "Many don't want

to share their work because 'it's not good enough.' But in academia, it is important to put that

aside. Sharing is an opportunity for feedback, growing, developing" Week 4 "[With your

research problem  and testable hypothesis] you are now entering the official discourse: here's

what's known, here's what I'm adding" Week 5), and to remind them that they are writing to

and for real individuals in their community ("You've got to organize this visually, not just

for me, but for everyone" Week 7 "[preparing for class presentations] "Audience – what

would they want to know from your study? What *don't* you want to know from each other?

… Time yourselves. Don't read, make eye contact. Make it interesting, sharing the 'so what'

of what you've done." Week 8). Additionally, in almost every class, B makes time for

exercises to help students work on their writing with and around one another: brainstorming

and freewriting, draft-analysis and highlighting (e.g., marking their works' verbs and nouns,

paragraph topics and evidence, stated social problem and research rationale, initial questions and hypothesis, questions driving their research and new questions emerging from their research), paper-trading, students writing peer feedback and discussing their reader responses.

Regarding B connecting personally with the class, student reflections show that much more of this interaction happened in quiet asides or office hours, never making it into my recordings or notes from the classroom. Yet there are still a few moments that I noted first-hand during the term, that give a sense of what that pattern of B drawing personal connections with the course and its students looks like. B shares illustrative stories about past students and class experiences (e.g., "The 'negativity diva' [story of a students' counterproductive attitude] … censoring voices have a place, but not in first-order, generative thinking." Week 1), as well as sharing illustrative stories from her own life experiences ("When I was a consultant, principles were what contributed to clarity, or to confusion [so I'm not giving you 'rules' for reviewing your literature, but rather, ways of being clear in thinking through how you are doing things] " Week 3). Along these lines, B is also willing to speak personally, being open about her life and feelings, where relevant to course (e.g., "[students: many yawns] You all are gonna fall asleep. If you need to stand up, do [students laugh] I don't want you to fall asleep. I've been up since 4:15, so I'm there with you" Week 7 "One more thing—I know you're ready to go. Ready to go! Office hours—it's no fun sitting around and no one comes. So please sign up, but not if you're not going to come." Week 9). Reciprocally, B shows signs of her personal interest and care for her students ("[Looks at student's name-tag] Just wondering where you worked." Week 3 "[To a student] I'm glad you're back {smiles}." Week 9).

Together, these interaction patterns that B establishes with her students help the group to form a progressively more predictable, dependable, synchronous flow of dialog among themselves. As B points out, there are many factors contributing to the arc of that course dialog: the larger institutional resources, structures, and culture, which both facilitate and limit what the course can be and what students expect of it; the larger life goals, community affiliations, and generational attributes of students, which shape their motives, beliefs, and attitudes as students of academic writing; and B's own teaching and learning experiences, educational beliefs, and personal character, which shape how she feels she can best serve her students in a way that is fulfilling, effective, and sustainable for her.

Yet at the center, it is ultimately in the course dialog itself that all of these aspects surface to be presented, negotiated, and channeled somehow into an educational exchange. The synchrony of that exchange—in the observable moment between teacher and students, in retrospect between each one's storied memories of that learning experience, and in comparison between the real and ideal outcomes of the course in both the teacher's and the students' minds—provides an *intrinsic* means for assessing the course, within the value-scales of its participants.

Above, we have explored those educational aims in B's mind (a gentle, supportive, character-building exploration of writing's complexity and creative freedom beyond the restrictive prompts and forms so familiar to university students, an invitation to write with a genuine purpose to a real community and to see how capable everyone is of not only understanding scholarship but contributing knowledge to it). Likewise, we have explored B's and her students' somewhat mutual sense of the course's strengths and weaknesses as an educational exchange (a success in helping students to see their own writing process more critically, and gain confidence in their ability to build and revise their work for themselves,

but faltering generally in convincing students of the value of style and grammar practice). Below, we take a moment to look at the actual course dialogs themselves: how those educational exchanges matured interpersonally an academically over the course of the term.

**Maturing Dialogs within that Learning Environment**

Heading into the final third of the term, B and her students seem quite comfortable together with the style of the course and with the manner of intellectual conversation being encouraged within that flow of activities.

A wonderful example of this more synchronous group dynamic comes in week 7, when B is going through style and grammar lessons with the students. During the first activity, B offers up sample sentences, commenting on what is problematic with them (e.g., the writer has statically nominalized potentially active verbs, or not clarified who is doing the actions) and students offer up their revisions of these sentences. For the most part, they apply well the concept she's taught, and she responds to encouragingly to their creative answers ("That's a really unique way to do it—I've never heard somebody do that an it works well"). When one student's revised sentence B leaves two parts nominalized, B asks him directly if he can see a way of improving it ("can you try to get that first 'decisions' out, and turn it into a verb"), then has him assess for himself how that changes the sentence's quality ("Yeah. And how does it sound once you do that?"). Before she moves on to the next sample sentence, she reiterates that this process is not a strict formula but a creative thought process they are learning, and encourages students to ask if they don't understand how someone got to their revised version. No one does ask during that activity, but during the lesson that follows—on using phrases, clauses, and coordinating conjunctions—students do raise questions where they are unsure or have heard different information (e.g., "Can a phrase

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have a subject?" "Is there a rule for really short introductory clauses, that you don't need a comma?"), without being prompted by B, and also readily respond to her questions about the example sentence she is crafting extemporaneously to illustrate her lesson.

The way B responds to the students encourages their continued participation in these dialogs: giving specific, informed answers ("I've heard debate about that, actually, some people say it cant have either a subject or verb" "Some people will say, up to three words you don't have to—it's changing, that's the thing about grammar") which affirm that knowledgeableness in the subject-matter that students recognized on surveys, and showing a light-hearted, supportive manner when correcting student's offer responses ("It's not [a dependent clause, as you thought], it's a phrase. *But* it's a word-group before. So I slipped one in on you..."), that builds some sense of "everyone is on the same level" and B "is not out to get anyone" that Avay and John described. Meanwhile, the content of her individual lessons and the narrative she uses to weave those lessons together—i.e., that she is giving students ways to think methodically about their choices in composing language, and those choices' effect their discourse with their audience—actively and explicitly facilitates students growing toward those core aims of B's writing course: purposeful understanding, creativity, open-mindedness, and confidence in the writing process.

Class days like these are consistent in the last third of the term in B's course, with the teacher's and students' social-emotional comfort and intellectual engagement readily apparent: where in early days of the course there were more yawns and longer silences among the students, in these later class sessions there is much more laughter and fluid, active academic dialog. Whereas in V's course, students laughs were often about the teacher's jokes or other students' amusing responses to films, in B's course the laughter is often her own (reassuring, connecting with, or getting excited about some detail of the student writing

experience) or spreads among the students as one of them makes a comment in response to B (e.g., a student in week 8 saying his low-tech graphs "look like they're from the eighties," to which B responded supportively "But those are actually often easier to read"). Such observable changes mark the growing synchrony in B's classroom: the comfort and energy that arises when everyone is on the same page, whether in a moment of social-emotional affiliation or a moment of intellectual connection.

The character of that synchrony in B's classroom distinctly reflects her method and manner of teaching: her calm and gentle presence, her knowledgeable and organized delivery, helping the course group to have faith through its middle-stages of wrestling with uncertainty and slowly to build confidence in sharing their research writing with fellow students. Where the success V's course looks like a group of students challenging and questioning everyone's ideas (including the teacher's) in a socially relaxed and intellectually critical way, the success of B's course looks more like a community of students comfortable expressing themselves in the manner of social scientists: sharing their research through visuals and presentations, fielding audience questions about their methods and conclusions, showing confidence and curiosity as individual thinkers learning with and through one another.

Looking back on prior classes, one can see moments from where B lays a foundation for these exchanges and that environment (early on), where the group progresses toward establishing that environment and facilitating those dialogs (midway), and finally where—as above—the group comes together in producing exchanges that are procedurally fluent, personally warm, and academically purposeful (the last days).

Below are a few descriptions of moments from class video-recordings that illustrate this natural progress of the course's educational dialog.

***Foundation work:*** by the beginning of week 3, B's guiding comments are establishing a reliable pattern for students of her explaining where they are, where they're headed, and how perfectly alright their experiences are during each stage of their writing. In the following excerpt, she speaks from the students' perspectives, brings in a metaphor to help describe how it may feel internally as they work through the process of narrowing down their research topic, validates that experience at this stage-of-writing as "normal," and points toward where they need to aim themselves in preparing the for the next stage:

> As you're working with the ideas you have, they start to morph a little bit.
> And you begin to wonder if you could still change you topic. This is that first-quarter stage, still, where you're generating and you're beginning to test.
> Sometimes you're getting a green light, "Ooh, yeah, this looks good." And other times you start down a road, you get a yellow light, "uuhh, okay, maybe not," or even a red, "I don't even knoooow where I could go with this."
> That's perfectly normal. Before long, you'll need to settle into it. But this is okay, still.
> But you *do* want to be moving *in*to finding out now, what we already know about this topic, and what we don't know. That's really where you should be headed.

This moment (about one minute long) helps in setting up an atmosphere of support for students and asserting an ethos of teacher knowledge about students' writing experiences. In addition, this moment transitions into B talking about her reflections on students' topic ideas, handing those topic proposals back with individualized comments, and passing around a sign-up sheet for students to meet with her in pairs to discuss their projects: demonstrating, early on, her commitment to helping students on an individual level to develop their writing.

So I looked at your topics that you handed in last week. And I'll give those

back to you. They have some comments. … Let me return these. And this'll

be another help for me to try and remember your names. Kelsey, Annie—

*Progress***:** by the end of week four, B is building with students an active and critical

dialog about improving their writing, while also maintaining the supportive atmosphere that

makes such guiding and revising feel constructive rather than corrective. B introduces the

workshop by acknowledging that students might feel uncomfortable sharing, out of a desire

to show that they are competent writers, and encourages them to let go of this worry in

service of their learning. Then she states aloud how she intends to listen, and encourages

students to listen, to one another as a way to learn about the various directions can go with

their writing:

You're not in here to prove that you're a perfect writer; you're here to *improve*

as a writer. So if you're finding that perfectionist within you, that doesn't want

anyone to see your writing because it's not good enough, just *silence* that;

that'll just hold you back. … Okay, so let's hear your thesis. And I may

comment as we go around, but I think we ought to just listen, too, so that you

get an idea of the variety of things that people came up with, when they're

trying to form a generalization about a body of research.

As students share their theses, B uses many of them as teachable moments, giving students

individual advice and validation as well as making general statements to the class about

what important attributes each one has, that they should listen for as others continue sharing

their theses, and look for in their own. In the moment below, B acknowledges that she can't

really assess the current student's thesis without any context, and so asks him what he thinks

about his own thesis, in light of advice she just gave for a previous thesis. Then she uses his response to explain further her original piece of advice:

> **B** "Is that a statement about the body of literature, or is it about the topic itself? That's one of the things I want us to listen for. {Nods 'go ahead and read yours' to Student} Okay, yeah."
>
> **Student** "{reading aloud} Although Facebook meant to provide a better means to maintain relationships, there is a strong debate that the computer-mediated communication world is dissolving social interaction rather than improving it: the argument describes Facebook and its 'friending' feature to [inaudible] and the virtual connection of people to be weak and low-commitment."
>
> **B** "I can't tell with that one. It sounded like it was a little bit about the topic, but I can't tell. What do *you* think? Is it about the body of literature?"
>
> **S** "I guess it should focus a little more on—"
>
> **B** "Giving us a sense of where the scholarship is. Because that's *how* you set up your study."

B concludes this sharing activity by asking students if anyone noticed patterns in the thesis statements, especially of those who got their statements down to one sentence. One student presents a general structure ("People said, like, 'All the studies showed this; further research is required' or 'further information'."), which B then expands on, explaining why it's an effective way of presenting a thesis:

> "Yeah, it's a subordinate clause and an independent clause. Subordinate clauses have a subject and verb, but they can't stand on their own, and they sort of put something in a *lower* position of emphasis. And you can decide

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which one that *is*. And there's a punchy one—there's an independent clause

that can stand on its own. So I heard words like "although, …"

In this way, her dialog with the students actively engages their thinking, builds a lesson around their own work as writers and listening audience members, and breaks down what they share to makes those contributions operationally transparent and useful for all students together. After that workshopping discussion, B gives students time to write and make notes on their own papers about things they want to revise. Pens are moving vigorously, with student's faces intently focused as they write notes to themselves for their next round of revisions.

*Synchrony***:** by the end of week 9, the students have essentially finished their papers, and—as the interviewed students all reported—now see how B's ordered progression of lessons and smaller writing tasks all contributed to composing that final document, and making it as thoughtful, informed, organized, clear, and persuasive as possible. The last two class days are dedicated to the students' presentations of their research. B has prepared them to present well by asking them what *they* want to hear from each other about their research, and yet again giving them experience-based guidelines about the details that most strengthen a presentation (e.g., eye contact, clear visuals and handouts).

On this first presentation day, student presenters sit facing their peers in panels of four, organized roughly by the theme of their research. Students in the audience look at their handouts from the presenters as each one describes their work and refers to those references. And at the end, the whole panel takes questions and comments from the audience. In one moment, a student (who shared his topic sentence in week 4, previous section) presents his research to the class, first sharing a personal anecdote about how he became interested in the topic of Facebook friending and unfriending practices through a discussion with his

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roommate, then giving some background on the topic, and finally presenting his findings along with what he sees as interesting and informative in them. In another moment, at the end of a panel discussion, two individuals ask a presenter to operationally define one of his terms and to clarify what the numbers in his figures mean, a third student shares with another presenter some experience he had traveling abroad that supports her survey's findings, and B asks her to clarify whether her survey question about people "hooking up" was only about their first-hand experiences or about their perception of activities in people around them.

These panel presentations embody so many core aims in B's course: students speaking with confidence and authority, questioning one another in a supportive and collaborative manner, showing both creativity and organized preparation, being both independent writers and active members of a discourse community.

After the last panel presents, on the last day, B commends the students for the work they did. She recognizes how hard it is to do this research, reassures them that she saw their research improve and their writing become more "specific and insightful" as the course progressed, and mentions that she's really enjoying reading their final reports. She also reiterates what she hopes they will take from the course: a good experience of first-order writing, the disposition to give themselves time in the future for doing that exploratory writing, and a few skills and strategies that they can apply in their future writing. She also uses my convenient presence to point out the value of this course learning experience: that I never did a literature review until grad school, and so they've now got a leg-up on a lot of grad students, as far as their writing skills and experience. She then concludes by taking a final opportunity to get feedback from her students:

Tell me anything you think I ought *keep*, and anything you think I ought to re-think. And then I have a specific question, of things I tried this quarter, that I want feedback on.

Students state appreciating the in-person meeting with B early on in the quarter that helped them get on the right track with their projects from the beginning, the highlighting exercises that made revisions more focused and purposeful, the break-down of steps that made writing the paper less difficult and more of a progression of tasks, the deadlines that kept them on-time with those steps, and B's use of gauchospace for giving students individualized feedback online. One student even mentions appreciating the style exercises, which she says helped her become more aware of how she constructs her sentences. Students don't offer many things they'd change about the course, but they do openly suggest B having a second in-person meeting with individuals before the final draft is due (as B had wanted to do, if not for her load of 50 students in this 10 week quarter):

**B** – "You were in small groups the first time, just so I could get through it. [What do you think, if I had done that,] would it have *been* as productive if I couldn't meet with you one-on-one?"

**Student** – "I think it's just a matter of, we would have to be on the same understanding [that] you're not able to read a whole fifteen-page draft, [so] we have to be able to come in with concerns that are ready. And then the student can take [the] best advantage of that [meeting] as possible."

**B** – "I agree. That's one of the things that I missed, too."

A student also suggests that B teach them how to do data analysis—which, on students' recommendations, she had done in the past, and had missed this quarter—"That's one of the pieces that I would add back in; I'm glad you mentioned it, because I missed it too."

Relatedly, the students suggest cutting the whole-day in the library to give more time for those lessons on how to organize and correlate data. So, by the end of the course, students come to appreciate most of the lessons they've learned as well as the way B orchestrates that learning experience, to notice the same few areas for improvement that she herself recognized, and to feel comfortable suggesting these changes face-to-face with her (not anonymously, as on the midterm evaluation, even though they have yet to receive their final grades in the course).

This dialog demonstrates trust and affiliation between the students and B, as well as a synchrony of views about the course learning experience: its academic value, its effective structure, and its few areas that can still be refined to make the course run better.


### The Role of Sincerity in Students' Educational Outcomes

When looking back over the pragmatic arc of this course—from principled ideals (B's described educational intentions and approaches), to practical interactions (the group's gradual social-emotional and academic progress in their exchanges), to personal takeaways (B's and the students' distinct, but dialogically coordinated, senses of what the group achieved)—much of its *success* seems to rely significantly on B's observable *integrity* as an educational leader, and on the students' *trust* in that integrity.

Students' explicit confidence in B's care for them, her knowledge of her subject-matter, and her willingness to put effort into sharing that valued understanding with them comes up time-and-again as they discuss their educational take-away: how carefully crafted her course is, how responsively she offers guidance and seeks feedback, how available and present she is to support individuals as needed in that ongoing dialog. These themes about B's clear dedication and genuine connection in teaching arise hand-in-hand with their

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descriptions of what they've learned about writing and about themselves as writers through her course. So B's persuasively sincere educational leadership appears integral to both the course's educational process and outcome, from the whole group's fundamental interest and cooperative effort to their eventual coordinated understanding and fluent interaction in learning together about the course's subject-matter.

When I ask B about "Sincerity" as it relates to her teaching, her answer is brief but runs deeply through her practical beliefs as a teacher, connected to how she presents herself with students, how she encourages them to relate with one another, how she wants them to develop through their educational exchange with her, and how she walks with them through that dialogic learning experience.

> It has to do with honesty. I think students pick up on whether you're sincere,
>
> both in your feedback—if you say, "Good job" and it's lousy, they know
>
> that—so. Yeah, I think it's important. I think that ties in with credibility too.

She associates the notion of sincerity most closely with "Honesty," a term that she uses in describing how she wants students to see her and connect with her ("Honest, a real person, not just an icon of a teacher"), and likewise how she wants to help them grow as individuals through her teaching ("I think [in terms of] opportunities to help [students] grow in character, to be fearless in their writing, to be honest about it"). In both these contexts (her intended teacher ethos and her philosophy in teaching) she describes honesty as a social disposition that she can nurture through her leadership as a teacher: by breaking down the prevalent "gulf" in university culture between teachers and students to create a "community of writers" who are learning together—herself included—and using that subject as a tool for "helping the individual grow."

In this particular course, she is helping each student to grow as "a writer, as a thinker, as a learner – as fast and as far as they can go in the time I have". But her driving ambition transcends the subject: for B, education is centrally about nurturing those students' character through the classroom community. For her, honesty is instrumental in achieving that educational aim. We see the idea arise in her teaching principles when she talks about peer relationships, where honesty is described as a counterpart to respect in creating a social environment that facilitates interpersonal bonding ("we talk about non-verbal stuff that hurts—rolling eyes, making eye contact with somebody else and going 'r-r'—all of those things that *hurt* peer relationship. I think I'm modeling ways in which we need to be respectful, {softly} and *honest*. Thoughtful, natural"). Likewise, we see that idea arising when she explains her principles for asking a good question, where "honesty" is described alongside "open-ended" as the element that makes a question meaningful as part of a students' learning, stimulating them to wonder and ask their own questions back as part of the educational dialog ("Real questions are ones I don't have the answer for. Those are the ones that really matter. And I'm also hoping that [their] questions will be my invitation to teach. So I'm … trying to stimulate those).

B also connects the idea of sincerity-honesty in educational situations to the notion of her credibility as a teacher. Credibility, to B, is a kind of trust that students give her, that she earns from them—not automatically, by her credentials and experience, but over time, by giving them a learning experience that *they* perceive as helpful and important:

I don't think my credentials and my experience automatically give me credibility with them. I think it's when they start seeing value in what they're doing. Sometimes they trust me [from the] start. And then, I think if my methods or the class were not effective for them, I would lose that credibility.

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So to B, "sincerity" is personal characteristic that is essential for her to have, and to nurture in students, in order to create a healthy and effective educational exchange. That honest, real, meaningful exchange allows her to learn what students need for growing individually as writers, and to figure out how best to get them there through her assignments and her guiding leadership. This genuine effort to know and serve students needs, then, persuades students to trust her as an effective teacher, and gives her credibility among them in the course.

At the end of the term, I ask student John about B's credibility in the class, and he describes understanding it very similarly to B. Initially, I ask him about the course content: whether any of the fundamental principles that B taught in the course really stick in his memory. He eventually lists off a few specific details from B's writing guidelines that he remembers, but spends most of his answer explaining how *effective* she is as a teacher, because of her willingness and readiness to share her knowledge right when students need it or ask for it:

> She knew [snapping] all the rules off the top of her head. And I felt like the
> ability to just transfer that knowledge to us within like twenty minutes was
> *fantastic*. Because it would have taken me twenty minutes to look up the *first*
> thing, in a style guide.

So I ask John what level of authority and credibility B has in the classroom, and he rates it as "off the charts" compared to other teachers. He starts explaining this by giving one counter-example of a writing course where his teacher couldn't keep the class moving forward unless students participated, and so on days when students skipped the reading or were feeling lazy, the class "just fizzled and died." In contrast, he then explains that B has crafted her course's educational dialog in such a student-aware manner that, whether or not the students respond

aloud, B knows what they need to think about at each stage and how she can guide their minds to focus on those points:

> We had group work that we did within the class, but she didn't necessarily *rely* on all of us. She would ask a question, and then another question, and then a *third* question that were all getting at points. If you were still listening to her, she was making points, *even* if nobody responded. And so *that* was a way to keep some sort of control and authoritative manner in the class, rather than let it just fizzle into boringness.

In John's view, B's subject matter knowledge, her question-based guidance of discussions and lessons, and her purposeful progression from one course activity to the next work together to keep his attention as a student, and his trust: he asserts confidently that she has a plan, is in control of how that plan is unfolding, and knows roughly where things are going.

Interestingly, when I ask John about the large amount of feedback B gathers from students, instead of complaining about its tediousness (as he had done when I asked about the grammar exercises), he overtly admires how much *knowledge* she has amassed about college writing students' learning through listening to them over the years, and how effective her teaching has become by way of that dedicated effort to understand and connect with her students:

> You can tell. I don't know how long she's been teaching the class, I assume for a while. So she's been getting feedback from everybody at that level, over ten years. That's a lot of knowledge.
>
> And at first I was kind of like 'Eh' about the revision workshops, but as soon as I actually got into the second one—and editing the corrections that she'd asked me to write on my paper—it was *really*, really helpful.

To John, B's midterm evaluations and countless other requests for student feedback (alongside her one-on-one meetings, personalized written comments, and so forth) unambiguously signal her sincerity: her constant, coordinated intention and effort to provide students with an opportunity for growth as writers and as people. She works continuously to make her class effective and personally valuable for her students, and "if you're paying attention," John says, "you get the benefit."

CHAPTER 8

AN EXPERT BECOMES A LEADER (M):

FROM CLEAR VALUES AND CONSISTENT SELF-INVESTMENT TO

SYNCHRONOUS EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES

**M, as a Teacher and a Course: Educational Values and Implementation Intentions**

Although M is teaching in the same university and disciplinary culture as V and B, his descriptions of his work as a teacher are distinct from theirs. His sense of reason and values as a writing educator—what he teaches and why—contains many of the same basic elements that theirs do, but centers around its own "core purpose," and consequently its own distinct version of that "core content" which M prioritizes in his versions of the university writing course. His statements about academia broadly, and the role of writing therein, point to this distinction (below). His personal dictionary as a writing educator—visually summarized through the 21-term word-web—helps to show how these core values and reasons then pervade his principled framework for teaching within that academic setting (thereafter). Finally, his educational exchanges with students demonstrate how he applies these personal reasons and professional principles in his own classes to deal with the practical challenges of teaching: acclimating unfamiliar students to his direct manner of teaching, drawing out the voices of quiet students, and addressing the resistive attitude of one student who views his academic demands as unfair.

**What I am Teaching, and Why**

When I ask M about academia's purpose—and the teacher's role as a channel for that reason—he describes with conviction the value of traditional academic methodologies. Despite trends toward liberal discourse and away from quietly receptive lectures in the classroom, M still sees, as a fundamental part of higher education, teachers giving important information to their students (e.g., how academic and real-world systems operate; what they need to study, practice, and do to thrive in those systems). The particular value of a university learning environment, as M describes, is that it is rich with catalogs of quality thinking and writing and other works, which it can guide students through or point them toward; which otherwise they might never discover, and never use to develop themselves as thinkers and creators:

> I like to think the teachers should be giving information. … if it's say movies,
> or books they should be reading, or some common knowledge about the
> university … at the very least—and it may or may not work—I want them to
> leave the room going, "Well, there are things I need to know." They may
> leave the room saying, "He made me feel stupid," which some people have
> said on occasion. But my feeling is the role of the teacher is, really, who else
> is going to tell them these things? Some of them don't come from families
> that have an education, or … don't have the opportunity to get this. Who's
> gonna tell them what to read? Who's gonna tell them what to see?

M applies this same traditional perspective to the role of writing instruction within the university setting. While he does not subscribe to some monolithic view of good writing (and points out that he both composes and teaches many styles and forms of writing for different audiences), he does contend that creating clear prose, forming the sentences and

finessing the language, comes from knowing the right words and seeing where the writing still needs work. And this recognition of quality comes through students reading models of great writing, teachers pointing out the nuances of that thinking and language, and having that experience to draw on as they produce their own works of writing:

> Nothing is better than knowing the right word; how to form a sentence. This is age-old stuff. If I had my way, I'd be teaching them nineteenth century—Emerson and De Quincy, and Haslet and Shelley. These are good writers. … when we moved out of teaching classic literature. We deprived our students of reading good writing. Who do they read who are models for them? They sort of have to invent the wheel all the time. … But when I come to Emerson, or I come to Joan Dideon, or—those two especially, they're written so well. You can't help but be [impressed]. And if they could pick that up. … you have to be able to handle ambiguity, and contradiction and irony and satire and all that kind of stuff. … I give them the list that E.D. Hirsch has made up, and … the nice thing some of them write is, "Now I know what I need to learn." And some of them go, "I'm embarrassed. I did not know half the stuff that people in the class knew." We've not done our students a service, I think. But I'm an old retrograde, traditional guy. You know.

This, for M then, is the core content in his course; the educational ends that he most values. Through his classes, he works to connect students with well-thought, well-crafted writing—and to get them evaluating, analyzing, debating this writing for themselves—as knowledge-base to stimulate their own thinking and composing, both academically and in the real-world that they'll soon be joining.

**How I am Teaching: A Personal Dictionary**

The way that M defines and explains the 21 teaching-related terms helps to clarify his *manner and strategies* in preparing students with useful knowledge and practice for the "real world," through his discipline of writing (with a values-emphasis on professional writing, critical reading and argumentation). Together, M's personalized understandings of each term's educational significance (as an ideal) and practical implications (as a reality) provide a simple and comparable image of his more complex and unique framework of internal principles for teaching university writing.

In the word-web below (Figure 14), which makes visible how these topic-terms are associated with one another in M's personal dictionary for teaching, several ideas can be seen playing structurally integral roles in that principled framework for teaching. First, M establishes and demands **Credibility** in his classroom (with Modeling and In-Class Correction), actively demonstrating his personal standards regarding thinking and writing, then treating students as intellectual equals, whom he holds to those same standards. He helps students to exercise and develop their credible intellectual expression through **Discussion and Argument** (with Tests and "A Good Question"), getting students to think through and articulate well-informed ideas by making sure they know material and then encouraging them to speak. As a leader, he maintains this high bar for his students through **Sincerity** (with Order, Basics and Review, Tempo, Peer Relationships, Explicitness, and Enthusiasm): showing in actions that he takes his work and his field seriously, willfully committing to do what is needed to help his students learn and make their class time worthwhile. And he actively looks for signs of their reciprocal commitment in his course, e.g., through their use of **Humor** (away from Apathy, with Exemptions and Friendship): actions that demonstrate an individual's being engaged, staying in contact, and giving focused effort.
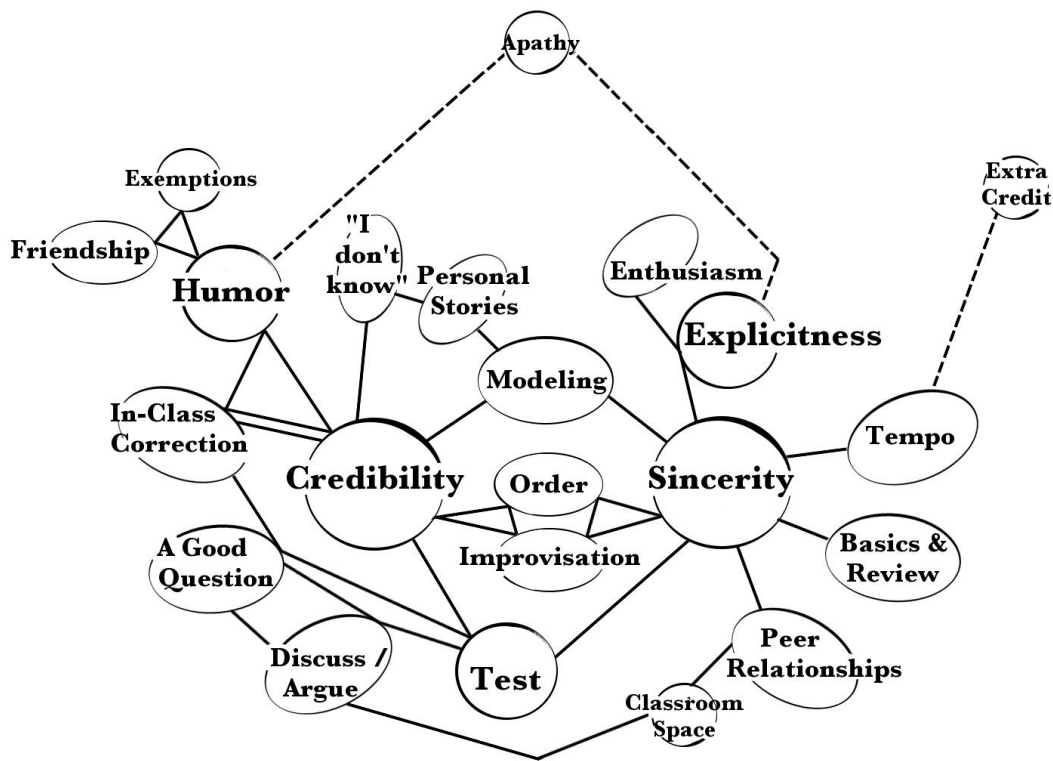
*Figure 14.* M's Personal Dictionary – a principled framework for teaching. Illustrated as a 21-word web.

Many of M's explanations for the 21 teaching-related terms contain multiple shared notions and cross-references, creating a comparatively dense web of interconnections in his personal dictionary (compared with V's and B's). This makes so many of the concepts seem equivalently essential, that at first it was difficult for me to decide where—through which topic-term—I should begin explaining his principled notions for teaching practice: Modeling and In-Class Correction, Tests and Discussion / Argument are all clearly integral to his overall teaching approach. But as I ruminated over his terms' connections, I recognized that the valued notions (e.g., a teacher's relatableness, a student's visible commitment, both sides' engagement and intellectual resilience) that he expresses across these more procedural terms, above, are themselves held together—at a higher moral level—by his conceptions of Credibililty and Sincerity.

Accordingly, I will describe the coherence patterns in M's personal dictionary using these two topic-terms as organizational markers.

*Credibility***:**

M's notion of **Credibility** creates a central link, tying together his other explanations about making students and teachers intellectual equals in the writing classroom. When asked about Credibility, he immediately distinguishes it as **Teacher Credibility** (a perceivable experience and subject-matter knowledge which the teacher is "doomed" without: "they're gonna look at me and go, 'Well, who am I writing for? This idiot?'") and **Student Credibility** (a basic knowledge foundation that the students have to build—in areas they don't yet know—so that they have the fuel to demonstrate their intellect: "once you give them the information and they have the brains to put it together, … I go, 'I know none of these artists … This is the time you teach me'"). By this explanation, M makes clear that what distinguished himself from his students is mainly how long and deeply he has interacted with the course's constituent topics and materials.

This notion then ties Credibility with M's idea of **Modeling**—associated with **Personal Stories** and **"I Don't Know"**—which he sees as an important educational tool that *humanizes* a teacher: making them relatable and credible as models in learning, for students (thus, his belief that a teacher should share their own experiences of effort, success, and failure with course subject-matter: "I think they have to know, 'I *know* this because I'm in the trenches as well'"). Likewise, this idea of Credibility compliments his definition of **In-Class Correction**: a way to make students aware of professional standards for thinking and writing, and so calling them to their full potential ("I have no problem with saying to somebody, 'That is not an appropriate answer,' … that's exactly the truth; I'm treating you like an intellectual equal").

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So too, M's goal of student Credibility (and his use of In-Class Correction) links to his idea of **Tests**. M sees tests as a tool for facilitating intelligent discussions: not merely assessing student reading-comprehension and synthesis, but more functionally ensuring that students know and can refer to the course material as they engage in intellectual idea-trading with each other.

*Discussion / Argument***:**

M fleshes out this line of thought, about how best to get his students publicly articulating and supporting their ideas for an audience, through a cluster of topic-terms tied together through his explanation of **Discuss / Argue**. His repeated emphasis on the value of student ideas being well-Articulated connects his description of Discuss / Argue to both those of Test and "A Good Question": **Tests** conveying the importance of well-*Informed* class discussions (i.e., students having something of substance to articulate) and **"A Good Question"** explicating the importance of original *Thinking* in class discussions (i.e., students understanding what they articulate, not repeating but creating and sharing: "What I like most of all are different and unexpected readings of the material. … I am trying to teach *ambiguity* and *opposition* so … as long as they *read the material and can defend their answers* that is the best"). Discuss / Argue then sits between this preparatory set-up and this ideal outcome, as the moment of classroom interaction where M describes himself actively orchestrating that intellectual sparring between students:

> I love to set kids up. I mean, sometimes it gets out-of-hand and the kids will go, "Enough of that already," but sure: [I point out] "He said this; you said this," and they look at me and go, "Yyy–I didn't say it, they said it," [and they] argue with each other.

Oh, I think that's *really* important. And that they can articulate their ideas and say, "Well, this is what I believe," and they don't have to go, "That's his opinion and he's entitled to it." Because—No. That's, again, not a real-world answer.

Here, in the dialogic reenactment above, M recounts an archetypal situation where he listens to students' ideas and then pits them against one another as an opportunity for them to practice that "real-world" skill of clarifying and defending their own intellectual perspectives. Seeing Discuss / Argue as a social means toward the course's educational goals, then, ties this topic to **Peer Relationships** and **Classroom Space**, clarifying how (in the former) M sees it as educationally "very" important that students "get a chance to talk to each other, to hear each other," and why (in the latter) he encourages classes to intermingle and values their congeniality with one another.

### *Sincerity***:**

There is a moment in M's description of "Classroom Space" that resonates with many other moments across his topic-term descriptions; a moment where he recounts putting substantial effort into making his class better, willingly learning from students where his methods succeed or fall short, and adjusting with those lessons in mind ("Sometimes I move people around myself. Once I had a student who never spoke and sat in the back row and I moved her to the front. She emailed me to say that she needed to sit at the back near the door as she suffered from agoraphobia! How was I to know!!! So now I leave them alone, though I might mention it to them."). Indirectly, these moments help tie together M's descriptions of classroom Tempo and Peer Relationships, Order and Basics / Review, Explicitness and Enthusiasm, through one common thread; **Sincerity**: being willfully committing to do what is needed to help students learn and make class time worthwhile.

M's embodiment of this Sincerity in his teaching practice, as he defines and describes it below, is obvious to those who observe or experience it:

> You can have no doubt by now that I am a very 'sincere' and dedicated teacher who wants to guide and help his students learn certain important elements and devices and also make their time in the class worthwhile. If anything *my students realize that I take my teaching and subject matter seriously*.

His descriptions of his various teaching practices, across the topic-terms, then point back time-and-again to this idea of Willful Commitment. That dedicated determination is evident in his described approach to **Order** ("even if I've read the article for the last 20 years, I *still* read the article the night before, I still make notes on it, I still see things I haven't seen before; I think students *need* to know 'This class, we're going to go through *this*' … so I think the teacher has to know what they want to cover that day and what the issues"); likewise his dogged attitude toward **Basics / Review** ("You need to do that, and need to go over—and again and again and again and again over—the material. They tell me – I don't know if you learned this – you retain 40% the first time you hear something, and then 60% the second time. So I know they're not going to get it the first time"). That drive is explicit in his expectations for students in course **Tempo** ("I have a theory that *time (like money) expands to meet our needs*. … I think students have to work out how to manage their time but generally they get the work done and I have very few slackers"); likewise in his immediate, clear, definitive self expectations when it comes to teacher **Enthusiasm** ("Yes, you must be").

***Humor*:**

As definitive as M is in stating the necessity of teachers having Enthusiasm, he is equally definitive about the importance of students being engaged and committed in the course. This

thread—of valuing visible student Engagement—helps to bring together a final cluster of terms in M's personal dictionary, most strikingly showing an antithetical relationship between his practical perceptions of Apathy and Humor. M points out that **Humor** is an intellectual way of seeing, and that the trade of jokes between students and teachers shows a level of mutual understanding:

> I think you have to have some sort of intellectual *ability*—when Akasha said, 'You're a bastard,' that day, I *knew* that, if she was *really* angry with me? She would never *dare* say a phrase like that to a teacher. So it was obviously—the students can use it back. And sometimes they can be very *funny*.

But more basic than teachers' and students' intellectual rapport, M begins explaining Humor's classroom importance by noting that when students merely *find* something funny, that is evidence of their mental presence with the course group: "if the kids are laughing, they're engaged." This idea then ties M's notion of Humor in with his explanations of both **Exemptions** and **Friendships**, practices which M commonly qualifies as based on whether or not the students' show proactively that they are engaged, connected:

> [Exemptions] "I've had students who miss class for four weeks and then turn up with a paper. I say, 'Drop the class … it's not a correspondence course.' So no. But … <u>As long as they contact me</u> and give me something. I mean, again, <u>I know [Akasha]'s trying</u>. She couldn't get the movie; she wrote me in despair. I said, 'Don't worry about it, we'll talk about it in class.'"

> [Friendship] "I do have a lot of students <u>who keep in touch with me</u> … <u>the kids came to me</u> and said, 'Will you come to our concert next week?' Sure I've arranged my schedule, I will go to the concert. <u>If AJ gets in touch with me</u>, I'll be friends with him."

M's response to the term Apathy, by contrast, helps to illuminate this value placed on engagement as the factor uniting these notions of Humor, Exemptions, and Friendship. His initial response to **Apathy** is simple and definitive: it has no place in his class ("Apathy? Don't believe in it"). He then follows that by noting the standard he sets by his own example ("I mean, one thing they can not say about me is I'm apathetic"), and the standard he maintains by his determination and clarity with the students ("Nothing that annoys me more [than student apathy]; I want them to be involved, engaged. I give them that Edgar Allan Poe line, 'Do you believe in ghosts? I do when I'm writing my short story' [I tell them] 'Be in this class, be engaged.' And it works. They're engaged"). Between these four topic-terms, M's position toward students in his course is quite unambiguous: he expects them to show him, in actions, their commitment to the course; the same way that he shows them, in actions, his dedication to to helping them learn through the course.

## A Unified Statement of Ideas-for-Principled-Practice

So here, as with V and B in the previous sections, M's expert understandings of teaching show a cohesive unity and a principled organization. A few of his ideas and their interconnections may be somewhat tacit (for example, whether he overtly recognizes the principle unifying his protocols for student exemptions and extracurricular friendships). And, as the word-web makes visible, his interwoven definitions are complex in ways that resist a clear linear reduction.

Nonetheless, M's general principles and memories of dialogic classroom experience—together, in his personal dictionary about teaching—create a network that he can apply readily to recognizable moments in educating new students and refining new courses (whereas divided, his explanations might come across as merely mundane platitudes

and frivolous anecdotes). M's ideas are *ordered*, through a hierarchy of educational values (what a learning environment should be: e.g., serious, well-informed, intellectually active, demanding, worthwhile, sensitive, humanized, real-world preparation), and are *organized for use*, grounded in familiar scenarios and key turning-points of the educational exchange. Thus, by rooting his values-based ideas in resonant patterns of experience, M provides a glimpse of where/when certain beliefs rise to primacy, for him, in practice: Modeling and Order from day 1, Tests and In-Class Correction and Debate as the class begins to cohere, Basics Review and Humor—with a little bit of Personal Stories and hints of Friendship—as the course dialog matures.

      With that principled framework in mind, we now have a touchstone for examining the social-emotional foundations and the academic-intellectual progress of M's upper-division university writing course: how he connects with his students (as a person) within a shared learning environment, and how he then leads and facilitates students' educational progress (in writing) through that environment.

**M, as a Learning Environment: Social Foundations of the Educational Exchange**

      Of the three teachers, M's educational exchange with his students seems the clearest-cut from intention to effect: he describes plainly for me what he does (not even as intentions, but as actions "I am" "I do"), does what he has described with consistency and tenacious energy, and leaves his students reporting unambiguously (and with almost unanimous agreement) that they know what his educational goals are—and that they believe he has accomplished some semblance of those goals with them, and that they appreciate that learning experience. The details of the classroom dialogs that stuck with me, after my days observing M and his students, centered around M's energy and connection: the intensity with

which he talked about the purpose and the practical details of writing, binding compositional technique and art together as equivalently and inextricably important ("I want you to underline this with your *blood*: assume a potentially antagonistic audience" "Plagiarism. I'll chop off your hands, don't do it"); also the specificity with which he inserted students' interests and ideas into both his lessons and his casual asides, cementing their identity in his classroom as indivisibly students of writing and uniquely driven individuals ("Let's look at your man Socrates, you [Stan] came up with, and he'd be a good argument to use as someone who did..." "Akasha, did you go to the dance thing this weekend? There was a very good review of it in the News Press today").

In this case, again, using an organized understanding of M's personal, practical, principled idiolect of intentions as an educator to illuminate the details of his observable classroom exchanges (and to assess his students' reflections on that learning experience) provides a unique level of insight into an educational dialog. With V, analyzing the arc of a course dialog and the educational reflections of students on that exchange, using the teacher's own framework of values and intentions, highlights which practical priorities (those core academic lessons, and those essential social-emotional elements, of an ideal educational exchange) V dedicates his main efforts to when situational stresses and workloads undermine his ideal levels of enthusiasm, focus, and investment. With B, exploring her course's dialog and her students' reflections, using the lens of her experience-based educational values and intentions, clarifies how she shapes course structures and conversations using students' feedback responsively, to ensure that she is still achieving her core aims academically and social-emotionally within an educational institution and culture that do not align ideally with her teaching philosophy.

With M, recognizing this framework of his educational values and intentions helps to show where students' reflections demonstrate a synchrony with their teacher in the educational exchange: not merely mirroring the words and phrases that M repeats heavy-handedly across the arc of the course, but personalizing for themselves the deeper attitudes and practical meanings of those messages. A single observation of M's classroom might leave an erroneous impression: his rapid pace and curt correcting of student answers stand out in memory, at odds with the gentler conventional etiquette of American educators. A standardized interview with his students might provide a superficial view of instructional success: students enjoyed the conversations, remembered content from the lessons, and report appreciating and using that material. Yet here, with the teacher's motivated intentions and the researcher's first-hand observations informing analysis of the student's reflections, one can explore more complexly the dialogic teacher-student learning relationship: how M's core (academic) messages have worked into the students' immediate voices and lives, and how his (social emotional) passion for the subject-matter and care for those students work integrally to persuade students' positive attention, intellectual effort, and active participation in receiving those messages.

Whereas my notes for V's course are dappled with signs of self-deprecation and humor, and B's with symbols of hands-on activities and openings for student feedback, my notes on M's course are characterized by emphatic underlines and cross-outs, Roberval balance-scales and BTW's: signs of M pushing home points about what is crucial for writers to remember or detrimental for them to do, repeating his core principle of acknowledging opposing views and telling side-stories from his experience like fables to illustrate his lessons. Humor does arise in his class, but usually as an aside, most notably in large guffaws as students respond to him being a lovable "hard-ass" ("Akasha, you still with us? Fading a

little bit? … Yeah, it's been a long day for all of us. Too bad [laughter]" "Thank you, Mr Biscuits. I *don't* care. [laughter]"). And M does prompt students to participate actively, but consistently adjusts ("[Seena-Day reads a passage] A little louder, a little slower. [SD: 'Sorry...']") and challenges them ("I don't think it is … I would argue that … Yes. So?") in what they offer, drawing out—as students describe it by the course's end—their best.

Below, I will draw on selections of data from surveys, interviews, classroom notes and video-recordings to highlight the defining details of M's progressive educational dialog with his students in this writing course: their views of one another personally and scholastically, their motives in the course, and their pragmatic arc toward a more synchronous dialog together in pursuing those goals.

## The Personal (intersubjective): Who "We" are in this Dialog

When looking at the social-emotional dynamics among M and his students, it is useful to keep in mind the way that he describes his teaching style – an intentional manner based in his formative educational experiences in an orthodox family and in European schooling systems. Like V an B, he pursues honest and engaged discussions with his students, with the educational goals of helping them hone their thinking and writing abilities and also enjoy arguing intelligently with others about topics they care about. But M's approach for fostering that interpersonal relationship with students is distinct: rather than using casual humor and gentle encouragement, he adopts a "demanding hardass" approach marked by empathy-sans-sympathy: seeking to understand and relate with students' individual challenges on a personal level while persistently driving home—with concerned seriousness—the message that the real world will not be lenient with its demands and expectations, and that his bluntness and high standards are meant to prepare them for that.

In our interview (see previous sections), this is the image that M describes for himself: a person who believes in his students' intellectual abilities, understands generally where their pretensions as writers and their temptations to slide by come from, and who is willing to give them the vital jolt they need to summon forth their fuller efforts and reflection. Knowing how M intends to think about and interact with his students, as a base for their educational exchanges, then helps in making pragmatic sense of his apparent attitudes and manner toward those students—and consequently their interpretations of his presence as a classroom leader.

When I ask M to place his students on a Performance/Attachment Grid—from "problematic" to "high" in their academic performance, and from "challenging" to "aligning" on their social orientation toward B's course ideas and aims—he interacts with the exercise in a manner that reflects distinctly his orderly orthodox upbringing alongside his complexly critical and supportive disposition toward his students. He prefaces the activity by saying that the students in this class I observed got lower grades than in his other writing section (three As and seven Bs, in a class of fifteen), yet makes a side-note that these students' life circumstances were influencing their work, and proceeds to place two-thirds of the class in the "High Performing" area of the grid. Regarding their social relation to him and the course, he spreads them out at first between "aligning" and "challenging," but then reconsiders because he doesn't want to imply anything negative about them (including one student, Jessica, who was particularly difficult up until the end), and finally states that really he sees them *all* in the "High Performing" category, before wistfully accepting his initial placements:

> Do I hear ['Challenging'] as negative? Because I didn't see any of these kids as
>
> negative. … 'parroting / distant, distracted / stubborn, takes things personally.'

I mean, Jessica, you could argue that she was *like* that. But I don't see her—

she wasn't parroting, she wasn't—I didn't see her in that *category*. … You

know, I {laughs} hate to put them all up in here: I really would put them all

up in here, in the *Higher Performance*. Even though they didn't *do* well, I felt

like in the room? … Okay, let's leave it as it is—I don't know if it's an

*accurate* assessment, but for want of another way to go with it.

So we see M wrestling with the confines of the activity in representing the way he views

them, wanting to add more complexity and—importantly—recognition of students' effort

and potential, beyond what shows in their work (as one student said in reflections "I feel like

he's more about analyzing people for their ideas, instead of just what they produce on

paper").

This personal depth with which M views his students, however, runs at odds with his

orthodox disposition to adhere to the rules of the activity, and so he struggles with it more so

than the other teachers. Whereas V places all his students as High and Medium performing

(resistant to judging them) and moves them around, and B distributes her students along

boundary lines (resistant to oversimplifying their individual complexity), M meticulously

reads the category sub-descriptions and challenges the form while adhering strictly to its

guidelines (resistant to disrespecting the predetermined structure). When I point out that the

other teachers manipulated the activity's boundaries, he expresses relief and amusement,

reiterating that he relates with his students much more complexly than a nine-box grid can

represent (and more positively than a word like "Challenge" implies):

Really?! It never even *occurred* to me—see, that's my orthodoxy. It comes

out there: you gave me the box, I 'Alright, well...' I didn't even *think* to think

of that. My feeling was that it didn't quite accurately capture the problems—

or the issues, I should say. Like you've got Akasha, who I've never felt her

challenge—I mean, I've had far far worse than that before, people who just

really object to things.

M's way of placing students, from beginning to end, belies a firm-and-professional but caring-and-personal relationship with them. His verbal contemplation when choosing where each student should go, initially, hints at the way he interweaves his academic and interpersonal connection with them ("Mmmm. I'd put Thomas here. So, he wrote me a very nice note, later on"), how nuanced is his image of their social presence ("[Stan] is here. But he also is *here*, I think. I mean, he can't be in all three"), and how deep below their apparent surface he looks for their true personal abilities ("Anon—here ['High Performing']. Because she was bright. She didn't do very well, but she was").

When I mention to M that students recognize and appreciate him being aware of their personal moods and feelings from day-to-day, checking in on them if they look distant and easing off of pressuring them to participate when they look tired, he states that this is something he hopes they notice. He explains that this is part of the social-emotional environment he intends to establish in his classroom, one where students feel pressure to rise and meet high standards of engagement intellectually, but also feel safe and respected in that educational exchange:

Yes. That's good, I'm glad they noticed that, because—There's sometimes I

say the first day, "I'm gonna push you, and if you say, 'No,' the ground's not

going to open up under you." And yes, I'll push them to a certain point. I

mean, what I hate is, "I don't know," or, "I have nothing to say," because my

feeling is: here's where you should; you're at the university. I still have that

grandiose idea of The University.

And yes, if they're having, I can see sometimes—somebody came in and she

was awful, she looked pale and sickly, and—sure, I'm not going to badger

her. And then some of them will e-mail me in advance and say, "I'm going

through a bad time," and so on so forth. Good.

This balance of pressure and support that M strives to provide in student's learning

experiences comes across in the way he reenacts his dialogs with them, understanding (as

above) but also pressing the imperative that they must persist and get their work done—so

that they will be ready for the real world, and can realize their full potential. One example of

this is the worried tone he takes when confiding in me about Stan, a star student who "walks

on water, but doesn't know" his potential. M describes how he is supporting Stan, even

helping him to submit his paper to a University writing competition, but worries that he may

not be able to look past his personal difficulties and pull up his grades.

He's very articulate. … It's too bad. He told me he's been going through a lot

of trouble. His girlfriend left him. He told me that was a big issue for him. I

was Mister Sympathetic, I said, "Well that always happ[ens]: life happens.

You've just gotta—there's always going to be something." I mean hey,

haven't we all been there, when shit's come down the pipe. But you've got

the paper to get done and you just go, "I'll put that [aside for now]."

In this narrated reenactment of their dialog, M makes clear that his hard (sarcastically

"Mister Sympathetic") ethos with students is really a sign of care for them: empathizing with

their situations, championing their abilities and ideas, and pushing them to make the most of

those opportunities by being determined, owning their responsibilities, and getting things

done.

Students' responses on mid-term surveys (Table 7.1) and in course-end panel interviews about the course corroborate this intersubjective reality. Their survey responses below show strongest explicit consensus around M's respect for students' views, interest in their ideas, active engagement in exploring their thoughts with them, and belief in their abilities—especially as writers. Yet students also show a marked uncertainty or ambivalence about claiming that M is globally impressed with or personally agrees with their ideas, likely reflecting M's constant challenges and notes on opposing viewpoints as they debate ideas intellectually together in the classroom.

Table 7.1
Student mid-term survey responses, "What the teacher thinks of you." Ordered by consensus, high to low.

| | |
|---|---|
| The teacher respects my opinions. | (4/4 = True) |
| The teacher is uninterested in my ideas. | (4/4 = False) |
| The teacher does not really notice/interact with me. | (4/4 = False) |
| | |
| The teacher wants to hear what I have to say. | (4/5 = True, 1/5 = neutral) |
| The teacher does not think my writing will improve. | (4/5 = False, 1/5 = neutral) |
| The teacher dislikes me. | (3/4 = False, 1/4 = neutral) |
| The teacher believes in my abilities. | (2/3 = True, 1/3 = neutral) |
| The teacher is not impressed with my effort. | (2/3 = False, 1/3 = neutral) |
| | |
| The teacher feels that my input enriches the class. | (2/3 = neutral, 1/3 = True) |
| The teacher disapproves of my opinions. | (3/4 = neutral, 1/4 = False) |
| The teacher trusts me. | (3/3 = neutral) |
| The teacher wants to be my friend. | (3/3 = neutral) |

Students' reflective statements during the course-end panel interview elaborate on M's uniquely hard-nosed, tough-love manner as a leader in the course's social-emotional environment. The first sentence they offer, when I ask students to describe how M's class compares to other university writing classes they've had—after a chorus of individuals saying "better, way better"—is "More personal, and more intense." Students then go on to

explain how M shows throughout the course dialog that he is learning about them as individuals, and takes seriously their ideas and interests:

>**Marjorie** "How he knew all of our names and remembered a little—even a little thing—about us, was cool. Because he'd refer to us and remember an idea that we had the week before, and 'You were talking about *this*.' And that was cool."

>**Smalias** "I haven't really had a teacher since high school that I felt has <u>actually gotten to know me</u>. Even though we only come here two days a week or something … he <u>will email all of us something that he thinks we'll find interesting</u> [**Marjorie**: nods, Seena-Day: "Yeah"], and <u>remembers</u> 'Oh, you're a film major. What do you think of *this*?'"

>It's very rare, in such a big school, to have a professor that you know knows you. And then it makes you want to do more, because—like, some random person comes up to you and calls you stupid, you're like 'Okay, you don't know me'—but if someone you know calls you stupid, it's like 'Aw shit' [Whole class laughs]."

As Smalias notes, M's personal connection with students makes his opinion of them meaningful, socially and emotionally and thus becomes a motivating factor for them in the course. The students also mention appreciating the knowledge that he shares with them, both from his life experiences and his rich stores of literary and arts exposure. As Smalias mentions above, he selects his side anecdotes and recommendations based on what he thinks students will find interesting. But as Stan and Seena-Day point out, these stories also enrich students' sense of knowing M and connecting with him on a human level:

**Stan** "I agree with you, he probably came off a little intense to start:

everything about him is just kind of intense. [class laughs] But … he kept

unraveling more about his own personal life, as it went on. And it was

interesting, you kind of had a vested interest in coming to class because you

wanted to find out something else that was, hard about what he had done, or

something."

**Seena-Day** "I liked his random quotes. He always had some random quotes

that were going with everything, like a commercial or something. [**Mil**: In his

newspaper. "I found *this* article!"] He's very cultured, and that was cool."

While students find his supplemental sharing to be cute and endearing, they also recognize

how effective he is at relating with students in their late teens and early twenties. As AJ

points out, few teachers treat students their age as competent independent thinkers, so his

interest in debating intellectually with them is (as Akasha says) "refreshing" and motivating,

as it respects their maturity level and supports a more genuinely open exchange. Also, as

Seena-Day, Stan, and Akasha point out, M is prepared and confident as a leader, but also

non-judgmental and understanding of students being less-than-prepared sometimes, which

makes them feel reassured and comfortable with participating in class as well as being

honest about what is hindering them on their off-days:

**AJ** "He's just really good at dealing with people our age, because he's really

open-minded and he really wants your opinion. The other TAs or Professors

that teach around here … don't *know* how to deal with people our age. They

still teach it like middle school and high school. [Akasha: "It's like they're

walking on eggshells."] Yeah. And *this* guy, like I said, you could tell he was

more into having an intellectual discussion—not like an *intellectual*

discussion, but somewhat of a discussion."

**Seena-Day** "My opinion is, for teachers, if *you're* comfortable up there, then

you're going to make me feel more comfortable. And when he comes in, he's

*hella* comfortable. [**others**: Yeah.] Even if Nobody's saying anything, he's not

shook. He's like, 'Alright, what's going on? What's good?' He doesn't second-

guess anything. He's comfortable, he knows what he's talking about, and he

can keep on talking until you guys want to give some *input*. And I think that

made me feel more reassured, more comfortable to even say something in

class. Because he just felt so comfortable."

**Stan** "Or like the situations where you'll be zoning out—or you'll be really

hungover or something—and just be in class like, 'Uhhh,' and he'll look at you

like, 'Hey! You alright, you gonna make it?' Like, 'Yeah, I'm fine.' [Whole

class laughs]"

**Akasha** "I like that part of it, too. Like, 'You look reeeally tired,' but kind of

like letting you slip. *Some* days you're just tired and hungover. [**Seena-Day**:

"And then he'll tell you a story about some kid on acid that came into the

class" Whole class responds, remembering] Or talk to me about our drug-

dealer friends. [**Seena-Day**: "Right!"]"

The students reenact dialogs not just from their own class-group's experience, but from

stories M has shared about other students (e.g., the student who came in and told M he was

on LSD), to communicate the kind of social-emotional environment his leadership creates:

respectful and accepting, intense and personal, interesting and motivating. Moreover, the fact

that he offers them memorable stories about his other student exchanges points to his

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purposefulness in that leadership: his stories are amusing, but set a model, a president, a tacit

promise about how he will respond in even extreme cases—with understanding and good

humor, without ever lowering his expectations.

These detailed individual-level insights help to make sense of general trends in

students' responses to the the mid-quarter surveys, where they assess the experience of

learning with M as a leader in an educational environment.

Regarding M's character, beliefs and values in and beyond the class, students

reported sensing most notably his "liberal" "definitely Democratic" worldview and his love

of "art and culture" ("well read" "likes movies"). They also mention his "European" mix of

beliefs and traditions, that he is definitely "not very religious" but believes in God, that he is

confident and wears "very well put-together and sharp" clothes. They describe M's

personality as one that is "encouraging," "positive," and "entertaining" to them: an

atmosphere he evokes by his passion (enthusiastic, talkative, always has something to say),

his avid and ongoing self-education (knowledgeable{2}, learned, sophisticated), and his bold

and thoughtful manner in sharing what he has learned (intelligent, insightful, opinionated,

confident). Likewise, they describe M's teaching style as one that they enjoy learning through

(engaging, interesting{2}, fun): a manner of educating that is energetic and stimulating (fast

paced, interactive{2}, challenging), widely exposed and well-informed (cultured, modern),

and thoughtfully planned and precisely executed (prepared, very logical, Organized, strict).

This overall understanding, confident, and positively demanding social presence that

M exudes with students, then, helps in explaining how they describe the feeling of

interacting with him during the course. Students describe the way M's passion and attention

to their ideas stimulates them to be present and participate (pressured, excited, "interest for

opinions"), and how that direct and critical attention feels both encouraging (better about

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myself, "(sometimes) intelligent") and high stakes emotionally ("it depends on what subject," Intimidating, "if I know the answer I feel confident, but if I don't I feel embarrassed"), but ultimately a safe and rewarding exchange (understanding, enlightening). Metaphorically, the animals to which students compare M seem to highlight these essential aspects of his presence: his sharp observational intelligence (an owl{3}) and his powerfully intense interactive style (A RAPTOR, liger [lion+tiger], t-rex).

Ultimately, the students all had unique experiences of M's course: whether they interpreted his intense energy as overwhelming or enticingly active, his direct feedback as weakly supportive or viscerally motivating, his structural preciseness as taxing or compelling, and his copious colorful asides as superficial tangents or effective memories for internalizing important lessons. Yet underneath this span of perspectives, all the students interviewed and surveyed seem to agree largely about M's passionate, demanding, attentive, and confident personal manner in teaching, and about the energetic, motivating, respectful and reassuring learning environment that emerges around that style of classroom leadership.

**The Practical (learning-centered): How "We" are Connecting with Content in this Dialog**

As interesting and invigorating as M's manner is—as enjoyable and rewarding as that is in its own right—both M and his students express a clear understanding that his driving purpose is educational: he is fostering an plain-spoken and actively participatory social-emotional environment in the classroom as a foundation for persuading students to be more responsible an invested in doing their work as writers in university, to feel more familiar and confident in learning about complex topics and arguing opposing views on them, and to see

in themselves evidence of their full intellectual and technical potential as writers—so that they can get work done in the real world, with a more resilient disposition toward criticism and a more open-minded awareness of others views and reasons.

In the space of the classroom, M constantly brings conversations back to his main points for the course: know opposing views so that you can address them persuasively, know the relevant information inside-and-out so you can support your viewpoint powerfully, and remember the details of orderly writing so that your syntax and formatting fortify your authorial voice. Whereas V tends to communicate his motives and intentions in a characteristically informal way through conversations with students, and B establishes her learning community mindset through spoken guidelines during student-centered activities and reflections, M drives home his messages through repeating and repeating into memory, and having students gradually fill in for him, those core refrains.

So M's focus in course exchanges with students is not to be a controlling authoritarian, nor an amusing storyteller; not to be dominantly demanding and corrective, nor self-indulgently effusive and personal. His practical goal is to use these interpersonal elements (clear structure, memorable stories, direct feedback, human understanding) to spur students toward their richest intellectual thinking and their most sharp and powerful writing. When students reflect on the course, they clearly recognize what M wants from them as writers and how he has organized the course to move them progressively toward those end goals: the words "push" and "pull," and the sentiment they are all smart and competent enough to argue as sharply and informedly as M, arises prevalently as they discuss M's educational method.

This understanding, consequently, shapes their expectations of M and their efforts in his course: what they trust him to do and rely on him to give, and so what caliber of work

they produce independently when preparing for each coming day, and how they expect he will respond to and use those offerings to further their course.

Perhaps M's clearest statement about his teaching method comes toward the end of the term, when decides to take a moment to explain to me his "orthodoxy." At first, it is unclear why he thinks this bit of his family history is so important for me in understanding how he structures and teaches the course. Then he begins describing how that orthodox mindset has "secularized" in his mind, and how that disposition toward finding and delineating the right versus the wrong way—the way that saves you versus the way that undermines you—has become elemental in his approach to teaching students about writing:

I was raised in a very very orthodox family. And when you're orthodox, you're told that there are certain things you've got to do and you've got to do it this way. … And I think some of that has secularized in my head into, "There's a way to do this, and you have to do it this way, and this is a very righteous way to do it, and if you do it this way, you'll be saved" kind of termin[ology]. I don't say that to the kids.

But I did notice one year, why was I getting worked up over things … I think in my case, it comes from the idea that there is a right way to do things, and if you do it the right way then you're guaranteed success, and if you do it the wrong way it shows no respect for the particular subject or the area that you've taken on. And I think that comes from that mentality.

You know, it only occurred to me a few years ago that that's what I was thinking and why I was so particular about things. So I wanted to add that into the mix, because I think it might be interesting, as I said coming from a very, very, very orthodox, devout family. Even though I myself am very loose

on the rules now—at least in religion, but—not in terms of writing. That's

become my new religion.

M points out that all teachers have this tendency to be particular about certain details in

writing being accurate ("B has the same thing about commas and semicolons"), but the way

he applies that expert's particularity in his educational practice with students—he has

realized, after decades of teaching and reflecting—is his personal translation of that

ritualized approach for disseminating valued ideas and habits.

When watching M teach in the classroom, through this lens of secularized orthodoxy,

so many details of his exchange with students resonate with that sense of structured ritual

and respectful contemplation: the way he reads and has students read aloud passages from

assigned articles like revered scripture for reflection, the way he elongates final syllables in

his calls for response ("But more importantlyyyy? … Yes, psychology") maintaining the

continuous flow of the conversation, and the way he commands students to remember key

points with a tone of mortal importance—driving home the value of those lessons like

students' future success depends on it.

When students describe their experience of the workload and class discussions in his

writing course, they clarify how M's course assignments and activities effectively compel

students to contemplate reverently the literature they read and encourage them to proclaim

their own views of those topics as part of the class's intellectual congregation. Mil starts off

this conversation, below, by mentioning how motivated he is to do his work and come to

class, because of the discussions that M either leads or seeds among the students. Marjorie

seconds this, giving an example of a day that she really regretted missing, because she

wanted to participate in that day's debate about the reading:

**Mil** "I was driven to do my work, because I wanted to participate in class. And when I had to miss, I would wonder 'What's Prof M discussing today?'"

**Marjorie** "Going off what Mil just said: I missed last week's Wednesday class about <u>Sweetheart from Song Tra Bong</u>, and I'm like 'I wasn't here last week, what'd I miss?' And then I was talking to Stan about that 'Obviously, Mary Whatever represented innocence' and then Mil turns around. He's like 'Right?! Why weren't you here to support me?' Because apparently there was a thing [debate] about feminism that I missed, and I was like 'Dang it! I missed that argument?! That could have been so good!' [**Seena-Day**: "Yeah, that was one of the best days."] Aw, and I missed it!"

This memory sets the whole panel abuzz with one another, recollecting moments of classroom debate. Akasha points out, however, that the workload for the class is unreasonable, and that M knows this but justifies it by asserting the educational importance of this course for them. AJ disputes whether it was really that much work, but for the most part, the class agrees that M's reading responses require an unusually substantial dedication of time and mental effort. Mil concedes this, but points out that that preparatory work *enabled* the class to have those intellectually rigorous and animated discussions that they so valued. Even Akasha is quick to acknowledge this point, that M's laborious assignments served a clear practical educational purpose:

**Akasha** "He does assign a Lot of work. [Whole class erupts in agreement] It's a GE class. I have so many major classes. … [And those reading responses] took me a couple of hours. … And he does have that off-putting, 'You're gonna get my work done. This is more important than any other class.' Which is what he *said* the first class. [Whole class: "Yeah."]"

**Mil** "All the extra work, it really does suck. Because I think out of everyone

in the class, I hate doing work the most. [laughs] But, doing that work before

class is really what allowed us to have the discussions that we *did* have in

class. Because—yeah, we could have just read the story—but it was doing the

actual response that helped us gather our thoughts *about* the story before we

got here and talked about it."

**Akasha** "And—made sure that we were actually reading."

Extending Akasha's note beyond the pragmatic level—that reading responses get students to

read—Mr Biscuits explains that M's assignments are crafted so that they compelled him to

read texts until he understood both the author's and his own ideas about the topic. That firm

structure of the reading response, coupled with the motive to participate in the course

discussion about the reading, moved Mr Biscuits past what he would have done otherwise

(i.e., skim the text and dismiss it as incoherent) and got him to read for understanding and

reflect with intellectual purpose:

**Mr Biscuits** "The responses did a good job at making sure you really

understood the readings, so you could come to the discussions with

something to bring. I tried to do the responses just skimming through it, and I

found that I actually *did* have to *go* and read parts of it or—and end up

reading the whole thing, and understanding every piece of it.

Like for instance, the reading by the pastor-guy on Vietnam veterans [**Mil**,

**Marjorie** vocalize remembering it]. When I first read that, I thought 'I have

no idea what I just read. I don't know how to respond to this, I don't even

know what this *is*.' And through—because of the nature of the response—he

wanted us to, he had these three things: there was the first paragraph, like, the

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main idea, and your response and the idea, and then the conclusion. And

getting the main idea out of something, and putting it into that [structure], it

made me read the thing like five times before I could do it."

This student conversation conveys how M's orthodox-fashioned methods in the writing

classroom help him practically to accomplish his educational aims: he pushes students hard

to meet his scholastic standards, but with a ritualized structure that makes that work familiar

and repeatable, and a communal element that makes those efforts socially-emotionally and

intellectually rewarding. At the same time, these activities drive home core lessons about the

value of knowing your topic and the importance of communicating your ideas with opposing

viewpoints in mind, by providing students with regular opportunities to apply their

knowledge in challenging one another's personal responses to shared subject-matter.

It is worth noting, here, how important the social-emotional foundations that M

establishes with students become when pursuing his academic goals with them. In class

lessons and discussions, M uses his "European" style of direct feedback and corrections to

hold students to a high standard of intellectual discourse. M listens intently as students

speak, but also interjects often to draw out students' fuller ideas and keep them thinking

critically. When students reflect on this, they are clearly cognizant of how easy it would be

for a teacher to "terrorize" his students (as V would phrase it) with this approach. Yet, given

B's personal connection with the students and the non-judgmental learning atmosphere he

establishes in their dialogs, students receive these critiques quite resiliently and

constructively:

**Seena-Day** "I don't feel like the way he did it made you feel like, 'Oh gosh, I

don't ever want to talk in this class again.' It made you like, 'Well, Damn!

What's the right answer? Let me find it.' You know what I mean? It made

you *want* to get running."

**Mil** "It's like, 'In your face, M.'"

**AJ** "You start thinking more before you speak, too, if anytime you say

something stupid he says 'No.' Or something remotely insignificant, he says,

'Ehh.' Just, you think ten seconds before you say everything. You don't want

to get called out."

**Akasha** "Or when he says, 'No,' you stop and actually take the time to be like,

'Okay, why was that stupid? Alright, okay, okay. I see it. I see it.'"

**Stan** "There were times in the class where you'd have to consciously keep

yourself from speaking. You're like, 'I have to shut *up*. No one wants to hear

what I have to say all the time. I'm just gonna shut up for a while. So, he

would [be] like, 'So, does anyone have an answer? Anyone want to say

something?' I would just look at him and be like {nods}, let everybody else

speak."

As the students above describe, M's critical remarks during lessons don't feel embarrassing,

in the context of the class environment, so much as stimulating, like he is constructively

challenging them to be more exact and thoughtful when they speak. Furthermore, when I ask

students if they feel uncomfortable calling M out on his opinions, the whole class responds

in unison "No," and—as in Mil's case, above—seems to regard his comments as spurring

them to seek out opportunities for out-knowledging him. In this social-emotional

atmosphere, M's class become a playful, positive, purposeful learning exchange that makes

the work feel intrinsically worthwhile.

Moreover, the course's orthodox, European methodology is one that M feels comfortable and confident embodying, and that that persuasively conveys M's core academic lessons. As the students assert at the end of the term, M's intense and personal approach has sharpened the way they assess the quality of arguments and opposing viewpoints, helped them to improve their own habits of making and presenting arguments, and empowered them with tools for teaching their peers in other contexts how to improve their writing. Even Jessica, the one student who felt distant from M and unencouraged in the course for most of the term, acknowledges that "definitely" she will walk out with a sharper awareness of how well people in arguments show their understanding of others' ideas. More outspoken students like AJ and Akasha appreciated M's "ball-busting" approach to working through arguments in class:

> **AJ** "He's really good at teaching people how to argue."
>
> **Akasha** "Because he *makes* you do it. He'll call you out on it until you argue back. I appreciate that."
>
> **AJ** "Yeah. He makes [you present] *educated* arguments, too. I feel like if you say something—even if your idea is good, but the way you're presenting it isn't right—he's just gonna [call you out], because he thinks all that syntax and stuff is hella important.

So M organizes course activities to support the unique kind of educational dialog he wants to have with students: intelligent, interactive, committed, well-informed, encouraging and useful preparation for thinking, arguing, and writing righteously in the real world. Student reflections at the end of the course evidence their overt awareness of M's methods, and their appreciation of the learning experience that has provided them.Their midterm survey feedback also provides some insight into which aspects of M's delivery as an educational

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leader (Table 7.2) and the course itself (Table 7.3) they may have attuned to more quickly, and which took more time to realize.

In both B's and V's classrooms, students wrestle with feelings of discomfort and uncertainty regarding the freedom and control these teachers give them in their writing: what to write about, how they're going to get to create a unified paper from their jumble of ideas. B even states overtly that she wants students to wrestle with uncertainty. M, by contrast, makes clear that he wants students to wrestle only with their own egos and temptations to do less-than-their-best as he spurs them toward refining their ideas and doing exact work, moving them beyond the "pretense that they're writers" and getting them to recognize what actual writers can do: take criticism, adjust argument and style to the audience-at-hand, and meet hard deadlines. So M grants them freedom to choose their writing topics and to develop their opinions, but provides clear structure for everything around: constantly reenforcing intellectual standards for what constitutes a "good" argument and providing exact parameters (even down to the number of *words* in a writing assignment) regarding how students should present those arguments textually.

So it makes sense that, at the mid-term stage, students in M's class display a marked level of agreement (Table 7.2) about his unambiguously professional and intense teaching style. The students who took the survey agree unanimously about his knowledge of the subject, his passion for it, and his ability to draw on stories—both from his personal experiences with writing professionally and with teaching past writing students—to make his points about what distinguishes careless from well-crafted writing. They also agree at this middle point in the course that, while M persuasively argues his own positions and is clearly pursuing a central agenda through his discussions and assignments, he is also highly aware of his students in the class and interested in hearing their various ideas. The surveys

hint that perhaps some students are still a little overwhelmed by M's speaking pace and high demands, not yet fully sure that they understand his core message or the purpose uniting all his activities. Yet, by the course's end, those oft-repeated messages and dependable cycles of activities seem to be clear to everyone in the course.

Table 7.2
*Student mid-term survey responses, "Teacher Delivery, on the Scale (1-5)."  Ordered by consensus, high to low.*

| 1 = "very little" \| 2= "little" \| 3 = "somewhat" \| 4 = "much" \| 5 = "very much" | |
| --- | --- |
| Knows the subject well. | (5/5 = "5") |
| Enjoys the subject. | (5/5 = "5") |
| Uses stories (examples, personal anecdotes) constructively. | (5/5 = "5") |
| | |
| Uses effective and appropriate language. | (4/5 = "5", 1/5 = "4") |
| | |
| Persuasively explains his/her own positions. | (3/5 = "5", 2/5 = "4") |
| Maintains and develops ideas/activities from one session to the next. | (3/5 = "5", 2/5 = "4") |
| Encourages the voicing of other positions in class. | (3/5 = "5", 2/5 = "4") |
| Acknowledges alternative ideas/methods. | (3/5 = "5", 2/5 = "4") |
| Maintains awareness of the students throughout the class. | (3/5 = "5", 2/5 = "4") |
| | |
| Communicates the subject so that I understand. | (2/5 = "5", 3/5 = "4") |
| Fluidly orders and connects activities within each class. | (3/5 = "5", 1/5 = "4", 1/5 = "3") |
| Makes clear the purpose of the course. | (3/5 = "5", 1/5 = "4", 1/5 = "3") |

Likewise, students' mid-term feedback regarding the class itself (Table 7.3) seem to reflect the arc of that learning experience in M's course: highly interactive (and rarely boring), highly challenging (but just as entertaining), conversational and interesting without being offensive. These are clear to students early on. Some still report feeling a bit intimidated by him at this stage, and divided on how flexible he is. This aligns with course-end reflections from Akasha and Seena-Day, for instance, who point out that M is accommodating but lets on to that fact only gradually, so that students don't take it for granted: his firmness about student responsibility makes even repeat students like Mil and

star students like Stan always a little surprised by M's understanding flexibility. Also,

students at this stage are not so unanimously affirmative about how useful the course is and

how clearly intentioned its structure is. This also aligns with students' course-end reflections,

where they describe the heavy workload and the rewarding conversations as so immersive—

in the moment—that it is not until they find themselves outside the class, arguing with

friends or looking at other people's writing, that they begin recognizing how the course has

influenced them educationally.

Table 7.3
Student mid-term survey responses, "This Class, on the Scale (1-5)." Ordered by consensus, high to low.

| 1 = "low" \| 2= "below average" \| 3 = "average" \| 4 = "above average" \| 5 = "high" |
|---|
| Interactive?          (5/6 = "5", 1/6 = "4") |
| Conversational?    (4/6 = "5", 1/6 = "4", 1/6 = "3")<br>Interesting?           (4/6 = "5", 1/6 = "4", 1/6 = "3")<br>Boring?                  (1/6 = "3", 1/6 = "2", 4/6 = "1")<br>Offensive?              (1/6 = "3", 1/6 = "2", 4/6 = "1") |
| Entertaining?        (3/6 = "5", 2/6 = "4", 1/6 = "3")<br>Challenging?          (3/6 = "5", 1/6 = "4", 2/6 = "3") |
| Clearly Structured?     (2/6 = "5", 3/6 = "4", 1/8 = "3")<br>Relevant / Useful?      (2/6 = "5", 1/6 = "4", 3/6 = "3")<br>Intimidating?             (2/6 = "4", 2/6 = "2", 2/6 = "1") |
| Flexible?            (1/6 = "5", 1/6= "4", 3/6 = "3", 1/6 = "2")<br>Confusing?         (1/6 = "4", 2/6 = "3", 1/6 = "2", 2/6 = "1') |

By the end, the students interviewed all report having a synchronous understanding

of M's goals for them as writers: that he wants them to be ready for writing and arguing their

views in the real world; to be open-minded and well-informed; and to see how much

potential they have inside when they push themselves to be accountable . Furthermore, they

point out that the aforementioned way M structures their writing activities provides them

with a memorable experience of how sharp and enjoyable their conversations and their writing can be when they put in the time and effort to know about a topic and to understand the reasons behind others' opposing views (to read and think, to listen and self-critique, to revise and follow through):

> **Mil** "Opposition. From now on, I'll never be able to say something without feeling stupid unless I know both sides. And if someone else tries to argue something to *me*, I'll check them on whether or not *they* fully understand what they're talking about. [**Jessica** and **AJ** voice agreement.]"
>
> **Mil** "Another thing, too, is like, after taking his course the first time, it did help me. And I did notice that my papers got better. So I didn't have to BS *as* much [laughs]. And then, just, a lot of my friends will ask me to help them with a paper, and I'll see things that he specifically tells us *not* to do right away. And it *feels* good to be able to, 'No. That's bad. Sorry' [whole class laughs]."
>
> **Seena-Day** "And you can *explain* it."
>
> **Mil** "Yeah, and you *can* explain it. Like, a lot of people are so convinced that 'Since the beginning...' is a good [introduction to a paper]. You know, it's really not. [whole class laughs]"

In many ways, this experience represents exactly the kind of educational outcome that M describes wanting for his students: for them to be independent, critical, responsible writers in the real world. In the story above, Mil is taking M's role when he looks at his friends' writing: immediately seeing what is problematic, explaining to them how they can improve it, feeling confident and competent in editing that writing. As M points out, his goal in saying things like "No. Wrong" with students is not to show his superiority—in fact, he

states that he loves when students argue with him or point out a mistake—he wants them to take that critical mindset and personalize it, to make it their own. Mil says similarly also, at an earlier point in the interview, that although M has done a lot of professional writing and he's good at arguing, he doesn't flaunt his abilities and experience. He uses his high self-standards to pressure students into raising their own self-standards:

> "[In] his own career, he's done a lot in writing. And he's not a *douche* about it, and the way that he treats us, I feel like he feels that any one of us is just as capable as he is of doing what he does, and he really pushes us to get there."

By course's end, M's students show both subtle and clear signs of being in synchrony with M's educational aims: understanding consciously what he has intended to do with and for them, and personally integrating several of those core lessons into their own attitudes, understandings, and practices as writers with opinions worth arguing. This points to the intentional and effective practical impact of M's personalized approach for educating students as academic writers.


**The Principled (goal-directed): Why "We" choose to Participate in this Dialog**

All three teachers in this study shape their writing courses and conduct their educational dialogs in ways that reflect their personal knowledge and values: the dispositions and understandings that they've come to believe are most valuable for college-aged writing students to learn or develop, the social environment and activities through which they imagine students might best experience that learning. These ideas are based in each teachers' own experiences, both as learners of writing themselves and as invested observers of many students' learning experiences with them in writing courses, and are refined though cycles of dialogic planning, practice, and reflection.

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In V's case, students' stories of being embarrassed and stressed resonate with his own experiences of punishing regimes in early education, motivating him to shape educational exchanges around the idea of a symposium: welcoming, informal, warm and propelled by the love of knowledge and critical thinking for its own sake. In B's case, students' direct feedback about what they appreciate or don't gives her confidence as she works to co-create a learning community unlike her early creativity-repressing school experiences and more like her positive later college experiences: active, empowering, supportive, character-building, a small but important part of a student's personal and social growth. M's case—his slow-grown principles for educational practice in the writing classroom—is likewise distinct.

For M, the transformative power of school was that it gave him confidence in his abilities and his worth: teachers showing their care by taking the time to drill and correct him, by calling him out from his quiet corner and making him speak, and by letting him know that they see potential in his mind and the ideas that he offers forth. So M shapes his course and his dialogs in a way that reflects these things that he values, refined through years of mistakes and realizations—saying something that is tone-def to a class-group's cultural context, or assigning a reading that moves no students and brings nothing remarkable to the classroom debate—and so delivered with confidence and purpose: that he knows what he wants you to realize, believes with conviction that it will serve you well, and is determined to draw that realization out of you (that realization that you can do better, and will).

When I ask M, "Have there been any issues, in this term in particular, that you felt were in need of attention?" I expect him to tell me about what lessons the students have had trouble grasping. Instead, he tells me about the areas he is currently working on inside of himself, as a teacher. He expresses concern about coming across too un-encouragingly when pressing students to arrive at realizations ("my enthusiasm gets the better of me, and my

desire for them to know can sometimes be a little overwhelming"). He worries that they

might not understand the stories he wanders into when explaining the real-world relevance

of lessons to his young students ("I'm feeling my age – they're coming from a different place

… could be close to a fifty year gap between us. That's a long stretch"). Finally, he states

that his purpose as an educator supersedes these underlying doubts, and so in moments of

teaching, he sets these aside and meets the students with confidence:

> If I lose my—if I start double-thinking, or start not saying the things I want to
>
> say, then who am I? What am I doing there? Traffic police—it's, you know,
>
> grammar police. At that level, at the [Upper Division Writing] level, they
>
> *Have* to know: you're going into a world in which it's going to be tough.

He goes on to explain what he sees as the most crucial thing students need from their last

years in university: preparation for surviving—for doing good work, and succeeding in the

careers they find for themselves—in the real world, and teachers who can convince them of

how important it is for them to take these preparatory educational experiences seriously:

> The articles in the paper recently about graduate students, and undergraduates
>
> not getting jobs anymore, it's really hitting home. So I think that they really
>
> need to know that the more they [prepare, the better]. And This is where they
>
> do it. I said to them at one time, "You don't wake up at forty and decide you
>
> want to read Jane Austin, or you suddenly want to become interested in art."
>
> It's not going to happen. Not going to happen. It's going to be now that you
>
> set those things in motion.
>
> So – going back to that 'If someone doesn't tell them' – yeah, [regarding my
>
> overzealous desire for them to know,] the virtue could be the vice. But isn't
>
> that true for [everything].

Based on that pressing need, M sets his practical priorities: friendship is not his aim, and friend is not his role; that game of being liked and making students feel good for ten weeks is an educational disservice, when they need direly to be prepared for life. So M crafts his educational role like that of a boss, and treats learning as the students' job—their official and serious responsibility—as preparing them for their life as thinkers and writers beyond the university's protective walls:

> I'm not there to have them be my friend. As much as I might like them.
> They're not my friends. And I like some of them a Lot. I mean, they do
> become friends eventually. But not—I can't play that game. It's not me
> making them feel good about themselves. That's ridiculous. You're not
> paying twenty-thousand dollars a year so I can say, "Oh, you're a nice guy,
> you're really clever": No. Your job here is to learn.
> 
> That's your job. I'm your boss. And, I really really think it does a disservice
> to students if all teachers are doing is making the student feel good while
> they're in the room for ten weeks. And the minute they leave that room what
> have they got out of it?

So these are M's principles—his practice-guiding ideas—in the writing classroom: give students an educational experience that they can use, and that they clearly recognize as important. So M works to shift the way they see quality argument and well-crafted writing: in an orderly, discerning, and confident way, where they recognize quickly if something is off and do not hesitate to call that out and correct it.

> My hope is, at the end of ten weeks, they will leave my class and they would
> not forget what I've taught them. And they will be sitting somewhere going
> through grammar or reading an article and going, "Wait a minute, why am I

agreeing with this?" or, "How is this written? This doesn't seem to be written

very well:   look, it's got passive voices and bad sentence structure," and stuff

like that. Or if they're writing a letter or an application, they'll go, "Well, I

have to make this opening sentence really sing." I'm hoping they remember

those things.

Those are the things that are important to me.

M's students, on the other hand, come into his writing classroom with largely different

motives taking priority above last-minute real-world survival prep. In the mid-term survey,

the main reason they state for taking the course is to fulfill their general education

requirements for graduation (requirement / required / requirement for graduation /

prerequisite. general ed / Is a requirement for GE Area A); only one student of six states

taking the course with the goal "to be more proficient at writing." Even at the course's end,

when I ask them what the purpose of university schooling is, they state their primary goal as

simply getting a degree so that they can get a job ("Get a job" "Job!" "It's like an

investment"), and—after that—a list of several character-proving or life-enrichment aims

("It's a test of whether you can commit and finish things" "it broadens your perspective on

the world and on life. It enriches your views on everything, … other people's ideas,

identities" "What if we weren't in school? It would be really boring" "once you start

working, you're going to realize how much fun college is … That's all I get from older

people who went to college: how much more awesome college was").

Nonetheless, the students apparently have a clear sense of what M wants from them

in the course, based on their responses in the mid-term survey, both at the surface level of

their performance (e.g., "participate and speak out" "Good ideas expressed eloquently yet

concisely" "analysis, clarity, critical thinking, originality, fluidity, passion") and at the deeper

level of their intended learning and growth (e.g., "be a great writer not just a good writer" "He'd also like for everyone to be able to intellectually argue about any topics that they disagree with" "in an unbiased and well thought-through manner so that we do not leave out any of our readers"). Furthermore, by the end of the course, M's students seem to be much more voluntarily aligned with M's principled educational goals for the course, acknowledging how generally important it is to be prepared as writers in life, and how valuable M's course lessons and activities for preparing them as writers. When I ask the students "Are [university] writing classes important?" they lead in by qualifying that M's eminently demanding and use-oriented way of teaching writing makes it important to them, personally:

> **Akasha** "Well, *this* one's important. But I think a lot of the other ones I took were just a waste of my time. I didn't learn how to write any better. This is the first class that's actually challenged me as a writer. [**Mr Biscuits**: 'Yeah, I agree.']"
>
> **Smalias** "It's about how to develop and communicate your ideas. Because people can have really great ideas, but have no idea how to explain them to somebody else. And to get any sort of job or be able to learn from other people, you have to be able to communicate and consider what they would be thinking—like, how to convince somebody, or convey your ideas, so they can be developed further."
>
> **Seena-Day** "Yeah. Having the ability to write well can benefit you in every aspect of life. For your career, or if it's just sending an email to family. Right? Most careers, you have to at least be able to write well. You can't just be writing whatever, not making sense. So, writing's very important."

From listening to these students' dialogs in classroom, and understanding somewhat their attitudes and interests, it is clear that these statements reflect their personal goals (e.g., Akasha is a firecracker who wants to be pushed to think, Smalias is a Film Studies major invested in communicating expressively, Seena-Day is a pragmatist who is focused on making a living after college), but also echo the arguments that M has been trying relentlessly to persuade them with since the first day of the term (e.g., I'm pushing you to bring out your best, acknowledging opposing views makes your writing seem more credible and persuasive, you will need to know how to write well if you want to do well in your career). So these statements point toward a synchrony that has developed between M and his students: students not only understanding what work M wants done or what lessons he has taught, but valuing that work M has lead them through and the lessons they've learned through that educational process with him.

### M as a Course Leader: Academic Progress in the Educational Exchange

The educational exchange in M's writing course is observably distinct from V's or B's. Analyzing the personal, practical, and principled factors contributing to his course—as in the above sections—helps in interpreting those differences meaningfully. Had I revisited my recordings of M's classroom with V's teaching methods and reasons in my mind, I might have interpreted that learning environment as too "stern-faced" and controlling, with an unwelcomingly firm line dividing student and teacher and with an intimidating amount of overt student criticism. Using B's idiosyncratic philosophy, I might have viewed that classroom structure as too didactic, lacking dedicated spaces for students to share about which aspects of the course activities they appreciate or might change. With a more generic American pedagogical lens, I could find numerous unconventional points of M's

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methodology to critique and correct: from his decidedly firm manner in responding to (even openly disagreeing with) students' ideas to his habit of talking amusedly about past students' follies (e.g., coming to class on acid).

However, after listening to M describe his slow-grown, student response-based path for refining his current way of teaching, and hearing students describe candidly how much they appreciate that challenging-and-motivating learning experience, I look at my observation-notes and review my classroom recordings with a much better attuned understanding of the respectful and caring educational exchange taking place between them.

This following overview of patterns that arose in my field notes from M's classroom is meant to highlight the dependable style and manner of educational leadership that M establishes in interacting with his students. Thereafter, a more detailed description of one recorded classroom exchange will illustrate how, within the social-emotional environment described below, academic progress emerges as M's and the students' exchanges mature across the arc of the course.

## Reliable Patterns in M's Teaching Style and Manner

Viewing the classroom educational exchange as cycles of dialog, I notice several types of actions and interactions repeating in my field-notes about M's bi-weekly classroom sessions with students. I'n M's course, these patterns are so regular that a list of days where they occur would be overwhelming: I have selected examples of them all from a single day's notes (Monday of Week 2), to emphasize how reliable these patterns are. These prevalent patterns in M's teaching can be sorted roughly into categories of core-idea "sermons," memory-stimulating asides, and critique-annotated intellectual discussions.

Regarding M's regular "sermons" about core ideas in his course, one notable pattern is that of M verbally re-emphasizing those ideas and writing / underlining on the board, in the context of whatever details are currently being discussed in that day's reading or assignment. For example, when talking about research, M explains "the key is Opposition. … And Audience is key – shed light on, inform, get them thinking." By WK7, M has added a few other points to this repeated lesson: "How to do research – Ask a Question, Contextualize, Opposition, Audience. … This gives you credibility." Another notable pattern in these sermons is M call-and-response technique, where he asks a rhetorical question within the flow of his lesson got get students saying aloud those ideas he has emphasized with them before (e.g., "Your role as the writer: who are you in this? {Student: 'the teacher'} Yes, thank you. The teacher").

Regarding M's plentiful asides, there are essentially two types. The first is breaking into personal stories from his own life—or sometimes from others' reported experiences—that illustrate his points. For example, when driving home the idea that opposition is key to research, M begins with the assertion that "You've got to understand the opposition; you've got to understand how other people think," and then launches into the example of his own academic defenses. Later when M is responding to students' 400-word summaries of that day's reading, he drives home the message that learning to "Be concise" is a useful ability through his story of working at a newspaper, writing reviews that were capped at 350 words. M's second type of aside relates to this one: breaking into analogies (e.g., gymnastics or other competitive skill-based endeavors) or theoretical future scenarios to highlight the real-world relevance of his course lessons or attitudes. For example, again, in arguing the importance of acknowledging opposition, M projects into his students' futures how they will need to use that approach: "You guys are going to be the leaders, so you need to be able to

see both sides – [to assert] 'I understand what you're saying, but I don't agree with you.' Understand is key."

Finally, regarding M instigating and guiding intellectual discussions with the class—on shared readings or on students' writing—one prevalent pattern is that of M quickly accepting or denying the accuracy of what students say, as he builds with their responses energetically toward the point he's after (e.g., "Good, we're all on the same page: struggle, struggle, and so on … now let's hear the whole paragraph"). In early days—like this one, my first day observing—M gives forewarnings and apologies to acclimate his students (e.g., "Read your summaries. I apologize in advance if I jump on your word choices and so forth..." "Sorry. I cut you off, I know"), but these asides diminish quickly in the days follow, as the class rhythm sets in. Another pattern is that of M accessing students' work on the spot, and explaining meta-analytically as a writer how and why he makes those decisions to revise (e.g., "See, this is how I work when I'm editing: … See, this is where you can cut words. … See, there you put what you think, not what the story said"). Extending from this pattern, M also has students assess their work and other writers' work—published authors or anonymous past students—on the spot (e.g., "Good. What's missing, why? {Student: 'mine's vague, …' }"), practicing looking at texts with a quick and critical eye for opportnities to improve.

Together, these interaction patterns that M establishes with his students help the group to form a progressively more predictable, dependable, and synchronous flow of dialog among themselves. The synchrony of that educational exchange—in observable moments between the teacher and students, informed by their reflections on that learning experience and their ideal aims as co-members in that class—provides an *intrinsic* means for assessing M's writing course, within the value-scales of its participants.

We have already explored those educational aims in M's mind (a serious, demanding, and bluntly realistic challenge of student writers' willingness to take personal responsibility and give due effort to producing well-argued, sharply crafted, and timely writing—as useful preparation for those real-world demands waiting beyond university). Likewise, we have explored M's and his students' somewhat mutual sense of the course's strengths and weaknesses as an educational exchange (a success with fostering in students a truly useful editorial perception and argumentative awareness, but perhaps overworking them a bit in the process). Below, we take a moment to look at an actual course dialog: a glimpse at what those educational exchanges matured into, interpersonally an academically, in the last weeks of the term.

**Maturing Dialogs within that Learning Environment**

By week 8 of the term, M and his students seem to have settled quite comfortably into the consistent flow of activities and reliable patterns of discourse in M's writing course. I chose to explore in-detail this particular Wednesday class session because, when I interview M's students just before the end of the term, they all voice agreement about how good their debate over the assigned reading was on that day. The audio and video from that debate does, indeed, offer an excellent example of the more synchronous group dynamic that forms between M and his students in the mature stages of their educational dialog.

On this day, the students have read "Sweetheart from the Song Tra Bong" by Tim O'Brian, and come in ready to discuss it—prepared with their reading notes and familiar, by this point in the term, with how these conversations typically unfold under M's leadership. Before getting into the "ins and outs of the story," M asks the students to provide a plot summary. In typical fashion, he uses this as a teachable moment about writing summaries:

the first student's topic sentence is too general to be informative, and she seems to know this (laughing when he responds "Well, okaaay"); the second student's sentence doesn't capture the full arc of the story, so he seeks a more complete answer (reiterating here the activity's purpose: "That's why we're reading them out loud"); as the third student reads hers, he asks her to adjust her speed and volume (which she does calmly and immediately, responding to the correction with no signs of embarrassment); he takes part of her answer ("losing her innocence – okay") and then asks a fourth student what her topic sentence is. This student prefaces hers, seeming to know like the first student that hers is not up to standards: M confirms this, ("Well, we've got *too* much information there") and continues to press the group for a solid summary sentence ("Can we get a happy compromise between the two? Okay, we'll go around").

Once the group settles on that foundational topic-sentence, M seeds a debate amongst the students by bringing up his last section's question: is this a feminist story? The way he words and contextualizes this question once again re-affirms that M appreciates a good intellectual exchange of viewpoints ("we had a huge argument about that this morning, which was great"), and gets the conversation moving by posing a more approachable sub-question: "What is this [story] telling us about women: why does he make [the protagonist] a woman?" The student Mil proposes a theory (we care about women), but M then challenges that by interjecting a follow-up question ("Who are the wusses in this story?") which all the students are in agreement about ("the men") and which undermines that theory. This then opens the floor back up, and many hands raise to offer alternate theories ("good, lots of hands. Great, love it.").

As students field their different interpretations of the story, M listens and writes their various potentially-valid points on the board. Those points that he doesn't write down, he

challenges outright ("Okay, I'll come back to that – crazy person thing [Ss laugh] I'm not convinced she's a crazy person"), but he seldom dismisses an idea and rather shows that he understands their opposing view but does not personally interpret the story that way, and keeps pressing the students to go further with their ideas:

> **Seena-Day** "Maybe the underlying thing they're trying to say is, war has no sympathy on *any* gender … everybody will end up the same."
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> **M** "Anybody's gonna get messed up: it's Nam.
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> **Seena-Day** "Yeah. War is stronger than gender."
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> **M** "Okay {writes on board}. So, *not gender-specific*. Again, I'll argue against that, but I can hear why you would say that it's not gender-specific. Okay? I'm still not satisfied. Why a woman?"

The group's path of discourse through their ideas—six main ones in all, about the role of gender in this story—is not a direct one: M welcomes into the dialog students associating the story with other textual themes surrounding war ("It's like the 'Dear John' worry—the stories that soldiers always tell, where it's like 'I wonder what my girlfriend's doing at home?' and 'I wish I could watch her, control her from away.' [M laughs] But then, when she goes to Vietnam, the same thing happens: he loses control of her"), with movies they've just watched ("Just like GI Jane. [Ss laugh]" "So *is* she a GI Jane … *is* she a feminist model?"), and with conversations they've had with real-life Vietnam veterans:

> **Mil** "They *all* mentioned something about 'When I went to Vietnam,' they were just like us [students]: sports, high school, bla-bla-blah. They lived in the suburbs. They had never had anything like [war]. And they said, 'That boy who went to Vietnam, *died* in Vietnam.' And the *thing* that they became is what came back. So because of that, that's just how I see it."

Yet M consistently keeps their complex debate oriented toward that center question ("But do you see the symbolism [of the anima, the feminine psychology] … why does he want [a woman protagonist]?") and manages to both challenge and include such vast interpretations as Mary being the embodiment of innocence (Akasha: "using a female, especially in that time, was more like she was the classic American sweetheart tale") to her being the narrating soldier's sexual fantasy (Mr Biscuits: "They're all out there, and so he's telling this story, like 'Yeah, she's so hot. She came and hung out with us for a week. She played with our weapons—' This is totally just this guy's fantasy." AJ: "Amazons are *awesomely* sexy."). For more well-founded theories, like the first, he presses students to elaborate ("Well let me ask. Does she *change*, in your opinion, in a positive way or a negative? We said 'Loses herself,' 'Becomes crazy'—is that a negative or a positive?") and for more questionable ones, like the second, he calls them out on their motives ("you're giving me all your stereotypes {smiles}. It's so AJ's fantasy, as opposed to—" AJ "I'm projecting." [class laughs]). Yet, in both cases, the students are in-tune enough with the course's standards of what makes an argument valid to reach into the text—unprompted—as they debate their interpretations:

> **Akasha** "She went in with this innocent, open mind. And because of the *innocence*—and part of that is being a woman—the innocence enabled her to change, and see Vietnam in a way that the men weren't able to. … She talks about wanting to *eat* Vietnam. And *eat* the dirt. She's finding herself, she's finding her connection with Vietnam. And through that, she moves on, by leaving civilization and going into the jungles."

> **Mr Biscuits** "She was basically Rat Kiley's sexual fantasy. [M chuckles] And I read that 'eating Vietnam' line—if you read this: {reads} 'Sometimes I want

to eat Vietnam. I want to swallow the whole country' She adds 'I just want to eat it and have it there inside me.' It's like this [sexual] appetite."

M's questions and responses guide and challenge, but students dialog so fluently and intuitively with that leadership that their half-hour conversation ends with a clear and coherent sense of educational progress. Everyone's ideas have been understood, fleshed out, compared and tested against the primary-text—making the exchange as personal and social as it is academic and intellectual. As M says, while summarily concluding the debate, "we've done a *pretty* good job on revealing our*selves* as well as revealing the story."

The character of this synchrony in M's classroom distinctly reflects his method and manner of teaching: his intense and personal presence, his sophisticated and structured delivery, helping the course group to feel reassured and motivated in the midst of daunting assignments and heavy-handed criticism, moving toward a sharper and more confident understanding of how to argue convincingly and write professionally. Where success in V's course looks like socially relaxed and intellectually critical students questioning the big ideas behind apparent details, and success in B's course looks more like a community of students comfortable sharing original research and fielding audience questions like legitimate social scientists, success in M's course looks like this: a bright, informed, intense, orderly and confident debate that is both enjoyable and edifying to experience—for the teacher and students alike.

Looking back on prior classes, one can see moments where M lays a foundation for these educational exchanges, where the group progressively establishes a learning environment that facilitates those coordinated dialogs, and where—as above—the group is consistently producing dialogs that are procedurally fluent, personally warm, and academically purposeful. Such dialogs demonstrate social-emotional trust and affiliation

between the teacher and students, as well as an academic synchrony regarding the course learning experience: its educational value, its effective structure, and its areas that might still be refined to make the course run better.

### The Role of Teacher Sincerity in Students' Educational Outcomes

When looking back over the pragmatic arc of this course—from M's principled ideals, to his practical interactions with students, to both their personal takeaways from that educational exchange—much of its *success* seems to rely significantly on M's observable *integrity* as an educational leader, and on the students' *trust* in that integrity. As students' reflect on their educational take-away from the course, they bring up time-and-again their explicit confidence in M's respect for them, his knowledge and passion for the subject-matter, and his willingness to put effort into understanding students' individual ideas and sharing with them those resources which he thinks they will most use and value. These themes about M's clear dedication and genuine connection in teaching arise hand-in-hand with their descriptions of what they've learned about writing and about themselves as writers through his course. So M's persuasively sincere educational leadership appears integral to both the course's educational process and outcome, from the whole group's fundamental interest and cooperative effort to their eventual coordinated understanding and fluent interaction in learning together about the course's subject-matter.

When I ask M about "Sincerity" as it relates to his teaching, he leaves no room for doubt in his answer. He defines his teacherly sincerity as a serious, effort-driving commitment to both his subject matter and his students: a belief in the importance of what he teaches and a desire to help his students learn those important elements. That he manifests such sincerity in his educational practices is—in his stated perception—beyond

doubt, not only in his own eyes, but in the eyes of his students and my eyes as an observer of their educational exchange:

> I presume you mean that the teacher is "sincere" in his efforts to help the students? You can have no doubt by now that I am a very "sincere" and dedicated teacher who wants to guide and help his students learn certain important elements and devices and also make their time in the class worthwhile. If anything *my students realize that I take my teaching and subject matter seriously*.

Though M has, at other points, expressed doubts or ambivalence about details his delivery style (the rush to get to a point, the sometimes-dated asides) and is still actively looking for ways to refine his course (separating his notes on students' papers into columns of grammar issues and intellectual issues to make them easier-to-read), he does not second-guess his own dedication nor others' awareness of how genuine is that personal commitment: he presents it as certain within, and clear from without.

This is not to say that M treats his educator role as a sole or consuming identity: he describes to me the theater of educating, and even how his voice and manner will change if he hears someone call "Professor M!" out in public (sliding him back into his "teacher-face").

> a teacher's partly actor anyway. It feeds your narcissism in a sense—because you're up there, you're in the power place, you're standing; they're sitting. Em, I don't—do B and V do any of the sitting with the students? … It's interesting, given the fact that we have different styles, that we all still do that standing. I used to do sitting in a circle, … I was conscious at times, "I'm standing, you're sitting," There is a power play—in that. You know, "You

have to look up to me," and all of those things, they do play a part in the

atmosphere in the room.

Yet this performative veil of institutional roles and power pretenses in the educational

exchange does not impede operationally on his definition of a teacher's sincerity, of his

attentive and committed effort with his students. In M's personal practical principled lexicon,

sincerity in teaching is about dedication to another's learning: believing truly that there is

value in the things you know, and caring strongly enough for another person to work with

them—in some moments, even beyond what they appreciate—until they too understand

those things, and see their value. This may be why, in defining the term "Sincerity," M

emphasizes his "want" and "efforts" to help his students above the subject-matter,

mentioning them before the "elements and devices" he is sharing with them, and recognizing

their time as something to respect and earn by making those exchanges "worthwhile."

The way M describes caring for his students as a teacher does not directly involve

them liking him, nor knowing him personally like a friend, but rather seeing him as a

supportive champion of their learning, and understanding him as an experienced writer who

is sharing truly important real-world lessons with them. When I ask his students whether

they think they really know him as a person, their answers reflect M's student learning-

focused approach to teacherly sincerity: they feel that he knows *them* (both as individual

learners and as recognizable "types" of students, within the patterned cycles of his teaching

experience) and they feel that they know him through relationship to the material (what his

biases are, that he wants them to know, as they evaluate his lessons for themselves).

**Stan** "I don't know. I feel like he could have given us his teacher-face, …  he

probably has a lot better idea of who we are. And so he's able to pick out the

people in the class that he's going to have *this* sort of relationship with, and fit

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them maybe into a *category*, almost? So I feel like I probably don't know him as well as I think I do—he's probably got a whole lot of other stuff that he does, that I don't even know about. Because that's his personal life. I don't know."

**AJ** "He's so involved in the material, though, that I feel like we actually get a pretty good [sense of him]. And I feel like he *wants* us to know where he's coming from, what his general position is, so that we can make an educated hypothesis on that. 'This information comes from a guy who [is a] strong democrat, blah bla-blah.' So in your own head, you can say, 'Okay, it's valuable information, but it's coming from a complete left side.' So you can re-evaluate his position. Which is cool, too."

The students in M's class seem so in-step with M's intentions and methods, voicing insights (like those above) that even I would not have realized, had M not told me directly those internal motives and practical reasons. Even as close to the class as I became, I was not M's student, and so never experienced that personal attention or intellectual challenge—that teacherly sincerity—in the way these students did. So likewise, I never developed that synchrony with him in the course's educational dialog. While I watched perpendicularly, the students and M were trading social-emotional signals and negotiating mindsets: coming to know and to trust one another's patterns, coming to question and challenge one another more boldly and fluently as their individual understandings synchronized with one another in the immediate time-and-space of that dialog.

Of course, those moments of connection in an educational exchange come and go: the classroom recordings capture M sometimes mis-interpreting what students say, and students sometimes failing to grasp a point M is making, their messages falling into the gaps

between life experiences, attitudes, ages, emotional states, energy levels, and personal dictionaries. Moreover, both M and his students recognize these gaps and shadows, each at some point responding "I don't know" when I ask what they think the other might be thinking or feeling or intending to accomplish.

Yet these moments of connection in the educational exchange between M and his students are clear—and clearly valued—at points. Toward the end of the term, the classroom is filled with whole-group laughter and high-energy debates: simple signs pointing toward a healthy and productive learning environment. In reflections at the end of the term, both M and the students state that they enjoyed the course, that it left M with things to think about and left the students with lessons that several individuals had already found influencing their thoughts and actions helpfully out in the world: simple signs pointing toward a successful educational exchange.

At the heart of this success and these moments of synchrony, students often mention elements related to M's definition of sincerity. And, as with B and V, students seem to link M's sincere-seeming teacher dedication with his persuasive credibility as a writing educator, and his motivating investment in being specifically *their* writing educator. His sincere in expertly learning and adamantly valuing his subject matter leaves students with admiration and respect for his "legitimacy" as a leader in the writing classroom:

> **Mil** "Professor M [has] done a lot. He's a really legit professor. Like outside of teaching, his own career, he's done a lot in writing. And … he feels that any one of us is just as capable as he is of doing what he does, and he really pushes us to get there."
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> **Seena-Day** "He would give hints like 'You should look at the whole paper: if you have space here, space here, they're going to think you don't know how to

*write*.' And it's like, 'Ooh-kay, well let me take a *note*.' I actually *wanted* to

apply that to my papers and to take his hints … something about the way he

teaches it makes me *want* to write better."

**Marjorie** "Yeah. Just because he's *published*, you're like, 'He *knows* how to

go through all of his papers a million times to make sure they look

presentable. And professional.' I see that."

Likewise, his sincerity in personally learning and responsively caring about his students

leaves those individuals with a sense of respect that motivates them to rise in their efforts to

meet M's general standards and personalized expectations for them in his writing classroom:

**Akasha** "I think it's that he was a human, he wasn't a professor, in so many

ways. Like calling you on your shit, telling stories that we can actually relate

to, that aren't just teacher-student stories. For me, that's what builds a respect.

And when I respect a professor, I *want* to do good work for them. … I want

them to respect me, and therefore I do the best work I can do."

**Stan** "Yeah. Being motivated to do the best work you can do, is like the most

you can ask from a professor."

**Seena-Day** "Right. It's like M telling the story about the kid on acid. The kid

just openly told him, 'Ah, sorry, I'm just coming off an acid-trip.' Like, you

feel hella comfortable [being honest with M]—he didn't judge him, he didn't

nothing. Like, 'Alright. Why are you *here*? I wouldn't be here if I was you.'"

**Akasha** "[And the student replied] 'I told you I was gonna be here.'"

**Seena-Day** "{laughs} 'I told you I was gonna be here.'"

This motivating effect that M's sincerity engenders with students even shows in the case of

Jessica, that one student who spoke out in opposition to the rest of the group during the

panel interview, saying "I know everybody is on the other side of it—but I'm on this side, saying I really had a difficult time with his class, and I really need a different teaching style." Even as uncomfortable and under-supported as she reported feeling for the majority of the course, she admits that she appreciates the lessons she learned through that experience ("I actually liked the debating part … And [knowing how to address opposing views is] something I think I'll walk out with"). Moreover, as much as M describes Jessica seemingly ignoring his feedback on how to revise her papers, and passing on the opportunities he offers her to participate in class discussions, she manages to do really well on her final paper— confounding M's honest expectations—and even comes to his office to give him a hug at the quarter's end.

> That student who I sort of was down on? I don't know what happened, but the
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> last paper was very, very good. And, didn't seem to have any of the problems
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> that I noticed in the *first* paper. She got a pretty good grade on it. So that was
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> really interesting to me. And then, as I said, when she *hugged* me that time, I
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> was like, "Who-aoh. This is really interesting."
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> Yeah, she got a B, B-plus on that last paper. And I think it's her work,
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> because there were so many things that I put in that they have to do—they had
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> to refer to this, refer to that, refer to the other—that it's very hard to
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> [plagiarize] in that particular paper. … I mean, there were things in it that I
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> felt were specifically *her* issues. So, that was quite an amazing.
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> I don't know what was going on. And something happened there, which was
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> maybe one of those *break*-through things. So I wanted to get that out there.
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> So as I said {laughs} take out everything I said about her. Obviously, I don't

always *perceive* the student the way the student—whatever the student's

thinking, it was very very interesting.

This "break-through," more than any other data-point in this study, perhaps demonstrates how crucial a teacher's genuine embodiment (and a student's unambiguous perception) of sincerity can be to achieving synchronous moments in an educational exchange. For, in an impoverished alternate reality where M honestly does not care about Jessica, dismisses her in his mind-and-heart as an obstinate, lazy, self-pitying individual with no practical potential to change in his course, and accordingly makes only superficial motions of effort to help her learn, there would be *nothing* to motivate Jessica's change, intellectually nor social-emotionally: no detailed expert notes written on her paper, no memories of M crafting a question that incorporated her major and her paper-topic to draw out her personal ideas in class. The only practical motive—not to learn nor remember nor incorporate in her life, but merely to perform—would be a grade.

Jessica wrote a thoughtful, well-evidenced, well-crafted paper about a topic she was interested in. Jessica walked to M's office with obligation, and gave him a hug: a physical demonstration of trust and acceptance, and likely in this case also gratitude and perhaps apology. She demonstrated that she learned something M intended (about how to argue, how to write), and managed not to learn some things unintended (e.g., conflating intellectual critiques with personal attacks, associating being challenged with feeling embarrassed). This is a sign of synchrony: of socially-emotionally connected and intellectually coordinated moments within an educational dialog.


**Quality Takes Time**

Such moments of synchrony, it seems (in the three case-studies analyzed above) emerge slowly in an expert teacher's practices: informed by cycles of educational experience and reflection, supported by personalized course structures and narratives, nurtured by principled and intentional styles of dialog with familiar learners.

Teachers' principled understandings of how to nurture such moments of synchrony with students seem to be distilled and organized usefully in their minds, connected to archetypal interactions and dialogs, which they narrate and reenact intuitively when describing how educational exchanges can (and ideally do) play out in their classrooms. Students' experiences of such synchrony—or its lack—likewise come out in their stories and reenactments of classroom dialogs, which in turn can guide observers or researchers to notice moments in the classroom exchange where teacher's pragmatic intentions meet or miss students' actual learning experiences.

Finally, in both expert teachers' and their students' assessments of these educational exchanges, the teacher's sincerity is described as a fundamental aspect of their success, both in making the learning experience positive, influential, and lasting for the students, and in making the role of Teacher enjoyable, effective, and sustainable for that individual who is leading the educational exchange.

CHAPTER 11


EXPERT TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL PROCESSES:

SOMETHING SUSTAINABLE, PERSUASIVE, AND FITTING


Expertise is a personal trait, a character trait: it is a way of seeing, contemplating, and doing that has been refined through cycles of experience. An expert not only recognizes archetypal patterns within and across situations, but learns to look through the disparate-seeming complexity of such situations and to *focus* on what is practically important there: determining what is reliable and what is unknown, deciding what should be accepted and what might be changed, combining that astute knowledge and those compelling beliefs into stable plans and fluid responses. Thus, there are no robot experts: care, desire, and motive makes a learner autonomous in their purpose; an individual's living sense of purpose is what makes them capable note merely of following directives and finding what it is told to seek, but recognizing the constant form or spirit of among discrete directives, and keeping true to those principles by departing from pre-set forms—originally, creatively, and dialogically—as both the world and the individual together continue to change.

A living heart, with its intractable motives, can be difficult to work with and may even resist learning, when seeking to protect its basic needs. Yet that same dogged drive enables enthusiastic originality in the face of failure, determined creativity in the face of obscure unknowns, and magnanimous leadership in the face of challenges, once a living

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heart recognizes that it is integrally connected with the world around it, and seeks to protect that whole as an extension of itself. So the wisdom of practice—phronesis, expertise—is a living, slow-growing, ongoing, and deeply personal attribute: a unique body of knowledge rooted in emotionally resonant sensory experiences, organized and refined for use through cycles of practical external trials and reflective internal adjustments, persisting toward an individual's ever-maturing ideal image of self-purpose, momentarily situated within the larger meaning of a perceptually eternal, inclusive universe.

The work of teaching (one such meaningful self-purpose, from a human's-eye-view of the universe), involves a few essential pieces: the subject-matter being learned by individuals, the "Teacher" individuals who lead this learning socially, and the "Student" individuals who elect to follow this teacherly guidance as they interact with the subject-matter. For this educational exchange to be meaningful in its purpose, both the teachers and students must genuinely value the subject-matter at hand (or else the work is ultimately a waste of time and effort). Furthermore, to be a successful educational exchange, the teacher and students must form some level mutual trust and understanding regarding their purpose together: what each desires to accomplish, how those aims are connected, what each is willing to give and receive to reach those common ends, and thus what each can expect of the other as they learn together (or else their conflicts and differences will distract each other from the learning, rather than support that shared purpose at the center).

Thus, teaching is persuasive and dialogic work: a process of establishing a *healthy* social-emotional environment for learning (i.e., an environment that responsively facilitates, rather than limits or impedes, an individual's innate desire to change, grow, and self-actualize through experience) and upon that social-emotional foundation, fostering *meaningful* dialogs around the subject-matter (i.e., exchanges wherein students and teachers

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augment their personal connections with subject-matter through sharing, comparing, and learning from one another's experiences). Where an educational dialog lacks trust, or mutual understanding and motivation, among its participating learners (the teacher and students), it risks losing that synchrony of their personal attentions, that unity of their intentions, that connection of their experiences around the subject-matter. No matter the subject-matter, this basic reality holds: interpersonal educational exchanges cohere around healthy, meaningful learning-centered dialogs.

Expertise in teaching, then, is personal, practical, and principled (by the intrinsic nature of expertise). The experience-base that informs a successful teacher's expertise or practical wisdom in classroom dialogs is idiosyncratic in its specific contents. The course structures and interactive styles that work best for a given teacher (most comfortably, effectively, and sustainably) have to be tested and revised continuously through cycles of dialog with various students, to fit the emergent needs of each new group in a course. And what "best" looks like will always depend on the character of the teacher and students (their immediate course aims, the larger educational identities and values that inform those aims, and the deep desire for life-meaning that motivates those ideal images of self-in-environment), coordinated in dialog.

This study has been a complex initial effort to trace the pragmatic arc of educational exchanges in three expert teachers' classrooms: to learn about the long, personal process that leads to their classroom activities and their personal manner being so reliably valued by students; to understand each teacher's ideal (should-be) image that they compare themselves against during their actual (is) day-to-day work with learners; and to use that vision as a touchstone for assessing how persuasively each teacher has conducted their dialogs with students. Deferentially seeking out and looking through a teacher's own lens on their

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teaching is a "believing game," somewhat unnatural to the default skepticism of a researcher. Yet looking at expert teachers' educational dialogs with open curiosity illuminates a few basic-but-important connections that tend to be elusive when imposing an external values-frame on the pragmatic arc of an educational exchange: helping students to consciously recognize some value, motivatedly invest some effort, and personally integrate some understanding about a topic that the teacher likewise values, commits to, and identifies with.

## Teaching as Analogous Personalization

Observing firsthand the dialogs between expert teachers and their students (and talking with each side about the purpose and experience of that educational exchange) has pushed me, more than anything else, to recognize how human is the work of educating another person—and how central is that educational leader's humanity to achieving healthy and persuasive learning experiences. Both teachers and students use words like "motivating" and "engagement" as quick word-markers for what they want to evoke, or experience, in the classroom: a deep, real, driving sense of purpose and connection in a moment of learning. When I talk to students and teachers about what fuels that ineffable, immeasurable, but eminently emphasized marker of a quality educational encounter, they both point to the same spot: the teacher as a person.

These teachers' *passion* about their subject-matter and *care* for their students (demonstrated through reliable displays of commitment, and explained in unambiguous terms) compels student interest and persuades student trust, leads forth the group's energy and models the group's tacit standards of effort. More than just getting students to physically show up and outwardly participate, a teacher's personal investment in their course's subject-matter and participants provides students with a relatable, encouraging, human image of how

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to personalize that subject-matter: when teachers tell personal stories about their own learning experiences (or commonly observed student struggles), they are persuading learners that their own struggles are normal and transitory; when they get excited discussing the meaning of a text or helping students clarify meanings in their own written works, they are showing learners how subjectively rewarding a writer's skills and mindsets can be; when they listen to students and then include those current topics or familiar terms or relevant examples in course lessons, they are proactively and explicitly connecting the lessons of the classroom to students' larger interests and thought-patterns and real-world issues.

I have quoted the teachers many times, in the pages above, describing how they as experienced learners each came to value the subject-matter of writing, and why they as former-students are so driven to create their version of a positive and productive educational environment for current learners as they offer them some analog of that personally valued learning experience in writing. Though V is tiring of his current course's format, he never wavers in his overt love of rhetoric or critical discourse and his adamant dedication to maintaining a welcoming, stress-free classroom conversation. Though B voices frustration with the time pressures and social distance fomented by larger university infrastructure and culture, she works creatively within that schooling context to nurture students' autonomy and confidence as writers and to establish a supportive discourse community with and among her student writers. Though M feels that so much of university education fails to challenge and respect students in ways that will prepare them with needed skills and dispositions, he commits himself to providing those crucial real-world lessons in writing, and demands that his students rise to his standards, realizing for themselves the potential that *he* sees in them.

When I ask the students what they believe the teacher's purpose is in university education, they describe much the same social-and-academic role that I describe above (and

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that these teachers intentionally embody): they are relatable guides who "mentor" students in the fields they care about (Shany), who "make sure you understand" beyond just knowing the words in the book by "talking to you, engaging you about it, asking you questions about it and making those questions *lead* somewhere, … through this experience [that] makes you as a student *comfortable* with the fact that you've learned" (Akasha).

Beyond just drawing on their personal content-mastery to help students intellectually understand a discipline's knowledge for themselves, teachers form a relationship with students that makes the learning experience socially "real" and emotionally "motivating":

**Melanie Jean:** "because if college was online, what would be the big deal about going to class or doing your work? You want to develop those relationships with your elders … Whenever I think about school, I always think about my *teachers* that I've had in school. Not just the classes, but how the teachers impacted the *learning experience* around whatever class it's been. The teacher's just critical, in that respect."

**Marjorie** "Also, they help to let you know *why* you're learning these things. Like, *why* this is important in real life. … I feel like a lot of the classes that I *hated*—I'm like 'Why am I learning this? I'll never use this!'—have been the ones where the teachers don't tie it into everyday stuff. Like, how it could help. … But [in] other classes, everything kind of came full-circle and said: 'Oh! That's why I'm learning this, that's why I should come to class, that's why I should try to remember.'"

**Akasha** "And I think it's that he was a human … that we can actually relate to … If I don't respect a professor—like my Writing 2 professor, we wrote about the most ridiculous things that they had *no* passion for, *no* prior knowledge

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of, out of one book that we were reading. And I can't respect someone who

teaches like that. And when I don't respect them, I don't do my best work. If I

respect a teacher, I want them to respect me, and therefore I do the best work

I can do."

**Stan** "Yeah. Being motivated to do the best work you can do, is like the most

you can ask from a professor."

What students are describing here is a learning-centered relationship wherein the teacher and

the subject-matter are integrally connected: the teacher's effort motivates the student's effort,

the teacher's knowledge about using subject-matter helps students to perceive the use of that

subject-matter, and the teacher's immediate presence as a respected "elder" and a relatable

"human" with the students makes the students feel more genuinely present in their learning

experience.

A teacher can never take their understanding and pour it directly into a students

mind, heart, and habits: as temptingly efficient as that would be (and as irascibly insistent as

some teachers are that their students must learn from them in this way), we as individual

living organisms do not learn for ourselves in that way,  nor can we transfer knowledge,

feelings, and dispositions so. What teachers can do (and what the experts in this study

demonstrate doing with students) is nurture analogous understandings in others: to create

environments, experiences, and dialogs around learners which help them to perceive,

practice, and uniquely personalize those life-lessons that the teachers carry with them and

value most deeply.

This radically alive type of teaching, this "analogous personalization," is the type of

educational exchange that these students describe having and appreciating with the three

experts in this study. One student explains the way M tells them to think about writing

persuasively for an audience, as also the way a teacher should approach teaching persuasively for their class – not by *forcing* their view of truth on the students, and getting students to repeat it, but by *sharing* their view and their reasons for holding that view as well as possible, and inviting others to try on that perspective:

> **AJ** "Educate. M actually said that was key. Your essays, also, they should Educate. … They shouldn't tell you what the right idea is, they should tell you what *My* idea is and why that idea is mine."

Elsewhere, AJ explains more specifically the pedagogical reason behind teaching in a personally situated manner – because being intentionally open about one's personal relationship with the subject-matter invites students to think for themselves about how they want to integrate that subject-matter into their own network of beliefs and values:

> "I feel like he *wants* us to know where he's coming from, what his general position is. So that we can make an educated hypothesis on that … so, also in your own head, you can say, 'Okay, it's valuable information, but it's coming from [this person's worldview].' So you can re-evaluate his position."

This view of teaching, as analogous personalization, lays bare the persuasive and dialogic nature of the educational exchange. This view of education may not be an attractive or comfortable for those who prefer objective, concrete, monolithic images of scientific truth and logical reason. But again, such notions are mechanistic; they eschew the fundamentally organic base of sensations and emotional responses that inform human thoughts and motivate social learning in the first place: people need to desire and value something as a prerequisite for exploring or understanding or mastering its constituent elements (whether it is mental health giving rise to Psychology, structural soundness giving rise to Engineering,

physical longevity giving rise to Medicine, or the impulse to share perspectives giving rise to Writing Studies).

People innately study not only the external world, but one another, in order to understand how things work and what meaning those small truths hold: from childhood, individuals observe the deictic guidance of other humans' eyes and fingers, imitate and empathetically align with one another's noises and facial postures, trying to puzzle out what others think is most important to attend to and how others are internally experiencing these common things that we share (plants that are "safe" to eat, words that are "appropriate" to say, acts that are "kind" to do). For all of our advancement as a civilized species, our personal learning and our social education still centers around these subjective exchanges in triadic I-You-It relationships: "Where do the most respected eyes point, what does the surest voice say, how does the wisest face respond to this Thing—and to my interaction with this Thing?" This social disposition makes teachers, at every level of education, the most perfectly designed and powerfully persuasive tool in another's learning: at once a model example, a relatable guide, a knowledge resource, a reassuring support, and a motivating element.

While any machine can look at a student's measurable output and compare it to a pre-set definition of present-moment "perfection," only another human learner can look at that apparent moment and say convincingly, "I have been there, this is how I progressed from that point, and I believe from my experience that you can do something similar: let me help you." This is teaching as analogous personalization, teaching through sharing experiences and synchronizing dialogs, teaching in arguably its most essential form.

By studying the individualized ways that experienced teachers (like the ones in this study) think about, intend, and negotiate such educational dialogs, one can systematically

explore how individuals' personal learning experiences motivate their practical teaching approaches and their  principled educational exchanges—and what deeply impactful learning experiences these slow-grown personal approaches can engender in students.

**The Role of Personal Sincerity in fostering Intellectual Synchrony**

The three teachers in this study were chosen because they are all similarly respected by their fellow educators and appreciated by their students, but also because they have starkly different personalities and teaching styles – a fact that I hoped would facilitate looking past their current "best practices" and focusing on the underlying personal processes that made those activities and strategies work so well in practice with students. Many teachers walk into classrooms with perfect plans that fall apart: that catch no one's interest, fail to communicate the central lesson, or only superficially engage the students. So I didn't want to focus on cataloging *what* expert teachers were doing, nearly so much as I wanted to understand *how* they were doing it so well: implementing their intentions in ways that for them are overall positive experiences, generally reliable and educationally effective, and practically sustainable over years of teaching; that for their students are overall enjoyable and stimulating in the moment, memorably relatable and persuasive in retrospect, useful and lasting beyond the course's immediate touch.

The details for each of them arriving to the point they are now—effective, prepared, resilient teachers whose students respect them as people and appreciate them as teachers, taking their classes repeatedly and to stay in touch with them beyond college—are unique at all levels: the their formative learning experiences, their teaching approaches, their educational philosophies. The general pattern common for all these successful teachers, however, is how strongly those parts cohere in their private narratives and their public

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practices: how their most positive and negative personal learning experiences directly inform their choice of "best" classroom practices and relational manner with students; how those practical successes and failures with students get distilled reflectively into a rich knowledge-base of vivid lessons that inform their general principles for creating (never perfectly, but usually well enough) an ideal learning environment for their students, and how those value-and-experience-based principles pervade their educational exchanges, in ways that students recognize as:

> **Ready**: calm and attentive, prepared and quick-to-respond, credible and confident and fluid in course dialog.

> **Invested**: available and approachable, caring and understanding, actively / preemptively addressing students' general and individual issues in learning.

> **Consistent**: course structure reflects their stated values, does what they say they will, demonstrates the kind of enthusiasm and engagement they expect from students, honest and relatable about themselves (especially as learners).

Students describe these aspects—the teachers' stimulating presentness, encouraging dedication, and reassuring constancy—not as incidental, but as integral to their persuasive impact as educators. Furthermore, from my vantage point as a researcher, I can trace these preeminent teacherly attributes back to very humble beginnings: these teachers were not brilliant student prodigies, nor boldly charismatic social leaders; they were relatively normal students, a mishmash of shy and goofy and sweetly rebellious personalities, who each realized in retrospect how much they valued certain learning experiences, and gradually immersed themselves in discovering how to foster similar experiences in others, through teaching. From there, each individual slowly revised and refined (and continues to revise and refine) their own best way: a version of teaching writing that fits their character, moves their

students, and is methodically efficient and spiritually rewarding enough to sustain and improve as a practice long into the future.

The unity of these teachers' emotions, thinking, and actions supports their professional presence and their personal connection in educational dialogs with students. They profess a strong belief in the value of what they teach, and a confidence in the goodness of the way they teach, that brings a persuasive power to the educational work they do—a sense of *Sincerity* that pervades their course structures, their word choices and tones, their actions and expressions—even as they continuously question and rethink their approaches, noting what they cannot know completely and seeking ways to improve their teaching. In this way, a teacher's sincerity may may be considered an operationally essential element in achieving moments of interpersonal and intellectual *Synchrony* with students in an educational exchange.

Where teachers feel sincere about their work (believing in the essential value of what they do) and applies that sincere disposition consistently over time in their educational dialogs (dedicating themselves to realize that value through their work), those sincere mindsets and habits pervade the teacher's work. This is apparent at least in the cases of V, B, and M: a unity of purpose, intention, and action in each one's teaching, apparent across their idiolects (the 21-terms), their narrated reenactments of educational dialogs, and their day-to-day classroom exchanges. Thus, this sincerity is something that I, as a researcher, can trace. But more importantly, for the course's pragmatic success, this sincerity is something that students notice: a teacher's almost-prescient readiness, coming from her years of practice and inquiry with students (as Johnny interprets with B); a teacher's enthusiastic investment, coming from his true care for students and his real interest in their ideas (as Twinkeestid

presumes with V); a teacher's driven consistency, coming from his resolute confidence that students *will* find real-life value in these lessons (as Akasha paraphrases from M).

As these students describe it, such elements of a teacher's sincerity variously draw in their attentions and spark their memories of educational exchanges, facilitate their intellectual understandings and personal connections with the subject-matter, and drive forth their trust and participation in course learning experiences. Of course, these discrete elements (e.g., personal stories, class debates, current event analogies, constructive feedback, inclusive language, student-run presentations) can be looked at separately and technically as "best" practices. Yet it may be more useful to view these elements more complexly within the context of a teacher's learning experiences, educational values, and individual character: looking beyond *what* activities they are doing, to *how* those activities relate to their values and beliefs, and how the genuine unity (or lack of unity) between their personal convictions and their teaching practices may by extension be supporting (or undermining) their synchrony with students in that educational exchange.

## Application and Future Directions

### Using this Method: The Value and Limitations of Pragmatic Classroom Analysis

This study uses a combination of classroom observations, surveys and exercises, stimulated-recall and panel interviews to trace the pragmatic arc of three courses' educational exchanges: from teachers' intentions, to classroom dialogs, to students' take-aways. This complex and close analysis is valuable as a whole for gaining insight into specific teachers' reasons and methods and assessing their dialogs with students from that native framework. This method's parts are also valuable individually for exploring specific areas of that

exchange: teachers' idiosyncratic lexicons (the 21teaching term prompts, the word-web analysis), teachers' and students' comparative views of one another (the performance-attachment grid, the student survey), and students' motivations in and assessments of the teachers' courses (the panel interviews, the stimulated-recall interviews). Yet there are definite limitations to this study's methods, and what can be extrapolated from its findings.

**The limits – getting close takes time and subjectivity.**

First, this method of studying teachers through their own lenses is intrinsically subjective and interpretive at points (i.e., does not offer exact values and proportions in comparing teachers' approaches or outcomes) and is radically situated (i.e., does not lend itself easily to direct replication).

Multiple parts of this study's data analysis could arguably have been strengthened by having each teacher confirm or correct those conclusions. The problem with this, however, would have been the long span of time (about two years) between collecting the data and finalizing those frameworks. Teachers' perspectives can mature significantly, and memories alter, in that time, not to mention (a) confirmation bias may lead individuals to sign off on minor inaccuracies, and (b) face-saving impulses may lead individuals to second-guess and adjust statements that they feel might portray them in an unflattering light. Thus, I took each teacher's impromptu responses in the moment, their first-instinct truths during those interviews, and used them to construct my frameworks for analyzing their educational exchanges with students during that same term. The teachers did have opportunities to give me additional information or make corrections during that term (which M did). Still, these informed frameworks could have been constructed in a more dialogic manner with the teachers, had I chosen to further distract them from their teaching duties during that term.

Along that vein, I could also have presented them with clips of their classroom dialogs to confirm my analysis of their intentions. In this case, however, the students' reflective interpretations of the teachers' intentions are more pragmatically salient for the purposes of the study (and at some point, it would have become cruel irony to undermine the quality of V, B, and M's teaching practices in an effort to chronicle how they teach so successfully).

Regarding the interpretive aspects of the study, I hope the study made abundantly clear that the word-web representing each teacher's idiolect is a rough spatial reflection of that teacher's definitions and their semantic interrelations: the sizes of circles and distances between terms are not precisely correlated with number or relative strength (direct reference, allusion, etc.) of those interrelations. These images are meant to illustrate how distinct are the teachers' understandings of basic notions regarding their work. Those interrelations are discussed in detail within the study's text (those connections are the actual evidence; the maps only interpretively represent that evidence). Likewise, the students' comparisons of the teachers to animals are meant to be taken strictly metaphorically, as a reflection of the emotional response that each one's energy in teaching evokes (not a reflection of their appearance, dietary habits, et cetera).

Second, this method demands substantial time and labor. Observing these three classes from week 2 through the end of the term was itself a substantial investment of time (though arguably crucial for evoking the candid and concrete reflections on the classroom dialogs that I received from both the teachers and students). Interviewing each teacher for over an hour, and taking over a class period for a panel interview of their student groups was also an investment for the participants involved. The full transcription and analysis of those interviews was again time and labor intensive. Finally, comparing and synthesizing these

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parts, to trace the pragmatic arc of the course clearly and coherently, was a challenging mental task—requiring my first-hand experiences, my reasoned arrangement of this glut of data, and my full working memory hunting for points of connection. This is a rewarding and illuminating research process, but not one that lends itself to quick nor consistent evaluations of teacher performance. This type of case study analysis works best when done in small batches, with a specific academic or scholastic learning aim.

**The value – getting close gives a sense of process and complexity.**

The value of getting close with a teacher's practice and putting one's self in the mindset of that teacher is that it reveals subtle connections and deep-rooted reasons in their approaches that—from a distance, or with an outside lens—might look arbitrary or self-contradictory. As was pointed out in each teacher's section, merely looking at a teacher's practice through a fellow teacher's framework can make certain aspects of that approach seem problematic or counterproductive, because done by another individual (or for a different group of students, or in a different learning environment) it *might* be ineffective, inefficient, or alienating. One has to view course activities and teaching styles in the context of the institution, the student-group, and the individual leading that educational exchange. Doing this, one can make fuller sense of why teachers do what they do—with what pragmatic intention, based in what motivating values and beliefs, based in what living experiences—and so can extract lessons: both about teaching well when one is in those particular contexts, or one has that type of personality (e.g., the jovial iconoclast, the nurturing scholar, the orthodox debater), and more generally about the process of refining one's teaching strategies and manner to fit one's self and one's environment (whatever combination that might be).

For instance, this study has illuminated for me several important patterns that distinguish experienced, successful, practically wise teachers' educational exchanges from

those less experienced, less satisfied, less clearly intentioned teachers with whom I've discussed pursuing healthy, persuasive, sustainable classroom interactions.

One notable pattern in V, B, and M's discussions of teaching is how dialogically aware they are in their exchanges with students: these teachers are constantly dropping into the students' perspectives, positing what thoughts and feelings they might be having, recognizing the limits of their understanding and wishing they knew more, then seeking to attune to those students directly through observing their behaviors keenly and asking about their perspectives openly. These teachers also use this lens of their students' theoried minds to craft their lessons and responses: not merely paying attention to what students respond well to, but using that information to reverse-engineer how students think and feel, and then using that model to structure future activities and conversations. B provides the most obvious example of this, with her general writing guidelines that intuit exactly what students need to hear at each stage of their writing process, talking their attitudes and attentions and goals into confident, productive focus. Yet V and M also show this awareness: V with his slowly honed collection of stories and phrases and analogies that seem to "work" for students, M with his confident statements about what students will come to appreciate (clear structure, intellectual challenge, seeing the real-world use of lessons) and that, by course-end, students admit they have appreciated. These expert teachers can immediately recall typical and realistic dialogs with students and connect them to their larger educational intentions, they know the arc of their course's narrative as a progression of such dialogs, and they appear familiar with and ready to respond to most anything students say in the back-forth of a classroom exchange. Each individual knows the essential character of their educational dialogs: their tone, tempo, content, progress, and possibility of variance or surprise.

Another notable pattern comes from the students' reflections on these educational exchanges, where they emphasize time-and-again how impactful is the teacher's personal care for them as learners and the teacher's dedicated interest in the subject-matter. This insight may seem relatively simple and obvious (of course teachers should care about about their students, and have genuine interest and skill and knowledge about their subject), but students mention it so immediately and with such weight that it clearly bears repeating. A teacher's investment in the students shows their understanding of learners' needs, emphasizes their social alignment with students as a fellow learner, and raises their credibility as an educational leader capable of insightfully supporting students' learning processes. Likewise, a teacher's motivated investment in the subject-matter (which includes students' thoughts and interactions with the subject-matter) sets a course-group's social standards for quality of participation and degree of effort: the teacher's passion conveys the importance of course material as much as the facts themselves, stimulating student attention, and the teacher's intellectually serious attitude toward what students are thinking and feeling about the course material conveys a level of respect and expectation to which students then report feeling compelled to rise and reciprocate. Thus a teacher's personal care and scholarly self-investment stimulate students' social engagement and intellectual motivation in the course (making that exchange much richer and more alive than learning from a book or an automated program).

Lastly, in reviewing fieldnotes and recordings from across the term, I notice again an intuitive and simple pattern of emergent trust and fluency among in the course: what teachers do often, students will gradually adjust their own behaviors to meet and manage. Trust (stripped of its normative moral overtones: honesty, responsibility, fairness, etc.) is an expectation of constancy. Students trusted V to get excited about their paper topics and point

out possible ways to develop those subjects, so they actively sought to talk with him about their interests—after class, in office hours, by text and email. Yet they also came to rely on his pattern of making late and cursory comments on their shorter writing assignments, and so simply stopped putting much thought and effort into those assignments. Students trusted M to take criticism as good as he gave, so they thought longer before speaking in class, and also watched his explanations carefully for moments where they could correct his representation of ideas. Students trusted B to give helpful feedback when they asked specific questions, but not to read their full drafts for them, so they acclimated to the habit of looking through their own works and preparing questions for her before coming in to her office hours or turning in writing assignments. Students adapt to the affordances and exigencies, resources and demands, of a learning environment: that makes all the reliable details of a learning environment, in themselves, tacit or explicit lessons. Expert teachers find personalized ways of shaping those small details (of activities, conversations, feedback and follow-through) to instigate and propel the types of change and growth they want to stimulate in their students.

There are surely many more useful patterns and lessons waiting to be unearthed within teachers' course dialogs, across disciplines and age-ranges and countries. These are merely the few that stood out to me, from watching three teachers in California educate undergraduate university students about writing.

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