EMPLOYING AGENCY: MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES OF MATERIAL CONDITIONS, POWER, AND LITERACY IN A FIRST YEAR WRITING PROGRAM

by

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ABSTRACT

MEAGHAN C. RAND. Employing agency: multiple perspectives of material conditions, power, and literacy in a first year writing program. (Under the direction of DR. TONY SCOTT)

The purpose of this study is to examine how first year writing teachers' histories and experiences affect teacher agency negotiation in their classrooms. Five qualitative case studies of first year writing instructors are used to discuss the impact of external constraints (institutional and curricular values, material conditions, perceptions of writing teachers and the field of rhetoric/composition, etc.) on classroom operations and practices. Using positioning theory as an analytical tool, this study presents an analysis of how these teachers talk about their positions within academia. Focusing on particular discussions of agency negotiation in the classroom and in their working environments, these teachers expose contradictory feelings about several aspects of their jobs, demonstrating resistance towards the material conditions of teaching college composition and the educational system at large. These instructors focus on agency in their classroom because they have a sense of control over their practices, yet they want to appear as if they are not overtly authoritative. These instructors also show resistance to more formalist or traditional conceptions of what defines an "English teacher" and prefer to be seen as progressive and/or critical in their stance towards education in general and teaching writing in particular. Results from this study can be used to facilitate discussion about how working conditions affect the teaching of writing. Recognizing and understanding multiple teacher voices and perspectives creates a more nuanced understanding of what it means to be a writing teacher in higher education today.

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PREFACE

If one tried to find the location of first year writing (FYW) on campus, one would need a map and a prayer. When first year writing was part of the English department, the instructors' offices were dispersed among the English faculty offices like a network, a silent network, expected to coexist alongside the "real work" happening in the English department. Housed in a popular academic building on campus, one would notice that nobody stays there; students and faculty bustle about on a mission to leave this building, whereas other places on campus have a more inviting feel.

Once inside the department, the gatekeepers, i.e. administrative assistants, would point in one direction or the other depending on who one wanted to see, and one was left to explore by walking around a dark and cavernous set of offices. If one was looking for a particular instructor, one may need to leave extra time to wander around the network of offices in order to find him or her (unless, of course, this instructor was a graduate assistant or an adjunct, in which one would find most of them in the common office area complete with study carrels and zero privacy).

Some instructors liked to work alone, and sought solace in the corners of the English department or in the coffee shop located nearby. In fact, the often eerily quiet halls afforded little communication and collaboration. For some employees, a few days in the office could pass without interacting with any other faculty.

Once it was decided that first year writing would become freestanding, the environment changed. FYW was moved to a renovated building complete with new offices, dedicated classroom space, conference rooms, and a lounge. The instructors' offices are in close proximity to each other, and students now frequently roam the halls

going to or from class, or to stop by their instructor's office hours. There is open space where both teachers and students congregate, and there is a general noise level above a whisper, which is a welcome change from the previous arrangement. The network is now more efficient and functions as a collective rather than as a fragmented group.

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It is amazing how a change of environment affects the conditions and operations of a program.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Undergraduate students most often take courses in First Year Writing (FYW) upon entrance to college, unless they have obtained prior college credit or a passing score on the Advanced Placement (AP) exam that allows them to bypass the composition course(s). For those who take first year writing courses, these courses have an important role in helping students acclimate to the rigors of college level work, and sometimes help foster a different perception of the role of writing in students' lives. Although instruction in First Year Writing courses varies depending on the college/university and the philosophy of their programs/departments, students often arrive at college with a wide range of histories, skills, and approaches to writing. FYW programs, therefore, have to address the wide range of students' perceptions of writing as well as address changing perceptions (by students, teachers, administrators, etc.) of what college-level writing should include. Movements such as Writing in the Disciplines (WID), Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), discussions of transfer, and the recent adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for K-12 education in most states have attempted to address some of these concerns or have complicated these concerns, but the fact remains that different constituencies have different opinions on who can teach writing, how it is taught, and what students should know about writing prior to entering college. First Year Writing exists as a complex space within the university and therefore it is a subject worthy of study.

First Year Writing programs have a unique set of challenges: most programs rely on a high percentage of adjunct or contingent labor as compared to other programs, many provide no benefits and a meager per class salary to the adjunct instructors (Discenna, 2007; Fulton, 2000; Green, 2007; Marshall, 2003; Maynard & Joseph, 2008), some are underfunded, and there are different views on the purpose of writing instruction for first year students (Bousquet, 2008; Miller, 1991; Schell, 2003). Additionally, women comprise the majority of composition instructors (Bousquet, 2008, p. 6; Currie, Harris, & Thiele, 2000; Enos, 1996; Stromquist, 2002). Many graduate teaching assistants also comprise a portion of the composition workforce as part of their graduate funding, even if their intended career goals are not to teach in rhetoric/composition after degree completion (Bousquet, 2008, p. 21). The pressure for increased accountability measures and tightening university budgets has called for many departments to reconceptualize the placement and composition of first year writing programs; some first year writing programs have moved out of English departments completely, while many still are housed within English departments, begging the question of the relationship between English Studies and Writing Studies. Regardless, a tension exists between competing views on the purpose of writing instruction on the college level and writing practices espoused by the first year writing programs.

This tension clearly has effects, both positive and negative, on writing program administration and what types of teaching practices are privileged in the classroom. Some programs have relative autonomy as compared to others. Some programs have a particular set of values about literacy as socially constructed and culturally dependent, while others have a different set of assumptions about literacy and rely on a scripted

curriculum, static genres and grammar instruction, as well as "measurable learning outcomes" placed on students' writing. The latter set of values in particular complicates the authority and expertise of the teacher with mostly negative consequences. As Tony Scott (2009) notes, "Instrumentalist management techniques—standardized syllabi, uniform grading rubrics, mandatory texts, mandatory evaluations—can ensure that FYC teachers are present and productive but not granted too much agency even in the classroom" (p. 55). Some teachers who work within first year writing programs must negotiate their own teaching philosophy and/or teaching practices with the philosophy of the first year writing program in which they work, as well as with the mission and philosophy of the college/university in which they work. Concern with managing workers and implementing this type of curriculum takes emphasis away from socioeconomic realities for teachers (Strickland, 2011, p. 73). Material conditions are such that sometimes a teacher sacrifices his or her own teaching philosophy to remain employed, and/or remain employed at an institution that may privilege a mission he or she does not agree with philosophically. This might be true, for example, with an adjunct instructor who might need to teach at a particular college or university because of higher per-class pay than another university. Another example would be a teacher who privileges a social constructionist view of literacy teaching in an environment that uses current-traditional rhetoric or formalism as their default philosophy.

Employment status and personal teaching philosophy, then, within the first year writing program might affect perceptions of writing. Additionally, differences in writing program administration also affect the affinity or allegiance a writing teacher may have towards a program. For example, teachers within a freestanding first year writing

program may have more relative autonomy than other programs housed within English Studies departments. To understand the extent to which teachers participate with and work against programmatic and institutional demands, it is helpful to research particular cases of working writing teachers in a First Year Writing program or department, focusing on both macro features (such as university structure and governance, program structure and governance) and micro features (language-in-use (Gee, 2011)) of writing teachers discussing their classroom practices).

The program of study, a first year writing program in a large urban research university (hereby known as Southeast State University), has been affected by curricular and administrative changes. A call for changes by campus administration at the study site created a contentious environment and a political space within what was the English department, reinforcing a literature camp versus rhetoric/composition camp controversy. This contention centered on a series of questions: What does it mean to be a writing teacher? How is literacy taught, and who has expertise to teach writing? Who should receive department resources? How are constituencies such as graduate teaching assistants in English, adjunct faculty and non tenure-track faculty socialized into a first year writing program struggling to develop a cohesive identity?

The complexity of these questions, and their real, material consequences begs further study. At the study site, university administration facilitated a split between first year writing and English, and created a new freestanding first year writing program. Therefore, there is a need to understand how parties related directly to First Year Writing (particularly those who work within it) discuss the purpose and function of this program. Additionally, this study seeks to determine if the labor status of those who teach in the

program (adjunct, non-tenure-track lecturer, or graduate teaching assistant) affects their views on the importance of the program itself, as well as their perceptions of agency within it. This study seeks to understand the material, political, and social conditions of a changing First Year Writing program, as well as understand how assumptions about literacy underpin these conditions. These conditions will be discussed by identifying specific moments of negotiation and analyzing the language used by the teachers to describe them.

1.1. Introduction of Relevant Research

Conflicting views about who can teach writing and its purpose and function at the college level also cloud people's perceptions of the role of the university writing teacher (Trimbur, 2011). Some feel as though, even if they have disciplinary expertise in something other than rhetoric/composition but still within the realm of English Studies, that writing is a natural extension of their discipline and therefore they can claim expertise. Such a notion discounts the expertise in writing pedagogy and composition theory that those within the rhetoric/composition field have studied. Those with expertise in rhetoric/composition may be faced with a difficult and unfortunate task then of having to prove their claim to expertise, or defend it, when they had disciplinary expertise all along. This situation reflects the historically diminished value of composition within English Studies and within the university itself (especially if the university considers first year writing a "service department"). This subordinate position extends to perceptions of English Studies as well, for as Protherough and Atkinson (1991) state, the discipline of English suffers from an identity crisis: "English is seen as having no real separate identity, as being soft and easy, without any obvious vocational application, a subject that

everyone 'knows'" (pp. 1-2). Writing Studies, therefore, becomes even less about theory and more about practice and skills. Additionally, views of first year writing (as a subset of general education) and as "women's work" complicate the space of composition in colleges today (Apple, 1986, pp. 9, 57; Ballif, Davis, & Mountford, 2008, pp. 1, 86; Miller, 1991, p. 123; Protherough & Atkinson, 1991, p. 23).

Identification with and allegiance to the first year writing program varies amongst its faculty and staff in any given college or university. Teachers trained in other disciplines who work within first year writing departments may also have allegiance to their field of expertise more so than to writing instruction but still seek employment in writing programs regardless, perhaps due to material and/or socioeconomic conditions. Other teachers may have trained in other English Studies disciplines, but have found a supportive working environment and/or philosophical alignment within their first year writing department. In any case, program philosophy and value systems affect teachers' understanding of their role within the program.

For example, "students need writing skills," or "first year writing should fix the problems of student writers," are commonly heard in reference to the purpose of the first year writing program and the teachers within these programs are charged with fulfilling these tasks. If they do not fulfill these tasks to the satisfaction of those who use these statements, both they and their students are blamed. In this case, grammar and mechanics are privileged over argumentation and quality of ideas (Gilles, 2002, p. 6). But what does learning to write at the college level mean? Who determines what constitutes college level writing? Why should the purpose of first year writing be to "fix" student work? That model presupposes a deficit model of students' writing. Those who make this

argument ascribe a value to writing and literacy—as skills-based. Those who teach first year writing therefore transfer these skills to students; the teachers can be taught efficiently to do so at little relative cost to the university. As Danielewicz (2001) states, "To be a writing teacher is to exist as a member of the lowest academic caste. Often, people think of language, especially written language, as a mere tool, a skill to acquire, an instrument to be used to accomplish other tasks. Thus, teaching writing can be a challenging and often thankless job" (p. 21). This "caste system" mentality has effects on perceptions about their jobs and clashes with many teachers within rhetoric/composition who believe in the transformational power of writing and of language.

First year writing programs also use graduate student labor to teach writing classes; many of these graduate students do not intend to teach writing after the completion of their degrees (Bousquet, 2008, p. 21). Although training programs are put in place to assist these new teachers to teach at the college level, some of these programs do not value the assistants' prior experiences: "Even when more time and resources are dedicated to teacher preparation, new teachers are often still positioned as 'empty vessels' who are in some way deficient—needing either new knowledges or new skills" (Stenberg, 2005, p. 64). The structure of training programs echo the banking model of education Paulo Freire criticizes (1970/2000, p. 72). Programs have to pass on information about the program and its day-to-day operations, but in many cases also provide a crash course on teaching in general, and teaching writing specifically. Theoretical perspectives of writing pedagogy become muted in these cases because of the constraints of the training (Restaino, 2012). It gives the impression that writing pedagogy can be taught quickly and cheaply to graduate students. After the completion

of their degree programs, these graduates who choose to pursue college level teaching (particularly PhD students) may be under the impression that there will be (full time) jobs available, but this is usually not the case depending on the area of specialization (Aronowitz, 2002, p. 12; Bousquet, 2008, p. 16). Recent movements to open source instruction such as through hybrid courses, online writing courses, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) also cause concern for many first year writing programs, as the faculty are put in a tenuous position. The economic motives of the institution outweigh the transformative possibilities and cutting edge content in a first year writing course.

The conflicting ideologies and value systems surrounding writing fracture not only writing programs, but also those working within those programs. This is most clearly seen in the classroom practices and material conditions of the laborers within first year writing programs and departments. As discussed above, non-tenure track lecturers, adjunct/contingent laborers, graduate teaching assistants, and some tenure-track professors (usually in combination with an administrative role) staff first year writing. Teachers of every employment status at the university level face administrative pressures tied to changing economic times. Budget cuts, increased class sizes, efficiency models of education, hiring freezes, the absence of cost of living salary increases, etc., all affect the ability to do their jobs. Most of these effects are negative. These conditions, in turn, affect teachers' agency, and subsequently can affect classroom practices. Classroom practices could include the type of instruction (lecture vs. discussion-based), response to student writing, classroom management/discipline, and the demonstration of the instructor's personal teaching philosophy. Facing the material and economic pressures

noted above, what semblance of power does a writing instructor have in his or her own classroom, and in what capacity?

While there have been advocates for a more political classroom space, critical stances on language and literacy, and/or writing for public audiences in first year writing in order to empower teachers and students (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Giroux, 2001; Knoblauch & Brannon, 1993; Knoblauch & Brannon, 2002; Trimbur, 2011; Welch, 2008), those who have competing value systems resist these moves. For example, a view of first year writing as a service program might not understand and/or support the reasons why Knoblauch and Brannon or Welch would advocate for a political classroom space, for why would students need to take their writing public or problematize the conditions of their education when they could be better served developing academic discourse (read "good writing skills") in the writing classroom? Writing teachers, including myself, try to work against this viewpoint. This viewpoint stands in direct opposition to those teachers and rhetoric/composition programs who view literacy and literacy instruction as an empowering practice for students. Lack of understanding about the work we do in first year writing frustrates many of us, and asking students to engage with our writing curriculum and write for public audiences becomes a means of combating these misperceptions of our jobs and our identities as writing teachers.

There are other threats to our identities, especially when identities are so closely tied to work. "Work is, in many social venues in the United States, the central claim to personal competency and personal worth. When work is denied us, that 'failure' requires explanation, and the explanation comes to serve as defense for our endangered personhood" (Holland, Lachicotte, Jr., Skinner, & Cain, 1998, p. 204). This conception

of work relates to class (as middle-class, "American Dream" ideals), but societal attitudes towards gender, race/ethnicity, and age also complicate the value of work.

For some graduate students, this work is automatic; because they are pursuing a Master's degree and the department chairs, program directors, and first year writing programs administrators state they have passing qualifications to complete the training program, they have the "right" to teach first year composition. After completion of the degree, graduates can choose to pursue a doctorate in their field of study, teach outside of higher education or outside of English Studies, or leave academia altogether for other opportunities. Other employees have different options. When adjuncts and contingent laborers who want full-time employment at the university are unable to secure it, this can cause them to reevaluate their identities as teachers, for what are the benefits of a job that makes less than a living wage? For the full time, non-tenure-track faculty or tenure track composition teachers, though, circumstances differ. For most non-tenure-track employees, there might not be research requirements, but there might be service requirements and a higher course load. Most tenure track employees have publishing expectations and these positions are very competitive in rhetoric/composition. From a university's perspective, R1 institutions (and others) define "personal worth" by amount of scholarship and research one produces over teaching and service. Other types of universities, such as teaching universities, do not necessarily place as much emphasis on research/scholarship, and therefore this prevents some teachers from actively creating the most recent scholarship in the discipline. In either case, the tension between university expectations of research, service work, and teaching affect teachers' perceptions of these job expectations or requirements.

One could argue that university teachers have autonomy, flexibility, academic freedom, and relative job security, even as curricular and programmatic constraints exist. However, upon closer investigation, all faculty have affordances and constraints that affect the way they do their jobs. For example, tenure-track faculty generally have more academic freedom than their non-tenure-track counterparts, but they also have the expectation of research and publication in their field as a means of attaining tenure. First year writing teachers in some programs are afforded autonomy through certain governance structures or freedom in their course design (as long as course goals are achieved as set forth in the course description/departmental curriculum), whereas other programs provide a more scripted formula of a "model" syllabus, required textbooks, and "suggested course assignments." Even with that type of restriction, teachers design day-to-day assignments and activities, and are responsible for the evaluation of student work. Given the varying degrees of power (that which they *perceive* they have versus what they may *actually* have), classrooms could serve as sites of resistance or as sites that replicate dominant narratives (or both). Teachers, then, have the capability to run their classrooms in such a way that reflects their personal views on writing instruction, literacy, and larger social, cultural, and economic conditions as long as the parties that regulate the teachers (writing program administration, the college, the university, etc.) believe the teachers are doing their jobs. If teachers feel as though the pressure to conform to the goals of the course, to the program's philosophies and mission statements, and/or to particular views of literacy is too great, then they might be more apt to replicate those views even if they differ from their own views. Even in those instances, agency works through the teachers' actions and behaviors.

Agency is not a tangible object, and therefore it is imperative to understand how people negotiate it in different sets of circumstances. When one thinks of the word "agency," one might think of a particular connotation of the word: an expression of power by an individual or a group. If people have agency, then they can assert power and face the consequences of their actions in any given situation. But it is not that simple. The complexity of the term, and perhaps the misperception of it, creates an ambiguity in its definition. People may try to objectify the term; agency is something you have (possession of) or do not have, but that is not enough (Ahearn, 2001, pp. 114, 122). Although agency relates to power and material conditions, it also has political and intrapersonal implications in particular contexts. For example, in a given situation if someone appears to assert agency, it could negatively affect the agency of others also in that situation due to a power struggle or a negation of power.

It is more useful and accurate to think of agency as a continuum between awareness and action, for as Laura Micciche (2011) states, "agency operates on a continuum including action and change as well as less visible but no less important forms of agency like thinking, being still, and processing" (p. 73). Agency constantly changes depending on context and circumstance. As Sherry Ortner (2006) notes:

> In probably the most common usage "agency" can be virtually synonymous with the forms of power people have at their disposal, their ability to act on their own behalf, influence other people and events, and maintain some kind of control in their own lives. Agency in this sense is relevant for both domination and resistance. People in positions of power "have"—legitimately or not—what might be thought of as "a lot of agency," but the dominated too always have certain capacities, and sometimes very significant capacities, to exercise some sort of influence over the ways in which events unfold. (pp. 143-144)

Much like a person having multiple identities simultaneously, a person also could have multiple degrees of agency given the time, place, and situation. In the context of a first

year writing program, people negotiate agency through overt or covert actions as related to employment status (non-tenure track instructor, adjunct/contingent faculty, graduate student, etc.), by discipline (personal affiliation with rhetoric/composition, or another discipline within English Studies), by expertise (who decides who has expertise in writing instruction and who does not), and by material conditions (such as salary, office conditions, classroom conditions, etc.).

In the "figured world" (Holland, et al., 1998) of the first year writing program, agency affects classroom practices, work/life balance, and decision-making practices. As Bandura (1997) states, "personal agency operates within a broad network of sociostructural influences. In agentic transactions, people are both producers and products of social systems. Social structures—which are devised to organize, guide, and regulate human affairs in given domains by authorized rules and sanctions—do not arise by immaculate conception; they are created by human activity" (p. 6). Agency includes people who have different power relationships in a given context, and always includes a negotiation because people act/react in relation to each other (Ortner, 2006, pp. 151-152).

Many situations exist for participants in writing programs (students, teachers, and administrators) to negotiate agency. The following includes some examples of covert and overt agency negotiation in different activities related to teaching writing:

- In a writing class, the teacher decides a discussion-based class is more effective than a lecture, and asks students to move their desks to form a circle to facilitate more discussion.
- A particularly extroverted student disrupts the class and says something offensive while the teacher is talking. Other students regulate his or her behavior by saying

something to the disruptive student, or signal their annoyance with body language. The teacher can decide from a range of reactions: ask the student to leave the classroom, ask the student to speak to him or her privately, ask the student to stop talking in front of the rest of the class, ignore the student, etc.

- For a major assignment, the writing teacher encourages students to pursue topics of their own interest. For some students, this open-ended assignment frustrates them because they want to be told "the answer," while some other students enjoy the flexibility inherent in the assignment. At times, the teacher will need to discuss options with some students whose projects do not meet the requirements of the assignment, or the teacher finds unsuitable or inappropriate for the project.
- The writing program distributes a list of "preferred textbooks" and provides sample assignments for its instructors. Additionally, the program offers several professional development workshops throughout the course of the year. Although not required, these workshops are strongly encouraged because they facilitate the exchange of new ideas, as well as consistency in the curriculum. Some faculty choose not to participate. Some faculty who would like to participate cannot because they have teaching obligations that conflict with when the workshops take place.
- An adjunct instructor teaches courses at two universities. These colleges offer different curriculums and value writing differently. Even though this instructor's teaching philosophy might align more with one of the programs, the higher pay at the other is an incentive to continue teaching at both.

- Teacher feedback practices vary widely among faculty; some instructors use rubrics and point scales to evaluate student work, and some instructors prefer to use narrative feedback rather than directive comments. Some instructors do not provide grades at all during the course of the semester and base grades on portfolio-driven assessments.
- Programmatic assessment occurs as mandated by the university and accrediting organizations, but some people treat the process with a healthy level of skepticism. Assessment seems detached from the contexts in which student writing happens, and the exercise seems futile.
- In a classroom, students work in writing groups to workshop their drafts. Some groups work really well together, and some groups cannot move beyond the "it's good, now let's read the next paper" type of peer feedback or cursory editing. This could be due to the lack of discussion of how to do peer groups effectively, or power relations within the groups themselves.
- Knowledge among faculty is circulated, discussed, and disseminated through formal means (such as in faculty meetings, through memorandums from the Dean's office or campus administration, through faculty committees, etc.), as well as through informal means (hallway conversations, social gatherings, etc.).
- The ability to make new hires in a writing program alters the course and philosophy of the program. Some faculty embrace the change, while others become more alienated from the values of the program and program governance as a response.

- Teacher professional development within a writing program varies widely; some teachers actively pursue research and attend conferences in rhetoric/composition, while others pursue opportunities in literature, creative writing, and/or other fields. All of these opportunities are encouraged (if budget allows). Research, though, is not required as part of a non-tenure track job at their university.

There are many more examples of agency in practice, but the range of examples here indicates how power and agency move through social interaction in a writing program. This project will investigate how teachers discuss moments of negotiation that occur in the classroom and in other aspects of their jobs, as they are important in showing the dynamism in writing programs as well as the oppression, for as Holland et al. (1998) state, "Human agency may be frail, especially among those with little power, but it happens daily and mundanely, and it deserves our attention" (p. 5). Laura Ahearn (2001) echoes this statement and proposes more research on "delineating different kinds of agency, or different ways in which agency is socioculturally mediated in particular times and places" (p. 122). Therefore, investigating teacher narratives and counternarratives within a program in addition to observing those teachers' classroom practices will expose those conditions.

This study seeks to do just that—to understand how teachers of different employment statuses construct and enact their agency within the space of a first year writing program and understand how external factors may influence teachers' classrooms. This study subsequently will investigate decision-making processes and value/belief systems related to writing instruction and literacy, and specifically

investigate moments in the classroom where these processes and values are present as related to agency negotiation.

This study will investigate the following research questions:

1. How do first year writing teachers' histories and experiences with teaching writing affect their sense of agency? How do these teachers talk about their constructions of agency and expertise?

2. How is agency afforded in specific moments in the classroom or in specific examples of other aspects of teachers' jobs? How do these moments demonstrate different negotiations of agency?

3. How do first year writing teachers negotiate their own curricular decisions based on their perceptions of programmatic values (concerning literacy and teaching practices) given material conditions in a first year writing program?

In order to provide continuity, it is important to provide operational definitions of terms used throughout this study:

FYW (First Year Writing):

This refers to a department or program housing introductory-level composition courses at the college level. First Year Writing is also known as FYC (First Year Composition) or college composition, but in this study it will be referred to as First Year Writing (or FYW). The typical sequence for students at Southeast State University is a two-course sequence, but there are also accelerated courses and support courses for English language learners. Traditional courses have between 22-24 students per course depending on the semester.

Non-tenure-track Lecturer:

A lecturer is a full-time employee in the First Year Writing program. At the study site, a lecturer carries a 4/4 teaching load typically unless he or she has administrative duties within the department. A lecturer position is non-tenure track, but lecturers receive a salary and benefits through the university. Lecturers have a variable contract period (initially a two-year appointment, followed by a comprehensive review after five years, and periodic reviews after the comprehensive review). During the study duration, there were 31 lecturers.

Adjunct:

An adjunct or contingent instructor works part time in the First Year Writing program, and has a variable teaching load (a minimum of one course per semester up to five courses per semester). At the research site, a part-time instructor is paid per course and does not receive benefits. Additionally, adjuncts are on a semester-to-semester contract basis. During the course of this study, there were between 30-35 part-time instructors depending on the semester and on need, comprising almost 50% of the faculty.

Graduate Assistant (GA):

A graduate teaching assistant has a two-year appointment in the English department while he or she completes the Master's degree program at the study site. In the first year of the assistantship, GAs work in the university's writing center and take a tutoring course and a teaching of writing methods course. In the second year, the GAs work within the First Year Writing program, teaching a total of three courses of composition (a 2/1 or a 1/2 teaching load). During the course of this study, there were a total of fourteen

graduate assistants: seven first year GAs who worked in the writing center, and seven second year GAs who were teachers of record in a first year writing course.

This study seeks to understand how first year writing teachers demonstrate and negotiate agency, and how they talk about their agency as related to their job as writing instructors. Chapter 2 contains a review of relevant literature. Chapter 3 contains a discussion of the methodology and theoretical framework for the study. Chapter 4-6 will contain the results of the study, and Chapter 7 will contain a discussion of the findings and future directions for research. The results of this study can be used in multiple contexts. The results can be useful to writing program administrators (WPAs) and other university administration to shed light on the material working conditions of first year composition instructors, especially of traditionally underserved part-time/adjunct laborers. As writing departments/programs shift as colleges and universities grow and change, it is important to study those who are the front line in providing writing instruction. The emphasis on teacher working conditions and teacher agency needs to be discussed because of the pressure of globalization on their jobs. On a larger scale, the results from this study can foster conversations about the connections and intersections of teacher agency, work conditions, and literacy practices.

1.2. Narrative 1: The Road to My Composition Classroom

School was the place where I could forget that [home] self and, through ideas, reinvent myself.—bell hooks (1994, p. 3)

There are many people in academia who advocate for writing teachers' rights and there has been increased scholarship about these very issues that exposes realities of teaching college composition. As I transitioned from a part-time teacher to a full-time

writing teacher, how I viewed my role in the university as well as how I was perceived in the department in which I work changed. My purpose in this project, then, is to raise awareness about these issues from a unique perspective—that of a graduate student in education trying to break into the field of rhetoric/composition. At times, I feel like an outsider in rhetoric/composition because of the route I took to become a part of the field, but at other times I feel as though my alliances and research interests clearly reside within the field of rhetoric/composition. This ambivalence demonstrates the type of negotiation I face often in my job and in my position in academia.

My story of becoming a teacher was predicated on the traditional transformative perspective of teaching: teachers can empower their students, and I wanted to be a part of that process. Growing up, I felt as though I had no other option than to become a teacher. This was tied to my experience in school, which was mostly a very positive experience. However, now I feel as though I was socialized to become a teacher rather than pursue another field. This socialization stems from my success in following the rules of school and with traditional notions of literacy practices. For example, I excelled at reading and writing at an early age. By first grade, I was reading two grade levels ahead. I remember during language arts class, I was allowed to sit out in the hall to read silently along with two other boys who could also read at that same level as me while the teacher worked with the other students in the class. Later on in my public school experience, I won awards for my writing, was tracked into the highest level of classes, and was praised from my teachers and peers for being "smart." I loved that attention and thought school was a fun place to be. I was involved in every extracurricular activity I could participate in because it meant that I could stay in school longer. Looking back, I think this had

something to do with avoiding being shuttled back and forth between my mother's house and my father's house after they divorced. I had to do well in school, and school was more of a "home" than my home was at the time. Most of my identity concentrated on keeping up that appearance of being a good student.

My mother encouraged me to pursue a field where I could be self-sufficient and did not have to worry about paying bills or how to afford food and a decent place to live, while my father told me I should not pursue teaching but pursue a field that made more money and had more prestige, like becoming a lawyer. It is important to note, however, that there were other people who influenced my decision to become a teacher. Most of these people were teachers themselves (and mostly female teachers); they saw I had teacher-like qualities and encouraged me to pursue this field. School is a gendered place even though I did not realize it then. This speaks to the power that external influences can have on identity formation, and the subsequent internal struggle that follows, for as Burbules and Berk (1999) state:

> Individual identity is created again and again, for a short period, in a specific situation, and before a specific public. Identity is not a given, but an activity, the result of which is always only a local stability. This activity is not one of balancing between the expectations of others and those of the individual itself. Rather, the balancing act is between different expectations, each of which has been partly internalized. Within every person there are different voices, which can be, and usually are, contradictory. (p. 79)

The people who expected me to have a different career because "being smart" had more earnings potential caused internal conflict for me. I wanted to please both of my parents, my family, and my friends by being successful, but in the end, I did not even try to pursue another field when I arrived at college because I felt so comfortable at school.

And it seemed logical that I would choose English and education because those were the subjects in which I excelled.

College was no different than my high school experience; I studied more than other people and worked very hard to keep my GPA to ensure the label of "smart girl" still applied. I was jealous of those who seemed to put in less effort but still received good grades or those who were naturally talented writers. After my freshman year at a large public, land-grant university, I chose to leave that university and my scholarship behind to move to a more prestigious university in a large city in the Northeast. My experience at my new school was disappointing. I loved the city it was in, but I did not fit in at this university. I did not feel comfortable when most of my fellow students had a lot of money, the best clothes, and fancy cars. My identity was the smart girl who had two jobs to help with expenses rather than just as the "smart girl." There was a clear class distinction between my classmates and myself, and I could not handle it.

A year later, I transferred back to the land-grant university and entered the College of Education there, which had stringent admission requirements. Once I was inside the gate, the program did not meet my expectations. I started taking educational psychology and methods courses that year, but felt as though I was not really learning anything that was going to make me a great teacher. I also wanted to take more English literature courses. I decided to leave the education program (against the warnings of the Dean of the college who called me over the summer to talk me out of it), and became an English major. I will just go to graduate school, I thought, and figure out a plan at a later date.

When I applied to graduate school, I decided to apply to two highly selective schools for Master's degree programs in Education, and a few Master's in English programs. I was accepted to one of the most prestigious schools in the country for their Master of Arts in Teaching program, but I gave it up and chose to attend a large public university in the South instead. This was for two reasons. The prestigious school was a full-year program and at the time cost $55,000 for one year including living expenses. I was offered no scholarship or assistantship opportunities, just federal loan money. I did not want the guilt of putting my family under all of that pressure financially. I could not justify to myself taking out tens of thousands of dollars in loans for a one year program, just to have a diploma from an Ivy League school and knowing I would not be able to pay off these student loans easily given a teacher's salary. The other reason was personal; I was in a relationship and I had to make a choice to commit to it. My identity as a student clashed with my personal identity. I was born in the interlude between Generation X and the Millennial Generation, and was raised to believe I have the right to have both a personal life and a career, no questions asked. In the end, against the advice of my family and most of my friends, I chose to go to the university in the South. I was twenty-one years old, and scared.

As part of my Master's assistantship, I was told I would teach freshman composition. The first year, I would team-teach with a more experienced lecturer in the department, and then I was on my own. The summer before I started teaching, I took a short class on teaching writing along with the other new graduate students who were also teaching. In this program, we read scholarly articles in the field, participated in normative grading sessions, and then we were given our syllabi and required books and

told to teach. I felt completely unprepared, but reassured by my co-teacher that I was ready to teach writing by myself, and I began teaching classes on my own soon after, checking in with her periodically. Stenberg (2005) states, "The administrator or 'master' teacher observes the TA to assess whether the TA has adequately assimilated the particular program's pedagogical goals and values. Once these goals are accomplished, no further observations are required: the reward is 'freedom' or isolation" (p. 14). I passed the test.

Still, I felt like the whole situation was a farce. I did not consider myself a writer; the only things I wrote were academic papers in my literature classes, and some failed attempts at poetry. At the time, I separated academic writing from personal writing. I never took first year writing as a college student (I was exempt from taking the courses due to early college credit), so how could I teach first year writing? This is a common situation for many teaching assistants (Stygall, 2002, p. 41), and I did not have the experience of being a student in first-year writing to rely on to inform my teaching. As Ward and Perry (2002) note, "TAs walk a tightrope between several subject positions: student, teacher, and scholar" (p. 119). I was only comfortable with the subject position of student at that time, but even that was questionable due to my lack of access to rhetoric coursework. I was a literature track graduate student, and we did not associate with the rhetoric/compositionists; even then there was a division with the structure of the program that limited our exposure to rhetoric theory and writing coursework. I considered myself as more of a teacher than a writer, but I did not feel like I was a teacher either.

Through my experience in graduate school, I felt as though I was slowly learning to be a teacher, but this was done in isolation rather than as a collective experience.

Robert Gilles (2002) notes this feeling as common amongst first year writing teachers (pp. 9-10). After our initial teacher training course together, our cohort went our separate ways. I had some administrative support, but I still needed more to help me be a good teacher, and the time to become a more mature teacher. I did not receive any advising as to career options, nor about how to navigate the academy and its rules about conferences and publishing; most of my professors seemed too busy with their own research or advising PhD students to spend time to support the M.A. students. So I kept my head down and did not ask questions. I did the best teaching I could while I tried to complete my degree as quickly as possible.

After I graduated with my Master's degree, I immediately moved home. I had no job prospects, I was not accepted to any doctoral programs, and I was alone. I spent months applying for any job I was remotely qualified for; by my estimation, I applied for over 150 jobs. After a few months of working in my father's construction company as a secretary, I was offered an administrative position at a medium-sized private university in the Northeast, and again I was forced to revise my identity. As soon as I adjusted to the thought of being a teacher, I no longer had the opportunity to teach. But after about a year, I met with the director of the writing program there because I was looking for more income. The director hired me on the spot as an adjunct teaching one class per semester in addition to my administrative job. Though this program had a required textbook and suggested assignment sequence, I really enjoyed my experience. I felt more comfortable teaching and I felt as though I was more successful in teaching writing creatively than during my Master's degree program. When a full-time position opened up in the department, I applied right away and assumed that I would be hired. I did not even get an

interview. How could this be? I remember being so shocked I was not granted an interview. After all, I had excellent recommendations and student evaluations. Looking back, I realized I had no idea about how universities worked. I did not know about the other adjuncts who spent years as what Jill Carroll calls "freeway fliers" and were piecing together a livable wage (as cited in Discenna, 2007, p. 472); I also had no idea that particular credentials and publications mattered that much in academic hiring. I just assumed that since I had become a "good teacher" that I would get the job.

This experience motivated me to pursue my doctorate, and I moved to Charlotte to pursue a degree that would allow me to take both education and English courses. After beginning this program, I have focused my research on writing pedagogy, the structure of universities/adjunct labor practices, and sociolinguistics. Through my coursework and my experience as an adjunct at two universities while pursuing my doctorate, and now as a full-time non-tenure-track employee, I have become more aware of my potential place within the academy after the completion of my doctorate, and frankly I am worried. All signs point to a work environment where I will constantly negotiate my identities and value systems. For example, I still struggle with my dual identity as a teacher (which I have always sought after), and a writer (a label which I am slowly identifying with more). And even now, I may be considered a "good student," but I am not necessarily a "good scholar" yet, as there is a gaping whole in my CV where the publications should go.

I argue that my identity as a "writing teacher" and "scholar" often conflict as a result of structural issues common to the rhetoric/composition field, and subsequent perceptions of it, which cause me to constantly renegotiate my place in the academy. Part of that is due to becoming more aware of systematic neoliberal higher education

practices that affect my ability to teach (in the most ideal sense). In other words, someone could be a stellar teacher but there will still be limitations on him or her caused by the structure of the academy which privileges an efficiency model. As Marc Bousquet (2008) aptly stated, "Working in McDonald's 'kitchen,' even the talent of Wolfgang Puck is pressed into service of the Quarter Pounder" (p. 4). There is never enough time, space, or resources to teach writing the way I would like to teach…

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

There are several theorists and studies that provide a useful framework for this study. First, a review of key figures in sociological theory, critical theory, and linguistics theory relevant to this study will be discussed, followed by a discussion of identity and agency and their connections to rhetoric/composition theory and pedagogy.

2.1. Michel Foucault

Foucault's writings and lectures on the history of disciplinary structures, such as asylums and prisons offers readers a view of historical institutions and how they have regulated people's behavior. Most relevant to this study is Foucault's concept of "power/knowledge," which informs the theoretical framework. In *Discipline and Punish* (1997), Foucault's discussion of "docile bodies" suggests that because of the oppressive nature of institutions in place as a means of surveillance, control is placed on the body as a means of regulation (p. 138). One of his most famous discussions of this scenario is his discussion of Bentham's panopticon, which shows the overt and covert nature of this surveillance (p. 201). Although much of Foucault's work is research on prisons, asylums, and other institutions, generalizations can be made about the relationship of power to the general public and how institutions like schools have adopted surveillance methods.

Foucault notes that people are not completely docile, but are participatory in the power structures in their society; Foucault's notion of power/knowledge expresses this concept. Foucault states that you cannot separate power from knowledge (Barker, 1998, p. 27; Foucault, 1984, p. 175; Hall, 1997, p. 49; Olssen, 1999, p. 22). He states:

> We should admit, rather, that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, not any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. (1984, p. 175)

Barker (1998) notes that Foucault's concept opens up the possibility that people can demonstrate agency because they are complicit in power/knowledge (p. 37). Other critics, though, do not believe Foucault's theories allow much room for agency (Ahearn, 2001, p. 116; Rhodes, 2005, p. 7). Foucault states, "Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power" (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). The consistent negotiation process is central to this study of teacher agency, for contexts and circumstances, as well as the group of people with whom teachers share their professional and classroom space, have power. How teachers negotiate agency and choose to what degree they are complicit in structural power will depend on a set of circumstances, and therefore this study will describe the tensions between macro-level features of the professional workspace as well as instances of power/knowledge in the classroom. In terms of writing programs, structures in place affect faculty and perceptions of administration by those faculty. As John Trimbur (2011) notes in *Solidarity or Service*:

> By a Foucauldian account of professionalization, writing program administrators (WPAs), precisely because of the professional knowledges, are invariably implicated in acts of surveillance that constitute both staff and students and 'docile bodies.' Through course design, textbook selection, testing, placement, grading sessions, and classroom observations, WPAs oversee the work of teaching and learning that takes place in writing programs and classrooms. The WPA's professional identity in this regard is inseparable from the micropolitics of discipline—measuring, differentiating, hierarchizing its subjects. (p. 78)

Therefore, depending on the relationship between the writing program administrator and the first year writing teachers, this could affect teacher agency negotiations because the WPAs become the conduit between larger institutional/university concerns and the local context in which students and teachers participate. As will be discussed in later chapters, some participants in this study could identify structural entities that impacted their work, and some replicated power/knowledge through their classroom practices.

2.2. Anthony Giddens

Anthony Giddens's in *The Constitution of Society* (1984) provides a framework for structuration theory, a discussion of the juxtaposition of institutional power and control versus free will. Giddens defines "structure" as "…rules and resources recursively implicated in social reproduction…" (p. xxxi). The structure is in place to encourage and sustain cohabitation and relative order, and those rules entrenched in society become "institutions" (p. 17). Structuration theory also includes an extensive discussion of agency. Giddens states, "Agency refers not to the intentions people have in doing things but to their capability of doing those things in the first place (which is why agency implies power: cf. the Oxford English Dictionary definition of an agent, as 'one who exerts power or produces an effect')" (1984, p. 9). Due to Giddens's assertion that all people are agents, Giddens critiques Foucault's argument that people have limited agency in service to the institutions of which they are a part (p. 16). Giddens believes

that an institution, such as a school, has both structural power and agentive power for those who participate in it. While Foucault would say that dominant power structures are forced on people and therefore reproduced by them, Giddens believes that people have more freedom and flexibility for their own actions than Foucault would allow (p. 136). Giddens's theory offers the perspective about agency as a negotiation that will prove useful for this study. As Ellen Messer-Davidow (1995) notes, "Agency, according to Anthony Giddens, is coproduced. Actors act. Their actions, regularized, are practices; practices, distanciated in space and time, become structural properties of a social system" (p. 29). Although the structure of institutions is set, the potential exists for agentive action. This study will investigate that action in the classroom when teachers are working with students and how teachers interpret and discuss them. Specifically, this study will examine how the overarching structure of the university affects teacher agency in a classroom setting, focusing on points of departure from action (seen in classroom observations) and discussion (in interviews).

2.3. Pierre Bourdieu

Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of cultural and social capital help extend Giddens's discussion above (Mahar, Harker, & Wilkes, pp. 1, 3). Bourdieu's theories of habitus and forms of capital and their effects on academic settings, like those of French universities in the 1960s, provide context to this study. Habitus refers to ways of being in a society that are natural to that particular society. Laura Ahearn (2001) states, "The habitus generates an infinite but bounded number of possible actions, thoughts, and perceptions, each one of which is imbued with the culturally constructed meanings and values embedded in by the habitus. These actions, thoughts, and perceptions in turn then recreate and/or

challenge the culturally constructed meanings and values" (p. 118). These ways of being are brought about through interaction among society members, and through history that informs these interactions (Ahearn, 2001, p. 118; Carrington, 2001, p. 268; Mahar, Harker, & Wilkes, 1990, p. 10).

Bourdieu's three forms of capital (economic, cultural, and social) affect interpersonal interaction, but this occurs through different means (1986, p. 243). Ultimately, these forms of capital stratify and separate groups of people (pp. 248-249). For example, socioeconomic conditions predispose some students to have more success in school than for others because schools privilege certain knowledge over other forms of knowledge. Earlier exposure (usually tied to class status) means more capital (Aronowitz, 2000, p. 7; Aronowitz, 2009, p. 111; Bourdieu, 1986, p. 242; Carrington, 2001, p. 282).

Since people communicate through language and gesture and participate in their society, language is tied to forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 66). In educational settings, teachers and professors have some social and cultural capital (and, depending on the discipline, some more than others), but not as much capital as other industries (Bourdieu, 1988, pp. 36, 48). Their recognition by others as experts in their respective fields demonstrates capital (Trimbur, 2011, pp. 73-74). However, having more capital than their students, professors are in a unique position of transferring capital. Bourdieu states that the messages conveyed by teachers through lecture are not necessarily understood by their students because of their lack of familiarity with academic discourse, and this is a fundamental issue in education (Bourdieu, Passerson, & de Saint Martin, 1994, p. 5). However, this assumes that students bring little or no prior history of

academic discourse and that teaching is one directional, similar to Paulo Friere's "banking model of education" (1970/2000, pp. 71-72). This notion could be specific to the type of instruction present in 1960s France, which was mostly lecture-based, but this does not take into account the social construction of learning. Although this type of learning does not regularly occur in composition classrooms in the United States today, Bourdieu is correct in recognizing how capital circulates among people and how students become socialized into the capital privileged by universities. Therefore, his work provides a strong foundation to the worldviews underpinning this study, and as will be discussed in later chapters, teachers and students use language that reflects particular stances towards social, economic, and cultural capital.

2.4. Mikhail Bakhtin

Mikhail Bakhtin's discussion of the social nature of language proves useful to this study because Bakhtin notes the dynamic play among people, their worldviews, and how their languages are influenced by others and by history (Halasek, 1999, p. 6). Bakhtin (1981) states, "The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention" (p. 293). Bakhtin also states that language negotiations funnel through people's choice of words in any given speech act (p. 294).

Bakhtin's concepts of heteroglossia and dialogism have been discussed at length in terms of textual analysis, but these concepts are also integral to discussions of attitudes towards interpersonal interaction. Sue Vice (1997), in *Introducing Bakhtin*, discusses the distinction between heteroglossia and dialogism:

> If we think of language itself as dialogic, then we can see that, as we live among the many languages of social heteroglossia, dialogism is necessarily the way in which we construct meaning. The language we use in personal or textual discourse is itself composed of many languages, which have all been used before. At any moment, our discourse will be synchronically informed by the contemporary languages we live among, and diachronically informed by their historical roles and the future roles we anticipate for them. (p. 46)

Languages, then, are constantly changing and affecting their speakers, and vice versa (Halasek, 1999, pp. 4, 8). Investigating instances of language, such as in the context of this study, will help readers understand the various tensions and negotiations the participants encounter and speak of in their interviews and in their classrooms. Bakhtin's work helps us highlight the ways in which language is such an integral part of our existence, and how we interact and make meaning through the ways in which we communicate.

Bakhtin's work has influenced rhetoric/composition pedagogy, notably in Kay Halasek's *A Pedagogy of Possibility* (1999). Halasek proposes a Bakhtinian influence in composition classrooms, advocating a "pedagogy of possibility." The main tenets of this pedagogy include student writers' focus on deconstructing language choice in their writing (p. 33), defamiliarizing power structures in which they participate (p. 119), and focusing on context (p. 183). The ultimate goal is to "engage students in purposeful resistance" (p. 184). As Halasek notes, this has a direct correlation to the concept of agency, for students and teachers can understand their writing choices and become better informed about their various roles and identities in the classroom, and in the public at large (p. 193). Halasek also notes the space of the composition classroom as one that is potentially powerful and transformative, which counteracts the more passive characterizations of a skill-based curriculum perception.

This study seeks to understand moments in the classroom where teachers negotiate agency, and therefore in a sense seeks to understand the amount of "possibility" that exists in particular instances in the classroom. The focus on how teachers negotiate the attitudes towards literacy and literacy instruction, as well as institutional demands, as expressed in the classroom sites yield interesting discussions about dialogism. As will be discussed in later chapters, several participants in this study discuss power with their students, or design their assignments to encourage students to investigate how power operates in their lives.

2.5. Globalization and Neoliberalism and Their Effects on our Education System

Globalization and the economic market directly affect educational practices; business language and rhetoric have infiltrated all levels of education and all administrative structures in education, including higher education (Shor, 1987, p. 4). "Competition," "accountability," "efficiency," and many other similar terms have routinely entered discussions about education over the past generation, with mostly negative effects. This shift affected all aspects of working in higher education, forcing a situation where research is privileged over teaching, tenure chances have eroded, and faculty are faced with more responsibilities with little if any additional monetary benefit (Aronowitz, 2000, pp. 51, 67, 84; Zweig, 2000, p. 25). Stanley Aronowitz (2000) states, "And the specifically *academic* mission of higher education—to produce and transmit knowledge that helps society be enriching the self—already relegated to the back burner, is rapidly being consigned to history by the corporatization of American colleges and universities. As I have argued, knowledge production and transmission must now justify itself in terms of its economic value or risk oblivion" (p. 123). Henry Giroux and

Bronwyn Davies echo Aronowitz's viewpoint (Davies, 2005, p. 12; Giroux, 2001, p. 1). Not only is instruction sacrificed, but the teachers also face more strain on their work/life balance (Currie, Harris, & Thiele, 2000, p. 270). Unfortunately, several critics note that globalization, neoliberalism, and a market-driven approach to higher education disproportionately affect women who work within that system negatively (Bousquet, 2008, p. 6; Currie, Harris, & Thiele, 2000, p. 272; Strickland, 2001, p. 460).

The effects of neoliberalism and globalization have material consequences for writing pedagogy. For the writing program administrator, this might mean having to oversee a larger pool of contingent employees, or relying heavily on contingent instruction. Economic pressure to run the program cost-efficiently means resources, and even physical space, become more regulated. As Tony Scott (2009) notes in *Dangerous Writing*, pre-packaged curriculum, perpetuated by the textbook industry, also reflect an efficiency model, detaching theory from practice (p. 33). Top-down approaches to writing instruction complicate the role of the teacher and the teacher's sense of agency. It seems that as market-driven education becomes more pervasive and present, so too does the pressure associated with agency negotiation for teachers.

2.6. Figured Worlds

In *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*, Holland, et al. (1998) explain how individuals are informed and shaped by the larger culture in which they participate, and how their identities are malleable. Holland et al.'s work, heavily influenced by the prior work of Lev Vygotsky and Mikhail Bakhtin, is useful in explaining how larger external forces exist in tension with local contexts (p. viii). They state, "People tell others who they are, but even more important, they tell themselves and then try to act as though they

are who they say they are" (p. 3). Identity, then, focuses on the individual's ability to give him or herself a name or a label within a particular social context, such as "I am a teacher" in the context of a school, and use specific language that demonstrates this identity. The capability to speak that name and assume/use that identity demonstrates a power relationship, albeit one affected by external forces and the context of the situation. Society functions on the interactions with people who are acting out their identities in response to their environments, and their identities are politicized and stratified based on gender, class, and/or ethnicity (pp. 5, 7, 125, 130). Therefore, agency and identity intersect because agency informs the ability to act out a particular identity in a given context.

For Holland, et al., identities are intrinsically tied to the concept of figured worlds that connect with each other in society. A figured world is "…a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (p. 52). The actors and value systems reflect power inequities (p. 125). There are also several different subject positions in a figured world in which one can enact. Even though the figured world maintains social order, people talk about and live out their identities in relation to or comparison with other people within it (p. 127); a relational interaction exists in figured worlds. So, in my school settings, I simultaneously have identities such as university employee, teacher, graduate student, and doctoral candidate, or a combination of these identities based on whom I am speaking with or interacting with at any given time. In these conversations, I often unconsciously account for the power relationship that exists between the person with whom I am speaking and

myself, as well as the words that I choose to use. Other people highlight/value particular identities of mine based on their own relationship to the power structures inherent in the university system and their relationship to me (as a colleague, boss, teacher, etc.), and act out these relationships accordingly. At times, administrative pressures, university and department policy, and accountability measures problematize these relationships, which can expose and highlight inequalities among university employees.

For example, a hierarchy exists within English Studies, as Susan Miller (1991) articulated. English literature differs from rhetoric/composition, linguistics, creative, and technical writing, etc. Rather than being seen as different, historical precedent and university structure create a "better than/worse than" dichotomy, and thereby unequally distribute power and prestige in the discipline. This situation affects the structure of a first year writing program, and its research capacity. For example, the study site for this project does not have any tenure-track faculty who actively teach first year writing courses as the majority of their course load, for they are not allowed to as long as their tenure lines remain with the English department. They can manage the writing program, consult for the program, and/or train people to teach within the program, but their tenure lines are outside the program. Non-tenure-track lecturers, adjuncts, and graduate teaching assistants staff the first year writing courses, and therefore differences in expertise, agency, and teaching philosophies exist within this program. Lack of tenure-track faculty also shifts the focus away from a potential research-based program to a teaching-centered service program. Additionally, when structural and/or programmatic decisions are made without input from all constituencies directly involved in teaching in

the program, someone or some institutional entity silences those employees who teach in that first year writing program.

Much of the respect issue stems from the question of expertise and of resources (Trimbur, 2011). If first year writing programs, generally speaking, generate large numbers of student credit hours and thereby tuition dollars for the university and also embrace pedagogical research and professional development, then why do programs often operate under the guise of a service department? Perhaps the history of rhetoric and composition affects this situation, but in any case, strained resources force situations where class sizes increase, or the department has to rely on adjunct labor (with poor pay, no benefits, and no collective bargaining rights in many programs). The structure places strain on the individuals who teach, work, and study in the first year writing programs rather the placing blame on the system itself.

As discussed previously, the unique position of first year writing as the gateway to the larger university has transformative potential, but the longstanding perception of its service department status and of those who work in these programs prohibits real change. Some believe in the inevitability of this situation, and some actively resist it. In either case, though, silencing happens in first year writing departments, and it is carried out through institutional means. But why is this happening, and what can be done to change it?

Those who teach within first year writing programs may be viewed as teachers, not professors (as defined by Shari Stenberg in *Professing and Pedagogy*). As Stenberg (2005) states, "Teaching, as I saw it, was the by-product of scholarly knowledge, not a means of *making* knowledge" (p. xiii); professors were the scholars whereas teachers

provided the service of teaching (p. xii). The dichotomy that Stenberg argues we need to transcend, however, is still present in many writing programs today. Barriers remain, though, because some writing teachers do not participate in scholarly discussions, conduct research, or pursue professional development in rhetoric/composition or the teaching of writing while some of their colleagues do participate. Although their reasons for not becoming scholars in the field may differ, the separation of teaching from scholarly work reinforces Stenberg's main argument.

Holland and Lave's (2001) concept of "history in person," defined as a "… constellation of relations between subjects' intimate self-making and their participation in contentious local practice" (p. 5) also relates to the concept of figured worlds by focusing specifically on contexts and the tensions that exist among participants in those contexts (p. 9). Power relations within figured worlds are negotiated to different degrees within those contexts: "Social, cultural, economics, and political relations at their broadest are enduring, high-stake struggles, perhaps "Struggles" with a capital S. As these struggles are concretely realized and specifically appropriated or thrust into everyday practice, some involve sustained violence, whereas others are ubiquitously low-key" (Holland & Lave, 2011, p. 21). Holland and Lave advocate researching particular sites of struggle in order to better understand how people revise their identities based on the contexts in which they participate. Therefore, investigating a group of teachers in a first year writing program as case studies proves useful in highlighting tensions in that context and among different groups of people who participate in that context. Also, studying how participants in a particular context talk about their experiences on a local (classroom and

program) level can highlight unconscious tensions they feel in relation to their local environment.

2.7. Communities of Practice and Language-in-Use

Communities of Practice (Wenger, 1998) and Language-in-Use (Gee, 2011) are two important theories relative to this study. Extending the concept of figured worlds, communities of practice provide a way to discuss the immediate, local concerns of a figured world. Wenger (1998) states, "Communities are not self-contained entities. They develop in larger contexts—historical, social, cultural, institutional—with specific resources and constraints. Some of these conditions and requirements are explicitly articulated. Some are implicit but are no less binding" (p. 79). As with figured worlds, communities of practice demonstrate active participation in constructing identity, and "a constant process of *negotiation of meaning*" (Wenger, 1998, p. 53). The degree to which a person participates in a community of practice and in what capacity can change over time and by circumstance (pp. 6, 75-76).

Although Wenger's concept has been criticized for not providing enough focus on language used in the communities of practice (Tusting, 2005, p. 41), Gee's (2011) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method can provide the focus on language used by participants in a community of practice. Critical Discourse Analysis can be used to investigate the discourse of a community of practice, as well as expose the inherent power structures and worldviews within groups of people (Bloor & Bloor, 2007, p. 4; Florio-Ruane & Morrell, 2004, p. 54; Huckin, Andrus & Clary-Lemon, 2012, p. 107; van Dijk, 1997, p. 7). As Fairclough and Wodak (1997) state, "CDA sees discourse—language use in speech and writing—as a form of 'social practice.' Describing discourse

as social practice implies a dialectal relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s) which frame it" (p. 258). Therefore, critical discourse analysis provides a way of thinking about the connections between macro-level and micro-level consequences of agency. James Paul Gee notes, "We use language to signal what sort of relationship we have, want to have, or are trying to have with our listener(s), readers(s), or other people, groups, or institutions about whom we are communicating. We use language to build social relationships" (2011, p. 18). Therefore the intentional focus between what teachers are saying (in interviews) and in observations of their classroom practices is of interest in this study, particularly with the focus on Gee's notion of "D"iscourse, the combination of actual language practices, gesture, and behavior (pp. 29, 40). However, although critical discourse analysis would be very useful for the context of a study such as this, positioning theory provides an alternative not commonly seen in rhetoric/composition studies. In positioning theory, the emphasis on storylines participants adopt in a given situation allows for a close examination of the language they are using (as would critical discourse analysis), but also focuses on the analysis of the relationships between identities and social roles a person adopts in that storyline in a way CDA might not, and therefore this study will use positioning theory as an alternative way of analyzing micromoments and language practices of the participants.

2.8. Agency

In Laura Ahearn's (2001) article "Language and Agency," Ahearn stresses the need to be aware of the myriad ways scholars define the word "agency" in sociological/anthropological research, as well as the need to understand how the term is

used in feminist scholarship, critical scholarship, etc. (Ahearn, 2001). Indeed, much recent research takes a variety of approaches to defining agency in response to notions of identities, subjectivities, and figured worlds. The following examples show the diversity of definitions: agency as "action" (Ahearn, 2001), agency as "interruption" (Reynolds, 1998), "slow agency" (Micciche, 2011), agency as "emergent" (Cooper, 2011), etc. As Marilyn Cooper (2011) notes, "In the sense that our actions are always our own, we act with free will; agency is grounded in individual embodiment. But by virtue of that embodiment, we also exist in interaction with the surround" (p. 440). This symbiotic relationship determines the range of agencies by participants in those contexts. As John Trimbur (2011) notes, "Agency, as I see it, is the way people live the history of the contemporary, the way they articulate (in the double sense of the term) their desires, needs, and projects, *giving voice* to their lived experience as they *join* their productive labors to the institutions and social structures they live within" (p. 36). What can be extrapolated from these definitions is about participation—individuals act in collaboration with the contexts in which they find themselves.

Ahearn (2001) provides a very useful working definition of agency for the purposes of this study: "Agency refers to the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (p. 112). Although Ahearn deconstructs this working definition and cites Foucault, Giddens, and Bourdieu as other theorists who discuss agency at length, this definition is useful to this study because it accounts for the tension between societal pressures and an individual's confidence and ability to act. Ahearn continues, "It is not useful in my opinion, to talk of having 'more,' 'less,' or even 'no' agency.…agency is not a quantity that can be measured. Rather, researchers should focus on delineating different kinds of

agency, or different ways in which agency is socioculturally mediated in particular times and places" (p. 122). Participants' actions within their communities of practice (their program and their classrooms) help determine how their definitions of agency are reflected in particular observed situations.

If agency is something negotiated in a situated community of practice, then there are not only material consequences, but emotional effects in any given discussion or action. Depending upon the viewpoint and who is involved, there can be positive or negative emotional effects of agency. For example, there are times when laborers feel slighted by peers or by administration, or administration feels the pressure of increased accountability measures or preferred management methods by university governance. Other examples include a teacher's interaction with a disruptive student, or a teacher who feels she can speak her mind in a faculty meeting without appearing to be a "troublemaker." As Nedra Reynolds (1998) states, "Agency is not simply about finding one's own voice but also about intervening in discourses of the everyday and cultivating rhetorical tactics that make interruption and resistance an important part of any conversation" (p. 59). In that particular case, does the quiet and observant "worker bee" who chooses not to contribute to faculty meetings demonstrate more or less agency than the outspoken teacher at the same employment level? Or, can they be compared?

These questions have no direct answers, much like the fact that "agency" has no concrete definition on which all experts can agree. However, it is important to understand how decision-making, actions, and worldviews of these participants vary within the contexts of their jobs in order to deconstruct how agency operates. The

examples noted above are all instances of agency at work in a writing program, and are all instances of agency negotiation and of the places where this negotiation takes place.

People, at times, might be fearful of agency because they might not understand and/or acknowledge other people's motives. Often, accountability measures and/or time affect decision-making practices in writing program administration, and therefore people have to assert agency in able to get things done in the interest of expediency (Micciche, 2011, pp. 73-74). However, Micciche argues for a more purposive strategy for decision-making for writing program administrators in that they demonstrate agency by deliberately delaying it: "Deferral is not necessarily a sign of powerlessness, inactivity, or dereliction of duty. On the contrary, it creates a much-needed space for becoming still and getting places, allowing for regenerative returns" (p. 74). Unfortunately, sometimes the purposes of this decision-making are not made known to the faculty at large, and therefore employees might feel as though they do not have the power to speak or act. However, power cannot be equally distributed amongst the faculty; those in administrative roles must be both sympathetic to the complex job requirements of a writing teacher, yet active in advocacy.

Each person involved in the operations of a writing program has agency—whether or not that agency is fostered or inhibited due to a number of factors (some controllable and some not controllable) depends upon the viewpoint and the power relations among the participants. Instances of agency negotiation include teaching and classroom practices, program administrative structure, hiring practices, faculty meetings, peer observations, professional development, and understanding university governance structure, among many other examples.

People may be fearful of their own agency, or at times resent it. This is because people, generally speaking, would like to maintain a good working environment rather than a contentious one. Writing instructors want to be told why things are done the way they are, have a voice in those decisions if possible, and also feel supported by their administration. Most writing instructors want to feel a sense of belonging to their program, and a sense of empowerment in what and how they teach in their classrooms. This feeling is not exclusive to full time employees either.

When agency negotiation occurs and power relations skewed, the person who feels that his or her agency was diminished might mistake the other person's agency as authority. And this is a dangerous position to be in because authority assumes that negotiation has not taken place; authority is more of a force than simply an action. The person in the position of authority makes the decision, or acts in a particular way, or otherwise asserts his or her own authority over another. Agency assumes that, even if people feel as though their agency is diminished, agency is still there. Therefore, agency requires negotiation, even in cases when a strong power disparity exists between the parties involved.

2.9. "Women's Work"

As stated earlier, most composition teachers are disproportionately female and education has a long and gendered history. Miller's *Textual Carnivals* (1991) and Grumet's *Bitter Milk* (1988) are two well-known studies regarding the role of women in education that provide useful context to this study. Stenberg's (2005) work also discusses the values and attitudes surrounding teaching in higher education and semantic differences between college teaching and being a college professor. Holland, et al.

(1998), and Bartlett and Holland (2002) discuss the concept of figured worlds and contextual literacy practices, which are relevant to this project because they relate to how composition teachers enact their attitudes towards literacy practices in the space of their classrooms. All of these resources address (either directly or tangentially) power relationships in education (i.e. what factors affect agency).

Madeleine Grumet, in *Bitter Milk* (1988), discusses the "women's work" aspect of the teaching profession from a historical perspective (pp. 10, 33). Grumet's focus on school as a microcosm of larger societal issues and gender inequalities highlights the inconsistencies of transgressive ideology versus material circumstance (p. 85). Grumet discusses how gender roles in our society have affected perceptions of the education system, particularly for women teachers. Grumet states, "Women constitute the majority of all public school instructional personnel; nevertheless, our experience of this work is hidden" (p. xi). Grumet deconstructs the role of the teacher by comparing it to a woman's reproductive experience (p. 5).

While Grumet focuses on elementary and secondary education from a historical viewpoint, there are lessons from her work that can be used in reference to postsecondary education and how college teachers demonstrate agency. For example, Grumet states of classroom teachers, "Docile, self-effacing, we hand in our lesson plans, replete with objectives and echoes of the current rationale, and then, safe behind the doors of our self-enclosed classrooms, subvert those schemes, secure in their atheoretical wisdom, intuitive rather than logical, responsive rather than initiating, nameless yet pervasive" (p. 25). This statement is simultaneously demonstrative of and skeptical of agency. The connection between agency and improvisation, in Grumet's example above, demonstrates

the decision-making power a teacher has behind his or her classroom door. As Holland, et al. (1998) state, "Constructivists think of improvisation as an expected outcome when people are simultaneously engaged with or pushed by contradictory discourses" (p. 17). In this situation, the teacher can deviate from the curriculum and has some control over what is taught in that particular classroom. When something disrupts that move, the teacher and students improvise to make knowledge together in that situated space. However, that situation assumes that teachers are otherwise meeting the often arbitrary accountability standards, and therefore do not require surveillance. If teachers have to "subvert" the privileged curriculum, this also assumes that they are exercising agency in response or resistance to this curriculum. The tension and skepticism exists, therefore, between institutional values and local practices in classrooms. These local practices are not necessarily "atheoretical" (Grumet, 1988, p. 25), but reflect the need to change the method of instruction if the teacher does not find the current method working in the classroom, or to move at a different pace than what the curriculum or administration expects of them.

Grumet believes that women teachers, then, have been socialized into a working environment where the structure reinforces gender inequalities (p. 85). Susan Miller (1991) would agree with Grumet's assertion of the socialization of women in education; Miller, though, focuses on college composition programs in *Textual Carnivals*. Miller begins her work by exploring the contentious relationship between English literature and rhetoric/composition because they were separated arbitrarily by Harvard's development of the writing exam in the late 1800s (pp. 27, 31). Divergent views of reading and writing pitted one camp against the other, and somehow college composition became

viewed as the place where writing skills are transferred to students, specifically privileging Standard English and the ability to communicate "properly" (p. 55). Changing ideals about what writing programs should teach in composition courses speak to a shift in values about writing. Therefore, one consequence to this would be conflicting views and values within writing departments/programs depending on which school of thought teachers identify with and therefore teach in their classrooms. The first year writing course that many teach also carries a particular negative connotation because it is "required." Miller also discusses how the historical roots of composition manufactured a dichotomy between literature and composition, where composition became a "national course in silence" (p. 55). Luckily, recent movements in rhetoric/composition and language and culture studies have resisted this propensity to compartmentalize writing instruction as skills-based or product-based, and have moved to a more constructivist approach, including writing in multiple genres, contexts, and audiences, and for different purposes.

Miller (1991) argues that the development of college-level writing instruction stripped most of the transformative potential from the discipline. She states of students, "The student is imagined to be (and in participating in the course is generally required to be) a presexual, preeconomic, prepolitical person" (p. 87). Students are not afforded power in these respects. The teachers, in essence, are also supposed to be "preeconomic" and "prepolitical" but they are not "presexual" because of the preoccupation of equating this work with women's work (p. 123):

> one figure of a composition teacher is overloaded with symbolic as well as actual functions. These functions include the dual (or even triple) roles that are washed together in these teachers: the nurse who cares for and tempts her young charge toward "adult" uses of language that will not "count" because they are, for now,

> engaged in only with hired help; the "mother" (tongue) that is an ideal/idol and can humiliate, regulate, and suppress the child's desires; and finally the disciplinarian, now not a father figure but a sadomasochistic Barbarella version of either maid or mother. (p. 137)

The assertion that the "real intellectual/economic/political" work is done outside of first year writing presents several problems. Teachers have an important role in their students' lives and agency is always present in the classroom. As Miller (1991) states, "[The composition] teacher is always engaged in initiations to the textual fabric of society and thus will always be in a particular and difficult relation to the powers that overtly regulate that society" (pp. 138-139). This indicates that although transformative power exists, it may not be fully realized because of the external constraints that dictate who has expertise to teach writing and how it should be taught.

I am not the "sad woman in the basement" (Miller), but I am considered cheap labor, or a body in the classroom who generates money for the university though my job in teaching writing. When more and more students are slotted into these classes, my workload changes and affects my work/life balance. This ideology is based on a fixed identity, and does not see women composition teachers in a more multifaceted light. Miller's additional metaphors for women in the academy (the nurse, the mother, and the disciplinarian) also do not allow for a more comprehensive view of a woman's multiple identities (p. 137), but they do highlight the misperceptions of others to compartmentalize labor (and gendered labor specifically) in first year writing programs. I agree with Eileen Schell, who in "The Costs of Caring" (1998) notes the ambivalence some female first year writing teachers face: "On the one hand, emotional rewards—a 'psychic income'—keep women invested in teaching; on the other hand, many contingent women writing instructors recount experiences of exploitation and express feelings of alienation" (p. 82).

I know I felt this way as an adjunct, and I still, to some extent, feel this way now as a non-tenure-track lecturer.

The commonsense notion of the purpose of teaching writing (and who teaches writing since its inception over 125 years ago) has been difficult to shake and has residual effects. Students often arrive to the first year writing classroom with a narrow definition of what constitutes writing, as well as a skeptical view of its creative potential, most likely due to prior experience with the way their writing was assessed. In this view, effective communication requires writing, but as long as one follows the formula (like the five paragraph essay), then one can learn to write. Prior to first year writing, personal writing was not necessarily fostered or encouraged (after all, schools' standardized tests do not measure creative or personal writing) and so students may experience a culture shock if they encounter a composition program founded upon social constructivist principles or on a different value system than they have experienced before.

A skills-based curriculum silences students from exploring writing as a social activity, composed in different genres, contexts, languages/dialects, and with different purposes. A skills-based approach also assumes the portability of writing techniques to any given context. Those who support a social constructivist view of composition would typically disagree with values of a skills-based approach because of the lack of concern with context and genre. This would depend on how they negotiate agency within the department and university for which they work. For example, someone could subscribe to a social constructivist philosophy, but need to teach a skills-based curriculum because their department or university asks them to, and this could be a difficult situation to reconcile for that teacher.

2.10. Identity Politics

The discussion of identity politics has become more prevalent in postmodern education, critical pedagogy, and composition scholarship as a way to address power relations in education in general and in English Studies specifically (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991, p. 81; Gee, 2011; Holland et al., 1998; hooks, 1994; LeCourt, 2004; Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001). It is important to review some literature that discusses identity to obtain a better understanding of its complexity and the influence of society and culture on identity formation and to connect it to the field of rhetoric/composition. Each individual has multiple identities; for example, I am a daughter, a student, a teacher, a partner, a friend, etc. These identities change and/or develop over time due to cultural values, material conditions, maturity, and many other reasons. In a particular context, some identities become highlighted or privileged, while others are suppressed by people or by power structures that operate in that context. The danger occurs when identities becomes static, as Ritchie and Wilson (2000) discuss. They state of teachers, "The confusing and contradictory narratives of teaching and literacy in our culture often construct teachers' identities and practices in ways that subvert their real potential to develop as teachers, diminishing their authority and undermining potentially powerful conceptions of teaching, literacy, and selfhood" (p. 19). They advocate that teacher education programs directly address identity politics in order to better prepare teachers in understanding the tensions surrounding their identities in and out of the classroom (2000, p. 180).

Language becomes a way to express one's identities (Danielewicz, 2001, pp. 3, 10; Gee, 2011, pp. 3, 41; Halasek, 1999, p. 8; Holland, et al., 1998). Additionally, our bodies display identity markers, yet they are shaped by cultural factors (such as "proper" hygiene and dress in a particular culture, etc.). As Donna LeCourt states, "We live identity…as social beings, as bodies, not just minds" (p. 2). Identity formation is a complex and recursive process (Danielewicz, 2011, pp. 35, 39). We know that power structures affect identity formation in addition to culture, context, gender, class, race, etc.

A large component of identity formation for graduate students is what Weidman, Twale, and Stein (2001) define as socialization. Socialization is the process in which graduate students learn how to assume the identity as teachers and scholars, and to "internalize behavioral norms and standards and form a sense of identity and commitment to a professional field" (p. 6). This socialization process is predicated upon learning the structure and bureaucracy of academia (p. 3).

This process is not easy, though. Graduate students struggle with their previous identities as students within the academy to that of scholar and/or teacher that develops through teaching opportunities or research assistantships, conference presentations, and publishing. These identities do not necessarily need to be set in opposition to each other; this shows the fluidity and connection between identity formation and socialization (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001, p. 16). They state, "Socialization is dynamic and ongoing, without a definite beginning or end" (p. 40). However, while the authors' description of the socialization process supports other scholarship about identity formation, these authors do not address how changes in students' personal lives are set in opposition to or negotiation with academic socialization, or how gender, class and/or

ethnicity complicate socialization. The students change from being students to scholars, but does the relationship change when there are different life responsibilities such as marriage, parenthood, caretaking, etc.?

Furthermore, we (as current or prospective rhetoric scholars) must help foster positive graduate student identities as teachers, regardless of their intended career goals, so that they do not feel as though they are "waste products" (Bousquet, 2008, p. 23). The must feel they have purpose and agency as teachers. We cannot keep "scholarship" and "teaching" as two distinct entities—they must inform and reinforce each other. However, we know that space and material conditions can affect behavior in the socialization process.

Revolts are thwarted when paychecks are at stake, and tensions between individual teachers and collective identities become strained. bell hooks (1994) discusses tensions between agency and action and how these affect embodiment in *Teaching to Transgress*:

> The erasure of the body encourages us to think that we are listening to neutral, objective facts, facts that are not particular to who is sharing the information. We are invited to teach information as though it does not emerge from bodies. Significantly, those of us who are trying to critique biases in the classroom have been compelled to return to the body to speak about ourselves in history. We must return ourselves to a state of embodiment in order to deconstruct the way power has been traditionally orchestrated in the classroom, denying subjectivity to some groups and according it to others. (p. 139)

In this passage, hooks identifies the expendable and ignored material body in the classroom. Packaged or skills-based writing instruction detaches the curriculum from the teacher. This is especially alarming given recent calls for "robo-grading" of student writing and the emergence of MOOCs as a means to redistribute (maybe even eliminate) the role of the teacher. The situation that hooks discusses above also reflects the way

teachers are often trained to teach. Therefore, there is a need for both students and teachers to reclaim our space within the system. Donna LeCourt (2004) believes this can be done with students through narrative and literacy autobiography, as will be discussed later. There are obvious gender implications in hooks's depiction, but there are also larger implications about the field of rhetoric and composition. As stated previously, it seems that universities with certain value systems "erase" or silence writing programs because they relegate them to transferring skills-based writing to students instead of fostering a writing program experience that could be empowering and transformative. In terms of the writing teachers' identity, this situation silences identity formation because they are valued from a particular lens; the figured world of teaching writing (as defined by higher education system) does not match the *teachers'* figured world of teaching.

There has been more recent research on women's rights in rhetoric/composition, as this seems to be a more pressing topic in the wake of university budget cuts and shifting department responsibilities. Michelle Ballif, Diane Davis, and Roxanne Mountford (2008), in *Women's Ways of Making it in Rhetoric and Composition*, surveyed almost 150 female scholars in the field and asked them to identify female rhetoricians who they believe were very successful in the rhetoric/composition field, as well as to identify various work/life balance issues they have encountered over the course of their careers. Their book profiles women such as Patricia Bizzell, Andrea Lunsford, Sharon Crowley and several others who their survey respondents deemed some of the most successful women in the field. *Women's Ways*, reading like a how-to guide, provides practical advice for women who are starting their careers in this field, and strategies for different stages of their career. Although some of the problems they discuss are well

documented, such as the issue for women rhetoricians in maintaining a work/life balance (p. 159), they show that even some of the women who "make it" have overcome overt discrimination in the process.

The authors note that the pressure to succeed in academia is so great that some women in the field choose not to have children or have to plan for children around graduate school or their career responsibilities (Ballif, Davis, & Mountford, 2008, p. 174). A respondent in *Women's Ways* stated that she and other women faculty in her department were called "the housewives" (p. 87), which also has certain gender and class connotations about how others in her department viewed women writing faculty. For adjunct employees, the material conditions of their jobs prevent most from being self-reliant or self-sufficient.

Additionally, assertive women may be caught in a no-win situation: "If a woman succeeds as a leader, she may be called a 'bitch' or a 'ball-buster' or worse. If she fails as a leader, she will be called a 'woman' or worse" (Ballif, Davis, & Mountford, 2008, p. 124). Apparently there is no middle ground because gender problematizes job performance. So, given the blatant sexism that some women have experienced in the field, even though they constitute the majority of the laborers in that field, what are the options for women to be seen as whole and multifaceted people? *Women's Ways* does not necessarily have the answer, even though the women profiled in the book do offer good advice about navigating the academy. The answer, it seems, is through activism and more discussion in the field, which is happening.

2.11. Teacher Identity Studies

There has been much research conducted regarding preservice teachers, but much of the research focuses on K-12 teaching, and only more recently on college-level composition teaching. However, parallels between teacher training for K-12 and postsecondary composition teachers exist and therefore these studies provide relevant discussion regarding best practices in fostering teachers' sense of self prior to entering the classroom. Studies by Alsup (2006), Bullough, Knowles, and Crow (1992), Danielewicz (2001), and LeCourt (2004) highlight a new focus on student and teacher identity development as integral to academic and professional success. Three studies focusing on graduate teaching assistant preparation and teaching experience in college composition, Rankin (1994), Farris (1996), and Restaino (2012), will also be discussed.

Bullough, Knowles and Crow (1992), in *Emerging as a Teacher*, discuss six new K-12 teachers' use of metaphor to negotiate their identities. In their case study, the researchers note conflicting views of identity as teachers acclimate to their new roles. Some of the metaphors addressed issues of expertise and some dealt with positive and negative attitudes and approaches towards classroom management (pp. 28, 119, 134, 165). This acclimation, for some of the participants, proved difficult because of internal and external constraints. Their identities were in flux. The authors suggest more preservice discussions of identity in order to facilitate the transition from teacher preparation to the workplace (p. 195). Although this dissertation study does not focus on preservice teachers, some of the participants expressed difficulty with acclimation and their feelings were expressed in teacher metaphors. Examples of teacher metaphors will be discussed in later chapters as they emerged in the data.

Jane Danielewicz (2001), in *Teaching Selves: Identity, Pedagogy, and Teacher Education*, supports Holland, et al.'s discussion of identity construction as something that is a work in progress (pp. 3, 35). In her qualitative study of students enrolled in the University of North Carolina's secondary education program, Danielewicz suggests universities create a pedagogy for identity development integral to all teacher training programs (p. 1). She suggests a focus in education programs on identity development because of the influential power teachers have on their students:

> Through [teachers'] daily acts and their demonstrations of self, helped define who I am, made me aware of preferences and talents of which I was previously unconscious, reminded me of life's limits, and directed me by way of example to either accept selflessly or to wholeheartedly work against the daily impediments I was certain to encounter. Both models were important. Against the conservative ones, I rebelled and discovered who I did not want to be. On the other hand, the imaginative teachers made agency visible; they showed me that it was possible to think and to speak and to act, to be someone. (2001, p. 2)

Several interesting points stem from Danielewicz's comment on her own educational experience. Not only does Ahearn's definition of agency apply to this statement, but also she equates agency with the ability to "be someone." But to whom? This statement acknowledges the relational aspect of agency. Agency then, relates to presence, existence, and work. In other words, Danielewicz's assertion that she needs to "be someone" could mean to be acknowledged by students, colleagues, and administration as a transformative teacher, as an individual who can affect change, and/or to display agency in any given work context. Also, teachers' influence on her identity development was strong. Although this might not be the case for every student, her comment does speak to the effect teachers have on their students, both positive and negative. The extent to which teachers become a conduit to larger sociocultural and socioeconomic issues depends on many factors, but there is a capacity to foster a political space in a classroom

(to resist), or to replicate the status quo. Both teachers and students have this capacity, as Danielewicz notes in her desire to rebel against "conservative teachers" (p. 21). The author considers agency a "principle in performance" (p. 141), meaning that people enact agency in their daily lives.

Donna LeCourt (2004) in *Identity Matters* extends this idea of agency by focusing on how material conditions affect college student writing. Although LeCourt's study does not address teacher preparation per se but instead focuses on graduate students and basic writers' perceptions of academic discourse through an analysis of literacy autobiographies, her work can still be viewed in comparison to other teacher identity studies because some graduate students inevitably will pursue college level teaching. LeCourt argues that, traditionally, students assume a passive role in participating in academic discourse. Academic discourse, delineated through institutions, limits students' capabilities to be more active participants in their educational experiences (p. 53). Thinking about agency has transformative potential for her students: "Agency must be seen as a way to materially and discursively enact change that *matters to students*. What I can do is ensure my own classrooms are not encouraging them to submerge their difference nor making acts of agency even more difficult" (p. 221). LeCourt's connection between visible identities through our bodies and power relationships within the university structure offer an interesting perspective to the discussion of agency—a perspective that personifies agency and allows students to recognize their own agency (pp. 19, 80). In the present study, "academic discourse" and what role participants have in socializing students into that discourse will be discussed.

Janet Alsup (2006) in *Teacher Identity Discourses* also complements Danielewicz's study by encouraging identity development pedagogy, but focuses on how preservice teachers talk about their identities as teachers through the use of metaphor. Alsup's study also connects to LeCourt's study in that her notion of "borderland discourse" includes recognition of the physical spaces of the student. Alsup states, "Borderland discourse, as a transformative type of teacher identity discourse, reflects a view of teacher identity that is holistic—inclusive of the intellectual, the corporeal, and the affective aspects of human selfhood" (p. 6).

Much like Danielewicz's (2001) depiction of the "conservative" versus the "imaginative" teacher in *Teaching Selves* (p. 2), Alsup (2006) discusses the conflicting cultural views of the role of teachers in our society, which complicates situations for preservice teachers who might not identify with the "villain" or "angel" dichotomy students typically ascribe to their teachers (p. 24). This binary is reminiscent of the misperceptions of agency (as one either has agency or does not have it). A teacher is either a good teacher or a bad teacher—he or she has the skills and persona of a "good teacher" or does not. This pressure, for some, is too much to bear. Alsup found in her qualitative case study of six preservice teachers that half of them ultimately did not become teachers (p. 43). Although she had a small number of participants in this study, the results speak to the conflicts teachers in training face.

Several studies also discuss teacher identity development in the context of first year writing programs. Elizabeth Rankin, in *Seeing Yourself as a Teacher* (1994), focuses on the tensions five new graduate teaching assistants face, specifically with the issue of authority and expertise (p. 5). Rankin's critique of gender and class also provide

additional layers to these concepts, and like some of the other studies noted above, she also discusses at length the different conceptions of what it means to be a "teacher" in our society. She states of her participants, "They're not sure they want to be teachers, given the way our culture sometimes defines that role. Teachers are lecturers, disciplinarians, grammarians, authority figures. They would rather be friends, foster parents, coaches, priests, or therapists—all roles that they see more positively than the teacher role, all roles that they can see themselves performing in some way" (1994, p. 119). Interestingly, these different subject positions also show how these new teachers negotiate agency; they are defining their identities as a relation to something else, rather to their job title as a teacher, perhaps due to the connotations of the word.

Christine Farris, in *Subject to Change* (1996), discusses how her participants dealt with particular constraints, such as a required textbook and a required sequence of assignments. Some of the participants had no difficulty with using a textbook that correlated to their teaching philosophies, but some struggled when they did not necessarily have the same values and philosophies that the textbook prescribed (pp. 14, 156). Farris (1996) notes, "Even if writing instructors identify themselves as 'expressivists' or 'collaborationists,' their day-to-day practice reveals contradictions, some but not all of which they are in the process of resolving" (p. 171). This last statement is of crucial importance to this study, which seeks to determine how a newly implemented curriculum affected classroom practices and if there were differences between what the teachers said about their values and practices and to what extent those values were implemented in classroom operations.

A more recent study, Jessica Restaino's *First Semester* (2012), also notes the disconnect between new graduate teaching assistants understanding of composition theory and their classroom practices, starting with the training programs they complete (pp. 2, 6). Restaino states, "Analysis of the struggle in our first-year writing classrooms uncovers deep roots in the tensions between theory and practice. New teachers often learn to enact classroom practices without intellectual exploration of the theoretical rationale for those practices" (p. 22). This could be due to material conditions, such as the requirements of the training program and its necessity to train new teachers quickly before asking them to teach. Restaino notes that when the participants began teaching, some of them struggled with classroom management and classroom practices, such as grading, because they did not have the time or space to think about theoretical frameworks of writing pedagogy (p. 81). The current model of production line training for new graduate teaching assistants is not adequate, and alienates the teachers from the subject. However, two of her participants improvised by asking their students to grade their own papers, thereby experimenting with new classroom techniques to them. This action demonstrates an instance of agency negotiation: "By requiring students to take part in the grading process, they asked students to meet them in a mediated, collaborative space where roles, grading practices, and assessment standards would be illuminated and augmented" (Restaino, 2012, p. 90). Although this process had mixed results, it does show the potential in the classroom space for seeing examples of agency negotiation in the first year writing classroom.

Although only one of the participants in this study was new to college-level writing instruction (as a graduate teaching assistant), information regarding teacher

training and identity development applies to all potential participants. The case studies and ethnographies noted above lend to the development of this study because they note successes and struggles with identity negotiation and agency negotiation. This study seeks to understand how different employment classes within a program (including but not limited to new graduate teaching assistants), approach these negotiations. Experienced teachers might also struggle, and it is important to hear their narratives and experiences with their students and with their institutions.

2.12. Positioning Theory

Positioning theory has roots in social psychology and accounts for the ways a person understands his or her role in social situations. The development of positioning theory is often attributed to Bronwyn Davies and Rom Harré (1990), with continued development by Rom Harré, Luk van Langenhove, Nikki Slocum-Bradley, and others, and initially focused on three points of analysis: storylines, rights and duties, and social forces (Harré, 2010; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999; Harre, Moghaddam, Cairnie, Rothbart, & Sabat, 2009; Harré & Slocum, 2003; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Davies and Harré (1990) define positioning as:

> the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines. There can be interactive positioning in which what one person says positions another. And there can be reflexive positioning in which one positions oneself. However it would be a mistake to assume that, in either case, positioning is necessarily intentional. (p. 48)

In figured worlds, people understand their roles and identities as changing. Positioning theory, therefore, can provide a way to analyze how people understand their roles and formulate narratives/stories based on their experiences and interactions in those figured worlds at a particular time and context (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 49). Examples of both

interactive and reflexive positioning will be discussed through examples from each of the participants. Critical theory allows, through the analysis of stories/narratives, exposure of power inequalities, moments of agency negotiation, and language practices. Positioning theory as described by Davies and Harré can reveal direct and overt discussion of their storylines but also could reveal subconsciously perceived storylines by the speaker (p. 48). Positioning theory has been used in analysis in educational contexts and linguistics (Anderson, 2009; E. Miller, 2013; Pinnegar, Mangelson, Reed, & Groves, 2001; Slocum-Bradley, 2010; Sosa & Gomez, 2012), but not specifically in rhetoric and composition scholarship. Positioning theory seems a natural fit, though, for rhetoric/composition analysis because of the concern with language and personal experience. Understanding how constituents in a rhetoric/composition program (writing teachers, WPAs, students, etc.) conceive of and discuss their storylines can be a valuable tool in analyzing how these parties understand the function and operations of a writing program. This study focuses on the experiences of the writing teachers. Positioning theory can be used in advocacy because it can help identify particular areas of disconnect, interpretation of curriculum, and multiple perspectives of participants.

Additionally, the communities of practices in which people participate also present a means to which people understand and rationalize their actions; positioning theory, then, can be a useful tool in exposing how those narratives work in a particular context at a particular time. Within the storylines people create their actions in response to positive and negative interactions with social structures in which they participate. Davies and Harré (1990) continue:

> Social structures are coercive to the extent that to be recognisably and acceptably a person we must operate within their terms. But the concept of a person that we

> bring to any action includes not only that knowledge of external structures and expectations but also the idea that we are not only responsible for our own lines but that there are multiple choices in relation not only to the possible lines that we can produce but to the form of the play itself. We are thus agent (producer/director) as well as author and player and the other participants coauthor and coproduce the drama. But we are also the multiple audiences that view any play and bring it to the multiple and often contradictory interpretations based on our emotions, our own reading of the situation and our own imaginative positioning of ourselves in the situation. (p. 52)

Participants' reading and understanding of social structures helps support the positioning of themselves and others. "Multiple choices" connects to the concept of agency because these choices are "socioculturally mediated" (Ahearn, 2001). As will be discussed, some of the participants construct a particular storyline for themselves, but enact a different storyline. In other words, observed behavior or discussions in the classroom contradicted the way the participant discussed the event in an interview. Parallel storylines also exist for some of the participants in this study.

Lastly, what positioning theory offers is a way to investigate language-in-use (Gee, 2011). As an analytical tool, positioning theory exposes negotiations people have with others, with themselves, and with their environments, ultimately revealing tensions in any and all of those locations:

> A subject position is a possibility in known forms of talk; position is what is created in and through talk as the speakers and hearers take themselves up as persons. This way of thinking explains discontinuities in the production of self with reference to the fact of multiple and contradictory discursive practices and the interpretations of those practices that can be brought into being by speakers and hearers as they engage in conversations. (Davies & Harré, 1990, p. 62)

Following Davies and Harré's seminal work, later iterations of positioning theory (Harré, et al., 2009, p. 9; Harré & Slocum, 2003, p. 125; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999, p. 4; van Langenhove & Harré, 1999) focus on how people understand the rights and duties ascribed to them in a particular context. The extent to which participants feel they have a

sense of obligation, either to themselves or to other people (students, colleagues, administration) or to the institution which employs them is of particular interest here. Van Langenhove and Harré (1999) also discuss the connection to agency: "Deliberate self-positioning occurs in every conversation where one wants to express his/her personal identity. This can be done in at least three different ways: by stressing one's agency (that is, presenting one's course of action as one from among various possibilities), by referring to one's unique points of view, or by referring to events in one's biography" (p. 24). The interviews lend to the understanding of the participant's point of view in a particular situation.

Agency is negotiated yet constrained by the set of circumstances in which a person finds him or herself. Harré and Slocum (2003) state:

> People in real life do not have an infinite reservoir of possible actions from which to choose. What people are permitted to do on any occasion is drawn from surprisingly narrow repertoires of categories and subcategories of actions. Among these are the actions that, in those circumstances, they are taken or take themselves to have the right or the duty to do. These are the actions one *may* do. They are drawn from the wider range of general possibilities, the actions that are physically or physiologically possible. (p. 125)

One can see the influence of structures here in these constraints. The "general possibilities" address how agency negotiations take place. What would be advantageous to do or say in a situation, affordances and constraints in a context, and reflections on power inequalities all require agency negotiation.

Wendy Drewery (2005) also discusses agency, noting that the relationship between agency and positioning theory can be used for transformative means (p. 316). Drewery states, "Persons cannot be agentive on their own, but only in relationship with others. Thus to be positioned agentively is to be an actor in a web of relationship with

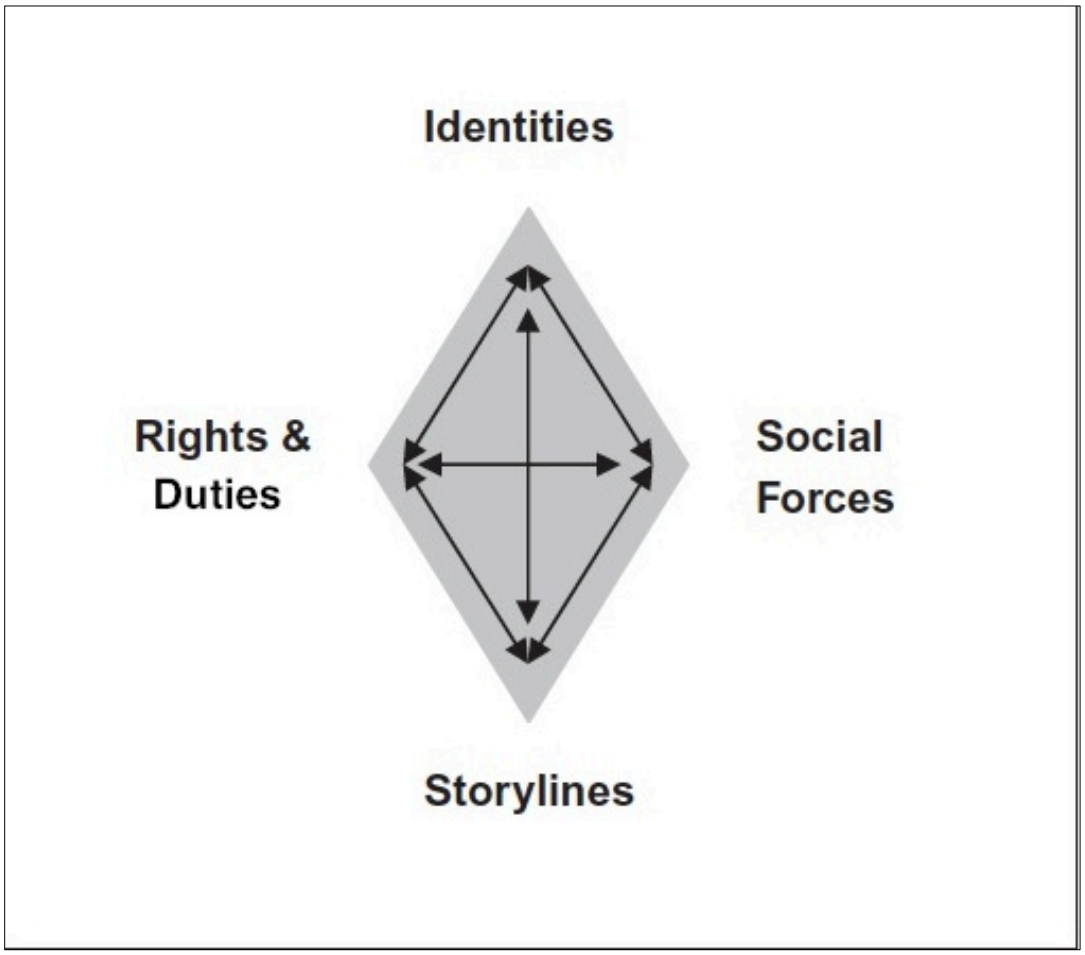
others who are also engaged in co-producing the conditions of their lives" (p. 315). These views address a critique of positioning theory, which is that it does not account for the social nature of discourse.

More recent studies of positioning theory (Anderson, 2009; Korobov, 2010; Slocum-Bradley, 2010) have attempted to address some of the shortcomings of the theory as conceptualized by Davies and Harré. The main criticism of positioning theory is its connection to "immanenist ontology" which assumes a cognitive approach rather than a discursive approach (Anderson, 2009, p. 308; Korobov, 2010, p. 266). According to these authors, there needs to be a way to account for how the social influences the individual. For example, Kate Anderson (2009) advocates for a "mediational approach" (p. 309). Anderson states:

> positioning theory can be reconceived as dialectically negotiated across multiple feedback loops of enactment and interpretation that criss-cross mediated *kinds* of persons, activities, and settings. Analyzing positioning as mediation (i.e., a confluence of multiple forms of mediation) acknowledges how interactions and social actors construct meanings of practices both in reference to the interactions themselves (traditional focus of positioning theory) *and* in terms of how these interactions relate intertextually and intercontextually to relevant texts, events, practices, and ideologies. (p. 308)

"Kinds" represent loose boundaries/categories to show the fluidity between micro and macro levels, and also accounts for the social rather than the individual focus. The focus on discourse is the main development since the theory's inception. Nikki Slocum-Bradley's (2010) positioning diamond (see Figure 1), which will be used for the purposes of this study, includes an analysis of storylines, identities, rights and duties, and social forces (pp. 91-96). The reason why Slocum-Bradley's model was used instead of the original model was because the addition of identities reflects the more social turn since the theory's inception. Not only do these four categories allow for analysis, but Slocum-

Bradley also offers levels of analysis, including the level of utterance, the level where the categories are discussed, and the macro-level concerns (p. 92). Slocum-Bradley continues that challenging and questioning offers potential areas of progress (p. 100).



[1] Figure 1: Slocum-Bradley's positioning diamond (2010)

[1] Slocum-Bradley, N. (2010). The positioning diamond: A trans-disciplinary framework for discourse analysis. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour, 40(1)*, 79-107.
Retrieved from http://ehis.ebscohost.com.librarylink.uncc.edu
In the original work, the "and duties" of "rights and duties" was omitted. I have modified Slocum-Bradley's figure to account for that error.

2.13. Narrative 2: Agency in Practice

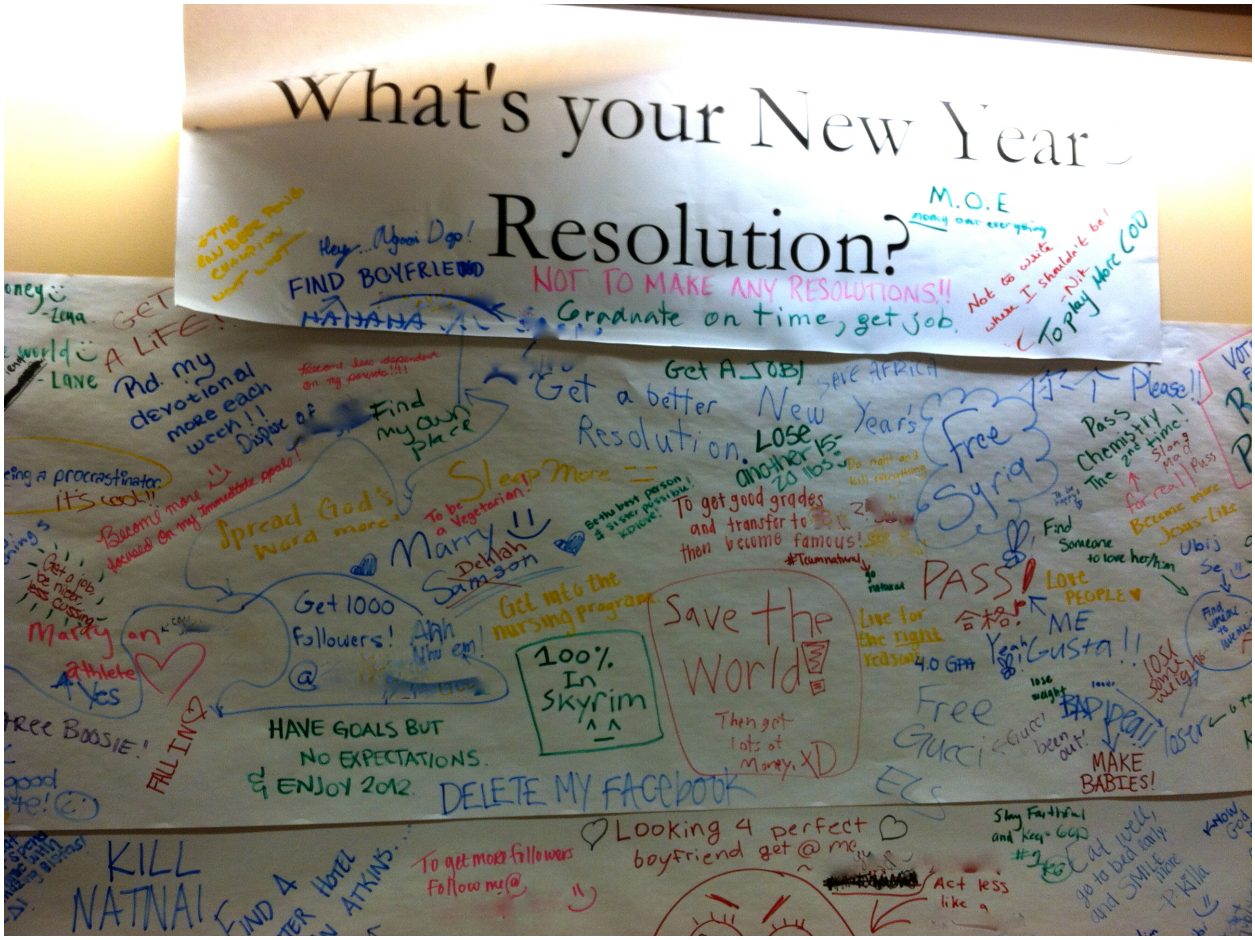


Figure 2: What's your New Year's resolution?

Close to the end of one fall semester, there was a display in my university library that caught my attention. The question "What's your New Year's Resolution?" was written on a large sheet of paper, about 20 feet long and about three feet wide, and anyone walking by could add resolutions to the paper (Figure 2). I do not know how long the display was posted and I am not sure who posed the question in this public forum, but by the time I saw it, the paper was covered with New Year's resolutions. In fact, there was barely space to write my own answer to this question on the paper and I chose not to write anything on it but instead focus on what others wrote in response to the question.

Ranging from the serious to mundane, from thought provoking to offensive, the various answers to this question fascinated me. Some responses were freestanding, and some responses commented on the responses of others. Examples included: "Not to make any resolutions," "Save the World," "Get more Twitter followers," "Find someone to love me," "Educate these stupid people" [this statement had arrows leading to others' responses], and "Stop procrastinating" [this statement had the "stop" crossed out and replaced with "start" and then added "it's cool"], among many other responses.

I stood in front of this display for a good bit of time, reading carefully through the responses, taking pictures, and thinking about what my own answer would be to this question (Work on my dissertation? Floss my teeth more? Be a better person? Get a hobby other than grading papers?). And I believe this was the point of the exercise. Seeing in public the thoughts of others causes the viewers to reflect on their own answers and participate in dialogue with others. I began analyzing the responses and wondering about their motives for writing what they did. When the responses were offensive (to me), I wondered what would provoke someone to write what they did. Perhaps they did not find their answers offensive at all. Perhaps they knowingly wanted to provoke this type of reaction from the viewer. When the answers were protected by anonymity, were people being more honest with themselves, or were they concerned with how people would perceive their answers? I am not sure of the answer. What I was sure of was this exercise was an exercise in inquiry and agency.

As I planned my first year writing course focusing on an inquiry-guided curriculum, I decided to bring elements of the "New Year's Resolution" display to my classroom. Over the course of the semester, students investigate a question they have

about a topic of interest and write about it though multiple modes, including blog posts, essays, a multigenre project, freewrites, etc. After discussing the assignment and completing several prewriting activities, I asked students to write their inquiry question on a large sheet of paper. I designated one sheet of paper for each of my classes, and rotated each sheet through them all. I asked students to then read through the questions for each class and choose one of interest to them. Then, I gave students the option to write a question in response to the original question, provide a source that related to the question, write a comment in response to the question, or draw lines connecting similar questions. I thought this would be a good way to have students help other students generate ideas for their own projects, pointing them to useful sources or asking them to consider different points to help students revise their questions. When I found someone writing something offensive or discouraging to another student (and I could not catch them all given how students were circulating around the room and writing on all of the sheets of paper), I reiterated to the entire class that the purpose was to offer constructive feedback. Students talked in small groups about "good" questions and "bad" questions, found connections to their own inquiry projects in some cases, and some participated in long streams of comments from multiple students on some particularly interesting questions. When I observed the discussions that were taking place, I decided to add my own inquiry question to one of the papers (Figure 3). After a paper had circulated through each of my remaining classes, I brought the paper back to the original class and discussed the results with the students. Students wrote down what others had said in response or took pictures of their questions and comments and then students used this feedback to work on their inquiry proposals.

The results of this process reminded me of what I saw that day in the library. I saw trends in the types of questions and types of responses. Some responses I considered inappropriate or offensive, and some responses were quite brilliant. Students had to negotiate their personas, and some students had to regulate their initial responses to other students' work (even if it was anonymous) or regulate the responses of fellow students.

In Figure 3, my inquiry question "How much agency do writing teachers have?" was met with one student comment—the infinity symbol. I find this response fascinating, for it forced me to revise my perception of agency in my current position at the university.

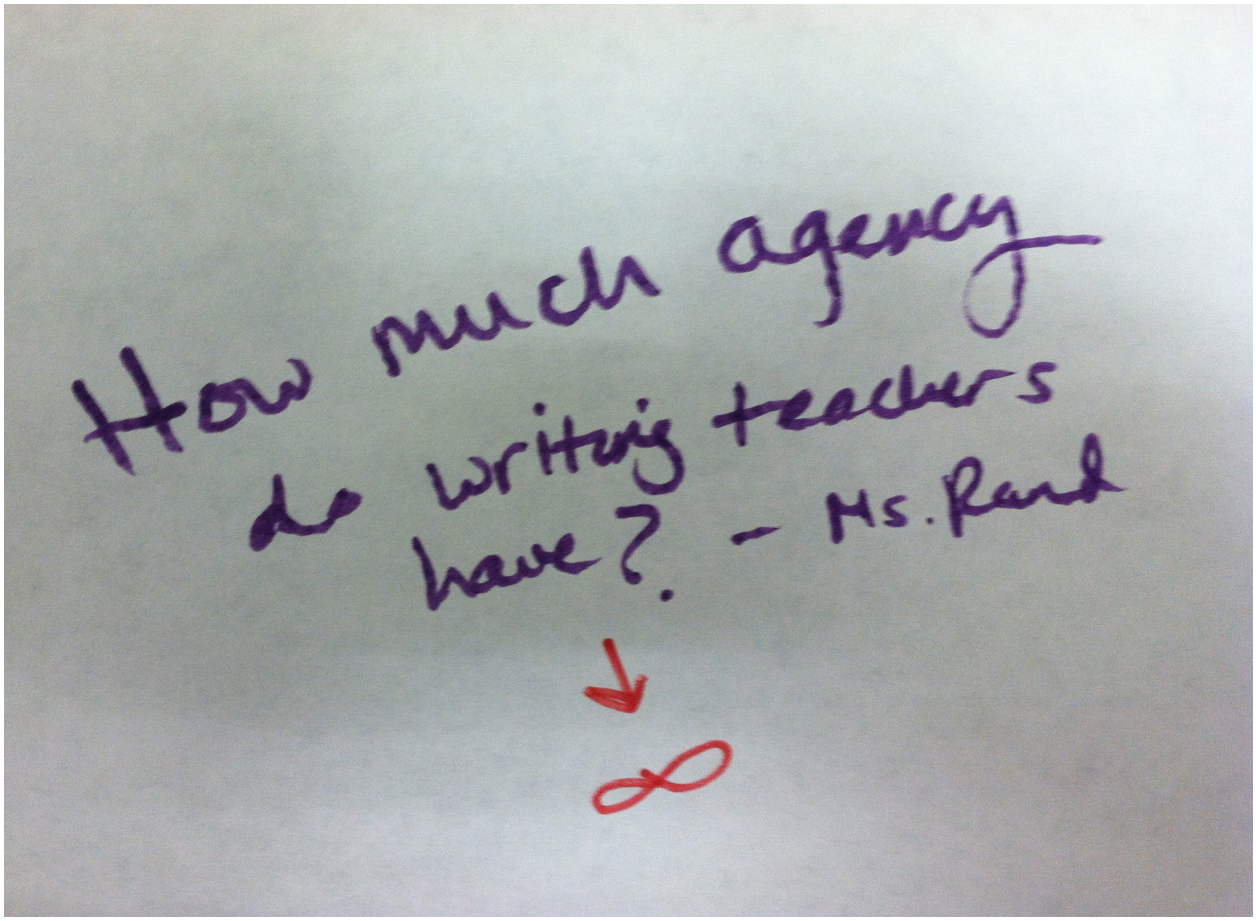


Figure 3: How much agency do writing teachers have?

In fact, this entire activity presents a view of how my students and I negotiate agency in a university community. Starting with the original "New Year's Resolution" idea, someone (or some group) posted the original question and the designated a space for people in the community to write their responses on the paper as an example of public rhetoric. I assume (but I cannot be sure) that the library administration allowed this to happen because this was posted in a public place with high traffic (near the library coffee shop) and this display remained in place for enough time for the paper to fill up with responses (although I am not sure how long the paper was displayed). Students and community members could add whatever response they wanted and were not regulated because this was done (almost) completely anonymously. Even writing on the paper in a public space demonstrates agency in that context. Passersby could choose to write on the paper, stop and read what others have written, comments on others' responses, or ignore it completely and walk by it. I became hyperaware of who was watching me as I took pictures to document this temporary display of art.

In my classroom context, I designated time in class for all of us to read through, comment, and revise students' inquiry questions. The spirit of this activity provoked me to write my own question on one of the large papers to see how students would react, or if they would react to it, although I had not discussed my research interests with my classes up to that point. Also, in one particular class, I felt compelled to regulate what students wrote on the paper because of a few particular students who I felt might not take the assignment seriously. I altered how I discussed the process for each class depending on class climate and how the students critiqued the range of questions.

There were some surprises throughout this process. For example, in one of my classes, one student noted she did not want others in her class to see her comment on a fellow classmate's inquiry question so she chose not to write responses on the paper. In another class, I had one student try to comment on as many questions as he could, so much so that the entire class had to wait for him to notice he was the only student left working on the activity.

I think what surprised me most of all was the infinity symbol in response to my inquiry question. I wondered who drew that symbol on the paper and *why* he or she drew that symbol. Do students really think that writing teachers have a lot of agency? If so, what type of writing teacher has agency? Do they know how teachers negotiate their agency? Does the infinity symbol reinforce a teacher versus student dichotomy or conflate agency with authority? I know I cannot generalize my students' point of view based on one response, and so I choose to view this entire process—from viewing the "New Year's" paper to the inquiry project class activity—as a process of seeing agency in action.

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The sources noted above provide an overview of relevant sociological and critical theory, linguistic theory, a discussion of agency, and an example of agency in practice. These theories and concepts presented here inform the rationale for the theoretical framework and context of this dissertation study. The following chapter will contain more detail regarding methodology, study site selection, and participant information for the case studies conducted for the purposes of this dissertation project.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Due to the context-dependent and socially constructed nature of agency, the power relationships (stratification and power reproduction) between laborers and the labor system are insightful and relevant to the concept of agency. Therefore, a subjective epistemology and a critical/postmodern theoretical framework are most appropriate for this type of research. This approach builds off a constructionist epistemology by specifically addressing hegemony, power, and agency (Gephart, 1999). As Kincheloe and McLaren state, "Critical scholarship thus seeks to transcend taken for granted beliefs, values, and social structures by making these structures and the problems they produce visible, by encouraging self conscious criticism, and by developing emancipatory consciousness in scholars and social members in general" (as cited in Gephart, 1999). Understanding relationships among people and the factors that affect those relationships (institutional, interpersonal, etc.) become key points of analysis in this type of scholarship.

Julie Lindquist's *A Place to Stand: Politics and Persuasion in a Working-Class Bar* (2002) presents an excellent example of the type of research that influenced the design of this study. This mentor text provides valuable information about conducting qualitative research. Lindquist's study of the bar at the Smokehouse Inn is ethnographic and therefore she collected a substantial amount of research over a long period of time, but there are several techniques that are also appropriate for a case study approach over a

shorter period of time, such as in this study. For example, Lindquist is a participant-observer in the bar. Lindquist is very forward with her subjectivity in conducting this type of research; she provides the readers with her own experiences and background to show how that affects her connections with the people at the bar. She then analyzes her own narrative along with those of her participants. A strength of Lindquist's ethnography is her ability to provide a thorough discussion of context through a detailed, "thick description" of the bar and its operations, and she weaves this description seamlessly with her analysis and critique of gender, class, and ethnicity as seen through the eyes of her participants. She also freely discusses the benefits and limitations of this type of research, demonstrating to the reader she has designed her study with honoring her participants' words in mind (pp. 4, 51).

Lindquist investigates macro-structures that affect the Smokehousers (the regulars at the bar), such as class, ethnicity, and gender roles within institutions and their lived experiences (pp. 47, 74, 85, 96). Lindquist states of the bar, "The bar is a working-class *institution*, a historical place where logics of identity and common sense are enacted in every moment of leisure" (p. 41). The arguments/debates that the Smokehousers have signal group identity. She also analyzes her participants' language used in their interviews with her as well as in conversations with Lindquist and other bar employees and patrons. Prior to the discourse analysis, Lindquist provides a composite of each participant in order to frame the analysis, and shows excellent data collection technique by discussing the participants' behavior on the day of interviews in addition to their responses to her questions. This allows the reader to understand more about who each participant is and his or her worldviews and identities.

Lindquist's approach to her ethnography, told with honesty and critique, is something this study seeks to emulate.

In terms of this study's design, George Kamberelis and Greg Dimitriadis (2005), in *On Qualitative Inquiry: Approaches to Language and Literacy Research*, provide an alternative to the positivist-interpretive/constructionist-critical epistemological framework. They propose a spectrum as based on four chronotopes; chronotopes account for history and context of a research setting (pp. 25-26). The four chronotopes are Objectivism and Representation (I), Reading and Interpretation (II), Skepticism, Conscientization, and Praxis (III), and Power/Knowledge and Defamiliarization (IV) (pp. 25-26). This study will reflect Chronotope IV (Power/Knowledge and Defamiliarization), which stems from the work of Michel Foucault primarily. Most important to this chronotope is the discussion of differences in social power. Therefore, in discussing agency as it relates to particular labor groups in the first year writing department at a large, urban research university, Chronotope IV provides the best framework for this study. Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2005) state:

> The chronotope of power/knowledge and defamiliarization does not entirely reject the idea that people have agency when they speak, read, and write….language and literacy practices always occur within larger social, cultural, and historical contexts that exist independently of any specific instance of these practices. Second, individuals have intentions precisely because they are always already situated within institutionally informed discourses, and thus these intentions are themselves effects of these discourses, at least to some extent. (p. 50)

Since this study relates to how participants conceive of and discuss their identification with the program, their discipline, and the institutions in which they work, the focus on understanding contexts and language practices used in context of a classroom in these case studies reflects the key components of Chronotope IV. Chronotope IV treats agency

with skepticism, and it assumes that participants have at least the awareness of agency present in any given context, rather than assuming some people have agency and some do not. Additionally, a connection exists between the participants' ideas about literacy and the contexts in which they work. People interact in a complex power structure thereby gaining power, but also reproduce the power placed on them through their thoughts and actions (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2005, p. 47).

This dissertation project uses a subjective epistemology and a critical/postmodern theoretical framework because there are multiple factors affecting participants' agency. This project also explores tensions in demonstrating and negotiating agency (Crotty, 1998; Gephart, 1999). The critical/postmodern framework for this study reflects Kamberelis and Dimitraiadis's Chronotope IV (Power/Knowledge and Defamiliarization) framework. The main tenets of Chronotope IV are the focus on social critique, power inequalities, and transformative potential (Kamberelis & Dimitraiadis, 2005). Cannella and Lincoln (2009) echo Kamberelis and Dimitraidis's approach to critical research by highlighting the focus on analyzing power relationships through language practices in critical research (pp. 54-55). Kincheloe and McLaren (2002) state, "Critical research needs to address more than ever before, the objective, material conditions of the workplace and labor relations in order to prevent the further re-securing of the ideological hegemony of the neo-liberal corporatist state" (p. 126). The intent is, as Glesne (2006) states of postmodern research, "to produce a *polyvocal* text, one that has many voices and not only that of the researcher" (p. 18). The epistemology and theoretical framework discussed above is best suited to this study because it focuses on the narratives the participants tell; each narrative/counternarrative will be distinct from the next.

In order to facilitate polyvocalism, the research design of this study is a case study approach using ethnographic research techniques, and focuses on the language writing teachers use to describe their experience in a first year writing program. Participants, who were all first year writing teachers, were observed in their classrooms as well as interviewed. The focus on context in case studies demonstrates the diversity of experiences, as well as in how participants act in a given setting (Carspecken, 2002, p. 74; Merriam, 1998, p. 19; Stake, 1995, p. 12). Therefore, this project analyzes how specific moments in the classroom demonstrate agency negotiation and how the context of the classroom affects teachers' pedagogical practices. A marker of case study research, the study of a "bounded system" (Barone, 2004, p. 8; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 426), is a First Year Writing program at a large, urban research university, and includes five cases of first year writing teachers who have different employment statuses in the program (non-tenure-track lecturers, part-time instructors, graduate teaching assistants, etc.). The methodology is a thematic analysis focusing on teachers' discussions of particular moments of agency negotiation, and uses Nikki Slocum-Bradley's (2010) positioning theory diamond, consisting of storylines, identities, rights and duties, and social forces. The ways in which these instructors talk about their experiences and identities as related to agency and their status within the program was fruitful in terms of data collection and analysis. The methods for this study were: participant-observation, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis. This study also uses purposive sampling. These components are consistent with case study research (Barone, 2004; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2003).

As stated in the introduction, this study investigates the following research

questions:

1. How do first year writing teachers' histories and experiences with teaching writing affect their sense of agency? How do these teachers talk about their constructions of agency and expertise?
2. How is agency afforded in specific moments in the classroom or in specific examples of other aspects of teachers' jobs? How do these moments demonstrate different negotiations of agency?
3. How do first year writing teachers negotiate their own curricular decisions based on their perceptions of programmatic values (concerning literacy and teaching practices) given material conditions in a first year writing program?

3.1. Site Selection

The study site is the First Year Writing program in a large, urban research university in the South. The study site, which will be referred to as Southeast State University, has an enrollment of over 20,000 undergraduate students (over 25,000 total students) from diverse socioeconomic, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds. A significant number of undergraduate students are first generation college students and working students. This site was selected because it has a large first year writing program serving over 3,000 students who are mostly first year students and some transfer students. The average class size ranges from 22-24 students per class depending on the semester.

The first year writing program, which recently split from the English department, offers five introductory level courses. Most students will take a two-course sequence over an academic year as part of their general education curriculum, but there is also a support course for English language learners, an accelerated course (one semester), and

an accelerated honors level course (one semester). In the two-course sequence, the first course uses a Writing Studies curriculum and the second course uses an inquiry-guided learning (IGL) curriculum. Full time, non-tenure-track lecturers and part time adjuncts staff almost all of these courses, although graduate teaching assistants teach a relatively small amount of sections comparatively, as do tenure-track professors from other programs/departments. For Fall 2012, just over half of the first year writing sections were taught by full time faculty (non-tenure-track). Graduate teaching assistants participate in a one-year training program, working in the writing center for one year as a tutor and taking methods courses, and then teach first year writing in their second year with continued support in professional development.

The program at Southeast State recently adopted a new curriculum based on a social constructivist view of composition; this new curriculum uses a Writing Studies approach and an inquiry-based approach. Although the program does not require teachers use a textbook in their classes, it does have a preferred list of textbooks for teachers to use if they so choose. First year writing teachers are expected to attend a one-day orientation to the program, and one professional development workshop each semester sponsored by the program. Faculty are also encouraged to pursue professional development opportunities outside of the program. Lecturers are also expected to participate in faculty meetings once or twice per month. Although adjuncts are welcome to attend, very few actually attend these meetings, perhaps due to scheduling or other concerns. The program has a Director, who is a tenured faculty member in the English department, and the program has several committees in place in which elected lecturers can participate.

This program provides a complex and unique environment to study because of the recent changes in the program noted above, specifically the changes in the curriculum and instructors' views on those changes, and the constitution of the faculty in terms of employment status. This study used purposive sampling, a common sampling procedure in case studies, in order to obtain participants representative of different employment levels in the first year writing program (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2009, p. 429; Merriam, 1998, p. 63). This project was approved by the Human Subjects/Institutional Review Board at the study site. After IRB approval, the researcher contacted the Director of the First Year Writing program to bring this project to the First Year Writing Program's research committee for approval (the researcher had already obtained initial approval for the project by the Director). The researcher identified prospective participants based on their teaching schedules and employment status, and then contacted prospective participants via email.

A main tenet of this purposive sampling was to seek participants who presented potentially contrasting views on literacy practices based on the researcher's observations. The original intent was to obtain at least six participants to comprise the case: at least two lecturers, two part-time/adjuncts, and two graduate teaching assistants, with no more than three participants per employment class. This study ultimately had five participants (two lecturers, two adjuncts, and one graduate assistant) who participated in a series of three semi-structured interviews and three classroom observations. In the semi-structured interviews, participants were asked questions related to perceptions of their employment status and department operations, teaching philosophy and views on literacy instruction, and scenario-based response questions (see Appendix A). Teachers were asked to

discuss specific instances of agency negotiation (as observed by the researcher) and talk about their perceptions of their classroom environment. Additionally, the researcher collected document data, including class syllabi, assignment sheets, curricula vitae, etc., which were copied by the researcher and stored in a secure location.

Each participant was interviewed for a total of three times during the course of the Fall 2012 semester or Spring 2013 semester, each lasting approximately one hour. Each interview was audiotaped, then transcribed and analyzed. Additionally, each participant was observed teaching three times during the course of the Fall 2012 semester, for a total of three hours, 45 minutes of observation each. The first observation took place after the initial interview, and the second and third observations took place prior to the second and third interviews.

After the interviews and observations were completed, the researcher first transcribed the interviews verbatim, and analyzed the data using a thematic analysis and positioning theory. The researcher then identified specific excerpts of data that addressed the research questions directly or provided a particular example of agency negotiation. The excerpts were divided into sections/stanzas and the transcripts edited again for clarity, such as eliminating filler words or false starts by the participant and/or the researcher, and eliminating notes of assent (ex. “Um hmm”) from the researcher (see Appendix B for transcription notes). These edits were made by the researcher’s discretion, but were provided to the participants to review, based on Willow Roberts Powers’s (2005) suggestions for transcribing interviews (pp. 49, 62). To protect confidentiality of the participants, the school name and participants’ names were not used. The university is described as a large, urban research university and is called

Southeast State University in any analysis. The participants were given an opportunity to member check the analysis chapters of this project.

3.2. Participants

Angela Powell: Angela is an adjunct in first year writing, and teaches at multiple colleges/universities. She has taught at Southeast State University for several years, so she is considered a "long term" adjunct. Her observed class was the second course in the traditional two-course sequence, and Angela's class was working on an inquiry-guided learning project throughout this semester. Students engage in multimodal writing throughout the course of the semester.

Bethany Thompson: Bethany is a new first year writing lecturer, having recently graduated with her M.A. She is a former teaching assistant in the program as well. Her class observed for the purposes of this project was the first course in the sequence, which focused on writing studies. Her students complete a literacy project and an e-portfolio. I would describe her teaching style as energetic and active.

Emily Foster: Emily is a second year graduate teaching assistant, so therefore this is her first year teaching her own courses in the program. Emily had teaching experience prior to joining the program, teaching at the secondary level and to adult learners. Her observed class was the first course in the sequence, and she placed a lot of emphasis on the creation of the e-portfolio, which was worth the majority of the grade in the course. I would describe her teaching style as the most authoritative/disciplined of this group.

George Barnes: George is a lecturer in first year writing, and has taught at Southeast State University for over fifteen years. His class was the first class in the two-course sequence, and in his courses he values metacognition and reflective approaches. I would describe

his teaching style as the one most influenced by expressivism and a process approach to writing. He has seen the program change dramatically over the time he has been employed by Southeast State University.

Savannah Wilson: During the observation period, Savannah was a "full time/part time" adjunct, meaning she taught the same number of courses as a lecturer, but without the higher salary and benefits. A recent M.A. graduate, she also has prior teaching experience at the middle and secondary school levels. Her observed class was the first in the sequence, and she spent considerable time working with the concepts of discourse communities and ethnography. I would describe her classroom as the one most conducive to engaging full class discussion and collaboration.

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The next three chapters focus on specific aspects of Slocum-Bradley's (2010) positioning theory diamond: storylines, rights and duties, and identities. Chapter 4 will focus on storylines of the participants, Chapter 5 will focus on rights and duties, Chapter 6 will focus on identities. Examples of agency negotiation will be analyzed using positioning theory. Chapter 7 will present a discussion of the results, and future directions for research.

CHAPTER 4: STORYLINES OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND CONSTRAINTS

Can you be a rebel in first year writing?

Who are the rebels—the students or the teachers?

Can you be a rebel in first year writing?

Well, no, on both accounts. There are too many constraints, too much red tape, and too much fear.

Can you be a rebel in first year writing?

Maybe.

Who starts the rebellion? Who would notice it?

Can you be a rebel in first year writing?

Aren't we all rebels?

***

Accountability, constraints, and boundaries become important to the participants because they rely on those limits to position themselves within particular situations related to their jobs. In the context of positioning theory, real limits, such as teaching a particular course within a set curriculum, causes a reaction to that limit. In other words, a first year writing instructor has to (in theory) teach in a way that meets the goals of the curriculum if they would like to keep their jobs. How those goals are implemented in the practical day-to-day operations usually falls within the jurisdiction of the teacher, not the program or the university. However, rebelling against the curriculum, or resisting

accountability measures, poses risks for instructors, so although the participants do actively show resistance, they have to be conscious of the risks of their actions because in some situations the risk to their jobs might be greater depending on the type, severity, and/or scale of their rebellion.

Some programs are more prescriptive than at Southeast State University in terms of these constraints (such as a required textbook or a common syllabus), and the more prescriptive a curriculum becomes, the more it is apt to affect how a teacher positions himself or herself within the program and/or the university. The rights and duties change from having teachers having the right to teach with certain academic freedom to ensuring they are fulfilling their duty to follow rules/constraints as stated by the curriculum. In this case, agency is mitigated when more external boundaries are present. The instructors become the arbiter of the curriculum rather than assuming an identity with more agency and expertise to teach they way they might wish. In the following excerpts, Emily, Savannah, and George all negotiate institutional and curricular constraints on their jobs and discuss how those constraints affect their agency in their classrooms in mostly negative ways.

4.1. First Year Writing Rebellion

Emily clearly demonstrates a healthy dose of skepticism of the system in which she works and studies in how she describes her roles within it. As a graduate teaching assistant, Emily both works within the system in hopes of graduating with her Master's degree, but she also perpetuates it in that she is a teacher of record in Southeast State University's First Year Writing program. In the following excerpt, Emily uses the metaphor of a box to describe both her view of genre studies in the design of her

sequence of assignments, specifically a genre analysis and an ethnography assignment, but also of her role within the university:

(1) E: They had so many different options,
(2) E: and they were all affiliated with genre.
(3) E: It was very much a creative project,
(4) E: and now they're going to write an ethnography,
(5) E: and I'm going to be constraining them in that box,
(6) E: because it's a very specific genre
(7) E: that they probably don't even know.
(8) E: And I think they need to understand how to write in that box,
(9) E: and they need to understand how to write out of it.

(10) E: The question is to write within the box.
(11) E: This is the ideal
(12) E: —you write within the box and then you move it outward.
(13) E: You redefine the box.
(14) E: But the only way that someone's going to actually read your writing
(15) E: is if it's somewhat somewhere in the box,
(16) E: or there's some
(17) E: —like there are some writers who are like way off the page,
(18) E: and eventually they get recognized,
(19) E: but still people don't read or understand them,
(20) E: because there still is a social box of different writing texts—

(21) E: and, you know,
(22) E: my idea is to widen the box.
(23) E: I used to be all about outside of the box,
(24) E: and I am kind of a rebel in a sense,
(25) E: but, you know, I'm a rebel.
(26) E: I have a rebellious character,
(27) E: and I want to rebel by, you know, um […]
(28) E: I want to resist institutional discourse by working from within the institution,
(29) E: so that is part of my role as teacher, as professor, as instructor—
(30) E: is to teach people how to work within the system, but also change it.

The use of the box metaphor is very helpful to Emily's storyline of being a rebel. As Davies and Harré (1990) state, "The words the speaker chooses inevitably contain images and metaphors which both assume and invoke the ways of being that the participants take themselves to be involved in" (p. 49). She uses the box metaphor to show how she feels constrained by her position in the program, but also how she wants students to "think

outside the box." The parallel storylines in this excerpt include her description of how the ethnography assignment pushes the concept of genre, how her job as a teacher is to encourage students to revise what it means to write in a particular genre, and how she personally resists institutional discourse. These storylines echo her statement of being a rebel—someone who can be a change agent and actively resist the institution.

In Stanza 1, Emily discusses how she sets the parameters for the students rather than the genre of the ethnography doing so, and she has the power to constrain their writing through that genre which she indicates by saying "*I'm* going to be constraining them" (line 5; my emphasis). The social force of this statement shows her agency; she feels that she controls how students interpret the genre of ethnography. She also constructs the storyline of students as ignorant of the conventions of ethnography (line 7). The "box," in this case, is the genre, and students have less agency because they are unfamiliar with it. In Stanza 2, Emily discusses how writers have the power to "redefine the box" (line 13), but until the students write within this particular genre, they will not be able to have the power to recognize how to subvert the genre. When she describes how writing is social (line 20), she positions some writers as identified outside the box. Those writers who can write "outside the box" have a certain amount of power or notoriety as opposed to those who write within it.

In Stanza 3, Emily shifts the storyline away from the students and their writing to her identity as a rebel. But, she can only be rebellious to the extent to which she can subvert. She cannot work outside the institution but she still identifies as someone who could and should rebel against it. It is interesting to note that in line 29, she notes her role as three different names: teacher, professor, and instructor. In terms of rights and

duties, then, she feels it is her duty to help students "work within the system, but also change it" (line 30). Emily notes any and all of these positions would help students achieve this goal, but this conflates those positions within the university community; these positions are not viewed or valued equally to the institution.

The institution is something, then, that requires change. But why does the institution require change? Does Emily feel constrained as much as she feels she has to constrain her students? Based on Emily's responses here and in later excerpts, Emily believes the institution requires change because she is unhappy within the institution. How she manages her classroom is a reflection of how she feels her employer manages her. She can control her classroom by setting the box in which students write, but she also want to be seen as someone who transcends and/or complicates the box. This contradiction shows how Emily struggles with the issue of control in her classroom, as will be discussed in later excerpts.

4.2. "Fence Setting" and the Dreaded IRE Sequence

Savannah believes the most effective way to teach first year writing is to resist traditional practices in teaching. In the following example, she discusses the pros and cons of a particular type of teaching model, the IRE (initiation, response, evaluation) sequence. In her discussion, she projects not only her dissatisfaction with this model of teaching, but also continues to develop her identity as the "non-traditional" teacher by showing how she does not follow this model nor think it works well in the classroom.

I: Interviewer
S: Savannah

(29) I: Is there something about the sort of IRE strategy that is beneficial?

(30) S: To the students or to the teacher?

(31) I: Well, let's start with the students.

(32) S: It very much lets them know where they stand.
(33) S: I think with the way my classroom is set up,
(34) S: it's really tough to know where you stand.
(35) S: It's tough to go,
(36) S: 'Ok, well yeah my voice can be heard
(37) S: but she's ultimately the teacher,
(38) S: so am I saying what's right?
(39) S: Am I saying what's productive?
(40) S: Am I doing enough to be able to get that A?
(41) S: Do I have the right ideas?'
(42) S: And I think with the IRE, it's very easy to go,
(43) S: 'Ok, so she said that was good. She approved that answer,'
(44) S: or 'Oh, that wasn't right. I'm not supposed to be doing that thinking,'
(45) S: so it's very clear where you're supposed to be.
(46) S: I think that's probably less scary so I think it's beneficial to the students in that way.

In a classroom that uses the IRE sequence, Savannah believes that teachers dictate right answers and wrong answers, and she sets up an opposition from that type of classroom to her own. In lines 34-41, Savannah projects what she thinks her students (who are used to classrooms that use an IRE sequence) say about her style of teaching. These students have a certain amount of doubt or uncertainty about their performance in her classroom because Savannah prefers an unpredictable classroom environment. She also states how students in IRE classrooms have more certainty because they are receiving immediate feedback (approval or disapproval) from the teacher (line 43-45). This provides them security in knowing definitively if they are correct or incorrect, whereas in her classroom there is certain insecurity because that sequence is absent. The fear that some students may face in Savannah's class is part of her desired operations of her classroom. In this instance of agency negotiation, Savannah demonstrates her agency by facilitating this type of environment and in return she expects her students to demonstrate their agency

(albeit mediated through this lens of fear/doubt) by ignoring the focus on "right answers" or grades that their other classes may value. When asked how the IRE sequence benefits teachers, Savannah replied:

(48) S: It's very easy to feel in control.
(49) S: I feel like it's easier to decide where things are going to go—

(50) S: —because with after every response,
(51) S: you can either continue and say I want it to go this way,
(52) S: so you could continue that,
(53) S: or that's what I wasn't expecting,
(54) S: so let's shut that down and keep going with this line.
(55) S: So there is that fabricated sense of control that I make every decision here.

Order and regulation, according to Savannah, are the most significant benefits of the IRE style of teaching. Therefore, Savannah believes the IRE sequence diminishes student agency because their teacher's agency overshadows them. Additionally, the routine of this sequence privileges efficiency and the "fabricated sense of control" (line 55) relates to a statement George makes about being part of a machine, which will be discussed in a later chapter. So, rather than an inquiry-based approach which privileges discovery, asking questions, etc., teachers who implement the IRE sequence believe it is their duty to regulate the conversation and assess student responses on the spot.

The teacher who relies on the IRE sequence is able to demonstrate his or her own agency in doing the "fabricating"; in this manufactured setting when a student responds with a satisfactory answer, that student receives approval or disapproval by the teacher. When a student has a non-satisfactory answer, the teacher "shuts that down" (line 54). Savannah, as a teacher who does not want to be associated with this type of teaching, feels there are more drawbacks to the IRE than benefits. She states:

(57) S: It doesn't allow for much student influence.
(58) S: They don't get to kind of figure out—

(59) S: I don't feel like they get to figure out their own ideas very much.
(60) S: They get to figure out what the teacher's ideas are.
(61) S: There isn't as much flexibility with the non-IRE.
(62) S: It's very much like,
(63) S: 'Oh ok, the conversation is going in this direction, so let's play that out for awhile.'

Savannah believes that the IRE sequence is partially responsible for a limitation in student agency in classrooms where this is common practice. In this storyline, a non-IRE classroom is inquiry-driven, "flexible" (line 61) and collaborative, whereas an IRE classroom is efficient and teacher-centered. In the IRE classroom, students do not have as much opportunity for discovery for fear they will be penalized for having the "wrong answer" (line 59). The guessing game that results in line 60 is with the teacher, not the course content, the curriculum, or even with their own ideas. Her repetition of "figure out" (lines 59-60) assumes a negotiation, and in an IRE classroom, the teacher removes that negotiation.

In discussing her view of this type of classroom, Savannah then shifts to thinking about her own teaching, and specifically about a statement made in a professional development program that she attended. The following discussion shows that although she does not identify with the IRE classroom, she still acknowledges the types of boundaries that she sets for her students in her classroom through the use of a fence metaphor:

(64) S: Someone said something in the ((program's professional development)) workshop that—
(65) S: 'That I let them go where they want to within the fence.'
(66) S: And I kind of liked that analogy
(67) S: because that's kind of how I feel like the classroom is set up for me.
(68) S: We kind of work within these bounds because we have to
(69) S: —or there's just going to be <u>no</u> plan and we won't be meeting the curriculum,
(70) S: but within that they can go wherever they decide to go.
(71) S: And I think that allows them very much to be able to explore,

(72) S: to be able to inquire,
(73) S: which is our curriculum.
(74) S: And I think that allows for more student interest so the IRE does not work for that.

The fence metaphor that Savannah adopts recognizes the constraints of the curriculum and subsequently of her job. The fence is the curriculum, and Savannah gives her students permission to exercise their freedom as much as possible within the confines of it. There is a slight resentment of that fact, as demonstrated in line 68 with the social force of the phrases "we kind of work" and "because we have to" (line 68). Savannah recognizes that following the curriculum and making sure her students receive the material commensurate with the course is important. However, within that fence, her classroom affords students the freedom "to explore" and "to inquire" (lines 71-72). In line 74, she again resists the IRE classroom by claiming that students in her classroom ultimately benefit more from wandering/discovering what they want to inside of the fence. When asked who sets up the fence for her students, Savannah replied that it was "a combination of whoever designs the curriculum and the teacher" (line 78). This reflects a shift from her original assertion that the curriculum is the fence. By adding in the teacher, Savannah recognizes her role within the fence too; she asserts her agentive stance in relationship to the curriculum and her classroom. The curriculum fence gives her the parameters of what she can teach or how she can operate her classroom, but she still feels she can demonstrate her agency in how she facilitates her classroom operations. She then reverts back to her original statement about the curriculum being the fence:

(80) S: Because the curriculum sets its own fence,
(81) S: and it's you can go here so ((first FYW course)) you've got to talk about inquiry into writing.
(82) S: You can't go into inquiry in other things,
(83) S: you can't do form because that's going to be wrong,

(84) S: and those kinds of parameters,
(85) S: and then I set my own fence within that saying,
(86) S: 'Ok, so we're going to think about these kinds of ideas
(87) S: and talk about literacy in these sort of ways,
(88) S: directed by these kind((s)) of assignments.'

Her shift back to the curriculum as the primary fence signals an ambivalence about who or what controls the boundaries of her classroom, which demonstrates an uneasiness about the power she has within the system. Savannah then states that the fence she institutes, as the teacher of the class, is located within the one the curriculum sets—there is a fence within a fence. The social force of the hedges she uses in lines 86 and 87 ("kinds of" and "sort of") indicate that Savannah wants to emphasize her resistance to following the curriculum exactly by not giving it full power. She demonstrates her agency by showing the curriculum has general parameters that she needs to follow, but she can still exercise freedom in *how* these parameters are reflected in her course design and classroom activities.

4.3. Being Free/Being Strict: Emily Struggles With Accountability Measures

Emily, like Savannah, also resists what some might call a "traditional college classroom" (lecture style, larger classes, etc.) when thinking about how best to teach first year writing. Emily believes this type of course is less rigorous than her course. In this excerpt, Emily discusses student preparation for class and feedback she received from students on midterm reflections, which also reveals a discussion of her views of accountability in her job. Additionally, Emily elaborates on what she feels are the main differences between her first year writing classes and others students might have in their first year of college:

(1) E: I think that probably in other classes
(2) E: they don't have as many assignments that are due.

(3) E: I think that this class is probably different than many of their other classes
(4) E: and they tell me that it's different.
(5) E: They say, 'In my other classes, I just show up and take the exam.
(6) E: They don't even take attendance.'
(7) E: So, I think that actually,
(8) E: we have high expectations in our department
(9) E: and we enforce those through the attendance policy,
(10) E: and we hold them accountable for doing work,
(11) E: whereas in other lecture-type classes they just get lectured
(12) E: then they take a test,
(13) E: then they have like four grades maybe per semester,
(14) E: and maybe turn in two papers, and—
(15) E: I don't think they're held accountable in other settings in the university.
[…]

According to Emily, there is a marked difference between her class and other general education classes, which takes the form of fewer assignments and less student involvement. Her evidence of this perception is what her students tell her (line 4). Emily sets up an opposition between her class and other general education classes, and through this opposition exposes the values of her course. The "high expectations" that she mentions in line 8, including taking attendance and having assignments throughout, are different than those other classes with lower expectations. Therefore, Emily believes her class is more valuable than others first year students might take, and by extension she is a more valuable teacher, although, as will be discussed in a later chapter, she believes her identity as a valuable member of the university is undercut by her position as a graduate teaching assistant.

When Emily discusses the content of those other courses in lines 5-6 and 11-15, she assumes that those classes value a more passive participation by the students, just showing up and listening to the teacher, and this passive participation results in a lesser accountability in those courses (line 15). Part of her job, then, because she shares the high expectations of the program, is to hold students accountable for their work, and to

maintain a separation from the other general education courses. However, Emily struggles with what accountability means, as evidenced in the next excerpt. To Emily, accountability means being a structured teacher, although she finds it unusual that her students do not necessarily view her class in that way. This ultimately affects Emily's identity as teacher:

(16) E: They feel free—
(17) E: and particularly with thoughts, not, because I'm a little—
(18) E: I'm quite structured.
(19) E: They're not really talking about my structure.
(20) E: They're not really free to turn in assignments late,
(21) E: but they're free to do,
(22) E: to study what they want to study.
(23) E: And they're free to explore topics they want to explore,
(24) E: and they're free to express their opinions,
(25) E: so I think that's what I aspire to be,
(26) E: and I wish I could be more free about doing your homework and stuff,
(27) E: but it affects the class so much if no one brings in a writing assignment you can't—
(28) E: then you have to change your entire day,
(29) E: so that's why I've been strict about it.

(30) E: You know, when the writing workshops come,
(31) E: if they don't have their papers,
(32) E: what are they going to do for a whole class period?

In terms of her teaching practices, Emily believes she has high expectations for her students; she expects them to be in class and submit their work in a timely manner. However, though she expects that students will follow her directions and deadlines, she also expects that within those parameters students will become explorers (line 23). This freedom within particular bounds is reminiscent of Savannah's fence within a fence metaphor. Emily wants to foster this sense of personal accountability in her students to be explorers, but she cannot fully let them have control over her classroom operations because that would take away from her agency. So, although she wants them "[to be]

free to explore topics they want to explore, and they're free to express their opinions, so I think that's what *I* aspire to be" (lines 23-25; my emphasis), she knows she needs to maintain order and control over her class; she needs to keep them accountable. Some of this attitude stems from the fact that this course relies upon process writing and workshopping writing, and when students demonstrate more agency (in terms of deciding new deadlines or choosing whether or not to abide by Emily's deadlines), Emily feels this takes away from her expectations of how the class should operate. In this storyline, in other traditional general education classes missing homework or assignments does not affect classroom operations as much as in her class because those other classes require a much more passive involvement from students while in the classroom. Her class depends on a workshop model where students revise their writing for homework and work on it in class.

When asked to discuss if she feels that there is a balance between structure and freedom in her teaching style, Emily responded:

(40) E: I think so.
(41) E: I'm really liking the way it's going,
(42) E: and I know I have a personal tendency towards rigidity,
(43) E: especially when I was teaching high school,
(44) E: and I think what's coming out is that these students are coming from high school
(45) E: and they're still bringing in their habits,
(46) E: and I'm hoping for something—
(47) E: I'm hoping to release.
(48) E: You know, because a high school teacher is different than a college professor,
(49) E: and I would like to release and let it be a college class with
(50) E: with less enforced accountability,
(51) E: and so maybe I should release a little bit,
(52) E: but I think it would reduce the quality of the instruction,
(53) E: so this is like definitely a balancing act.

Emily's experience as a high school teacher prior to becoming a graduate assistant at Southeast State influences her attitude towards classroom accountability where she feels her "personal tendency towards rigidity" (line 42) was more compatible with the demands of teaching in a high school. In her storyline, since many students in first year writing are just one year removed from high school, they still retain some "high school" tendencies that require her to be strict in class. However, she resists that feeling because she now teaches at the college level and wants to separate what it means to be a high school teacher versus what it means to be a college professor (line 48). Emily mentions "release" twice in this stanza (lines 47, 49), and in the context of this discussion, she means letting go of the fact that she is now a college instructor and has to approach her teaching methods differently than she perhaps did in the past. She wants to let go, but finds that prior experience and history makes this difficult.

The "enforced accountability" statement in line 50 begs the question of motivation and where accountability comes from; while there are external accountability measures (the course description, the curriculum, etc.), she also expresses concern with the accountability measures she places on her students (assignments, due dates, etc.). There is a certain amount of intrinsic accountability she places on herself to provide a quality class for her students and be both strict and flexible with how she operates her classroom. There is also a certain amount of fear in this discussion, though, because she feels that she would have to sacrifice teaching quality if she could not maintain the "balancing act" (lines 51-53).

The above example shows Emily's struggle with agency negotiation in her classroom, particularly with accountability and leniency. This could, in part, be due to

Emily's position as a graduate teaching assistant. Emily struggles with her GA identity because she has prior work experience and feels she has a different viewpoint and a different expertise than other GAs due to that experience. As will be discussed in a later chapter, she expresses resentment towards her position and the institution because she feels the institution undervalues her expertise. This feeling, along with her intrinsic attitude towards being strict, affects the way she operates her classroom.

4.4. Making Connections Equals Accountability: George Resists the New Curriculum

Of the three participants discussed in this chapter, George displays the most resistance towards the program itself rather than towards other departments, courses, or teaching styles. One of George's main concerns about the curriculum is with transfer or generalizability of the material. He resists the new curriculum because he feels parts of the curriculum work in isolation. In turn, he is concerned about his role and identity as a teacher of this curriculum because he struggles with seeing the connection between the curriculum and other courses; he believes there has to be transferability. He states, "… but the things we are doing I have to wonder how much of them are practical in terms of carrying over of skills beyond what we're doing," and uses the ethnography assignment, popular within the program, as an example of his skepticism. In this storyline, George positions himself as the resistant teacher or questioner of the curricular values. In the following excerpt, when asked about his views on the curriculum shift, George exposes his perspective on genre, and on a formalist versus a social constructivist curriculum. George states:

(13) G: I think that so much has been focused, though,
(14) G: on the notion of an ethnography as this perfect pearl.

(15) G: As this artifact that we quest for,

(16) G: and we strive for with the students,
(17) G: and we have them producing these terrific projects.
(18) G: I mean, we've got some of them ((that)) are amazing.
(19) G: Some of them I'm envious of what other instructors have been able to produce,
(20) G: but at the same time,
(21) G: I look at it and I wonder,
(22) G: how is this going to help them outside of ((the first course))?
(23) G: Because, it's a perfect pearl,
(24) G: but the problem with it being a perfect pearl is that it's a solid, concrete thing.
(25) G: It doesn't change, it can't change,
(26) G: if it does change, it loses its integrity.

The ethnography project as the "perfect pearl" (line 14) treats the ethnography assignment (which is not a required assignment but one that some instructors have adopted for the first course in the two course sequence) as a static mode rather than a genre that evolves or changes. This statement begs the question of what an ethnography looks like in a first year writing classroom. Although he does not describe his perception of what an ethnography in this discipline would look like, he acknowledges that some instructors have been able to implement this project and have had great results (lines 17-19). He states "*instructors* have been able to produce" (line 19; my emphasis) rather than students producing these ethnographies, which supports a more teacher-centered classroom. However, he displays skepticism at this genre within the curriculum. George uses the word "wonder" used in line 21 and above in the introduction to describe demonstrate this skepticism; the social force of this word indicates that he is not wondering, he is critiquing the use of the ethnography assignment.

George's conception of an ethnography assignment as a static genre prevents students from transferring what they learned from it to other classes, which contradicts what he feels the value of first year writing is in his teaching philosophy. George's

concern with modes over process writing is reiterated below when George talks about what should be valued in rhetoric/composition classes:

I: Interviewer
G: George

(28) G: The biggest issue for me
(29) G: is that we moved away from even a basic model of true rhetoric to a model of—
(30) G: I don't even know what our current model would be,
(31) G: because it's really scattered.

(32) I: So when you say true rhetoric, are you—

(33) G: Classical.

(34) I: Classical rhetoric.

(35) G: Classical rhetoric.

(36) I: Ok, ok.

(37) G: Not just argument but exposition.
(38) G: Even life writing has a newer version of these things.
(39) G: Let's have the students examine themselves, their culture, their history,
(40) G: but let's also do it in ways that we can incorporate talents and skills and traits
(41) G: that they can take to their liberal studies class,
(42) G: that they can take to their humanities class,
(43) G: that they could even take to a science lab and apply to writing lab reports.
(44) G: And what I'm seeing from a lot of people, though,
(45) G: is just ok, ethnography is ethnography and they're not putting any thought into it beyond that.

(46) I: Ok. Do you mean in terms of exploration of genre for example?
(47) I: Because you're talking a lot about transfer of things.
(48) I: So are you saying that people are doing the ethnography
(49) I: for the sake of the ethnography rather than understanding—

(50) G: Yes.

(51) I: --the rationale behind it.

(52) G: Yes.

(53) I: Ok.

Interestingly, George treats classical rhetoric as a "perfect pearl" and therefore when it is no longer taught as such in first year writing, George fixates on a particular assignment that is gaining in popularity within the program. In his mind, classical rhetoric, "true" rhetoric (line 29), does transfer, whereas what students learn from an ethnography does not. Ironically, in line 39, when George talks about students learning about themselves and their cultures, he is advocating for an expressivist and social constructivist model in first year writing, but feels classical rhetoric/formalist models of rhetoric are most appropriate for first year writing because it is most transferable to other courses (lines 41-43). Since he feels that the program is moving away from "true rhetoric," other instructors are misappropriating the ethnography assignment (lines 44-45), perhaps because he feels the curriculum is so "scattered" (line 31) that instructors want an assignment that they can keep as the "perfect pearl."

George attributes this scenario to what he describes as a tumultuous time in the history of the program; when there is change, some people will resist it and ultimately revert back to comfortable ways of teaching, or are searching for something that they feel fits the curriculum:

(54) G: That there was so much […] negativity with incorporating this new curriculum,
(55) G: that I don't think we actually got into the context,
(56) G: and making the things fit together in a fluid sense,
(57) G: and it feels like looking at the options for even, say, ((the first course))—
(58) G: we have that little box that has the 'here's some things you can do for ((the first course)).'
(59) G: Uh, what's the theme?

For George, the implementation of the writing studies curriculum happened without addressing the resistance to it (line 54), and instructors resorted to mimicking the

assignments without understanding or investigating the theoretical underpinnings of having an ethnography assignment in a writing studies curriculum. These instructors followed suggested (but not required) assignments for the curriculum (line 58). George calls into question the theoretical underpinnings of the curriculum, asking, "What's the theme?" (line 59). George felt that the resistance to the new curriculum did not allow them to understand fully the purpose of particular assignment such as the ethnography.

In another excerpt, George reiterates his previous statements on transfer and his frustration with the new curriculum, particularly with the ethnography assignment:

I: Interviewer
G: George

(1) G: […] give them a couple of skills that they could take with them.
(2) G: That's where the pressure is for me.
(3) G: And that's why I worried a lot when we started adopting the new curriculum
(4) G: is how are we going to make these connections?
(5) G: and I'm glad we've had access to a lot of articles we have,
(6) G: because otherwise I would still be banging my head against the wall,
(7) G: and thinking ok where is the connection?
(8) G: Where is the connection?
(9) G: The very first time I heard we were going to be doing an ethnography,
(10) G: I thought to myself 'Are you kidding me?'
(11) G: because I was thinking of linguistic ethnography—

(12) G: In the older term—

(13) G: --and definition.
(14) G: I thought, what the hell are we going to do with freshman students who are barely eighteen,
(15) G: couple of them still maybe seventeen,
(16) G: and what sense does that make for us to teach them about that?
(17) G: What are they going to get from that they can take to another layer?

In this storyline, George assumes the role of the questioner/resistor of the curriculum. His repetition of the question "Where is the connection?" in lines 7-8 emphasizes his need for transfer of writing skills beyond the first year writing classroom. His reaction to

hearing of the ethnography assignment demonstrates his treatment of it as a static genre in a particular discipline (linguistics) (line 11). Although he acknowledges that resources were made available during the change to the new curriculum (line 5), reading articles assumes a more passive approach to engaging with the change on the part of the faculty. He assumes his students (due to their age) are unable to find value in the ethnography assignment because this assignment is not generalizable to other disciplines (lines 14-17). He seems to be concerned with results by focusing so much on transferability. This could be a defense mechanism and a reflection of how he sees his job in relationship to the larger university. A connection means value and he wants to be valued. George states:

(19) G: Whether it's for a class,
(20) G: whether it's for an internship,
(21) G: whether it's for even ((the second course)) because for me that's what it's about—
(22) G: is looking at it from a gestalt picture.
(23) G: And if I can't find some sort of holistic connection there,
(24) G: then I either need to reframe it or I need to keep talking to people
(25) G: until I get a little spark that will help me reframe it.

The students' experience in first year writing has to be transferable to other courses in order to fit George's conception of a "gestalt picture" (line 22). If it is not transferable, George is persistent in making it transferable or seeing the complete picture. The "reframing" he does (lines 24-25) is his attempt to comport his values onto the new curriculum, rather than attempting to understand the values of the new curriculum and negotiating with his own personal teaching philosophy. Part of the problem George has in making connections with the curriculum was the confusion surrounding the implementation of it:

(28) G: There was—has been—a tremendous amount of miscommunication and misunderstanding from the get go on this.

(29) I: Ok.

(30) G: Before we even came to the current curriculum,
(31) G: there was a notion about just doing a one semester course
(32) G: and then doing a one semester course with paired to an in-major course or ((a general education)) course.
(33) G: And there were all of these pilot courses being run
(34) G: and nothing was really working
(35) G: and it got so confusing and it was just—((laughs))
(36) G: really we didn't know what the hell to expect.

(37) G: And it was almost like a bad comedy show, you know.
(38) G: I could be reading the paper and you could walk into the room
(39) G: and I could just put the paper down and say,
(40) G: 'So, what's the curriculum ((going to)) be next week?'
(41) G: and that's what it felt like for me for months,
(42) G: and when we finally started getting geared toward what we have now.
(43) G: I admit that I was one of the people who was questioning everything
(44) G: because I felt so displaced by all of the chaos that had been going on with different pilot programs and studies, and so on,
(45) G: that I wanted to make sure I was understanding what we were doing,
(46) G: what our expectations were,
(47) G: why were we doing it and how it was beneficial for the students?

Here George begins to talk about his perceptions of the chaos in the program as it was changing. He uses "we" several times (lines 30, 36, 42) to describe the collective group of first year writing teachers, whether or not this was the dominant feeling shared by other instructors at the time. The lack of a cohesive, unified curriculum at the time was exacerbated by the emergence of several pilot programs. Rather than pilot programs adding value to the program, George felt these courses took away from the program (line 34) because their experimental nature detracted from the consistency in transferring skills from first year writing to other classes.

George, in giving his "bad comedy show" example, shifts from "we" to "I" to show how this situation was directly impacting him (lines 37-41). It also shows the vulnerability of the instructors, who are acting passively, waiting for news from some

other party (i.e. the program director or curriculum committee). In lines 43-44, George accepts his role as the questioner because he did not know how to handle the changes that were happening in the program. The changes and unanswered questions, as George explains below, were affecting his identity as a teacher of writing:

I: Interviewer
G: George

(48) I: Were you questioning the chaos, or were you questioning your own sense of teaching, or—

(49) G: Kind of both.

(50) I: Both, ok.

(51) G: Because when you have such chaos in,
(52) G: especially a program of our size,
(53) G: that creates almost exponential chaos because we deal with everybody,
(54) G: and when we deal with an entire incoming class of freshman,
(55) G: we might be dealing with I don't know ((what)) the number was this year, 3600?

(56) I: Yeah, something like that I think.

(57) G: Maybe 3400 or something, somewhere around those.
(58) G: Even just the number 3000
(59) G: is huge and to think, ok,
(60) G: I'm gonna have maybe 100 students, probably less than that to deal with,
(61) G: what am I going to be dealing with them about?

George's concern with the size of the first year writing program at Southeast State adds another layer to his need for connections/transferability with other departments within the university. To George, when chaos exists, it becomes magnified because of the large number of students the program serves (line 51-53), and in turn George magnifies the issue he has with the program by invoking these numbers. Consistency and uniformity has more value than experimentation with pilot courses within the program because of the sheer numbers of students who take first year writing. It is in this moment of

resistance/questioning when George's values about teaching writing are exposed. In George's effort to find the connections with the curriculum, he finds himself disassociated from it. Although he displays his agency in resisting it, the price he pays is the uncertainty in his own connection to teaching writing.

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Savannah, Emily, and George all approach the issue of accountability similarly. All three participants adopt the term "accountability" in some way into their storylines, and for the most part, they see accountability to the program and/or to the university as a constraint on their teaching practices/teaching philosophy. The pressure to teach effectively in service to the university but also afford choice and agency to/with their students is real and causes tension for these instructors.

The feeling of being accountable to something (the curriculum or the university) and/or to someone (their students) weighs on their teaching practices, but it seems that their attention to accountability to the curriculum or the institution outweighs their personal responsibility towards their students. Savannah's struggle is making sure that her students have freedom within the fence is only in relationship to the fence itself (set by the curriculum); in other words, the fence dictates which direction *she* can go, which ultimately affects her agency.

Emily internalizes the accountability negotiation. Her personal attitude towards her job reflects how she sees herself in the classroom (as someone who is more strict with students). Her accountability to the high standards of the program coincides with this attitude. If she sacrificed her teaching style, she would be doing a disservice to her students who see her first year writing class as a place different from their other classes.

She cannot control her position within the university, but she can control her position within her own classroom.

George's accountability and loyalty, as a long time employee of the university, is to ensure what he thinks is the highest quality (read most transferable) to the other courses and departments within the university. When changes are instituted at the program level (rather than from a top down approach), this disrupts his agency by calling into question his values and causing him to resist these changes. He feels more accountable to the university rather than the program.

The storylines presented here affect how the participants view the rights and duties of their jobs as well as their identities as participants in a classroom, participants in a first year writing program, and participants in a larger university space. As will be seen in later chapters, the storylines that Emily, Savannah, and George adopted here stand in opposition to other storylines that they adopt in other circumstances. Davies and Harré (1990) state:

> Persons as speakers acquire beliefs about themselves which do not necessarily form a unified coherent whole. They shift from one to another way of thinking about themselves as the discourse shifts and as their positions within varying story lines are taken up. Each of these possible selves can be internally contradictory or contradictory with other possible selves located in different story lines. Like the flux of past events, conceptions people have about themselves are disjointed until and unless they are located in a story. (pp. 58-59)

Therefore, focusing on different storylines these participants adopt as discussed here and in later chapters show how the participants are making sense of the figured worlds in which they belong. The participants discuss/address agency when they assume a storyline, and *how* they discuss the storyline reflects how agentive they feel in a given context. Chapter 5 will address another aspect of positioning theory, the rights and duties

that these participants feel they have given the storylines they adopt. Similar to what was discussed in this chapter, the rights and duties that the participants assume given their identities and storylines expose tension and resistance, and in some cases, show marked contradictions in how the participants understand their role in the classroom and within the university.

CHAPTER 5: RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF THE FIRST YEAR WRITING INSTRUCTOR (REAL OR IMAGINED)

Rights and duties relate to storylines because focusing on rights and duties helps rationalize action within a particular context. Rights and duties also connect to identities because they can help explain what people do or what they *think* they have to do in relation to their identity in a situation. For example, in a following excerpt, George believes that (as a component of his job as teacher) he should teach his students what he perceives to be valuable life skills in addition to writing instruction, which begs the question about what a college level instructor's job description entails. Is it the job of the first year writing teacher to teach anything other than writing, such as life skills or academic discourse? Or, due to the interdisciplinary approach and social nature of writing instruction, does the duty of the writing teacher go beyond writing instruction? Those involved in first year writing would argue that their jobs include more than teaching technical elements of writing skills. This chapter will focus on George, Savannah, and Bethany as they discuss what they believe to be rights and duties specific to their jobs. Through focusing on rights and duties, these participants demonstrate both the affordances and the tensions they feel in relation to their jobs.

5.1. Thinking Through Difference: How FYW Instructors Disassociate Themselves From General Education

In a new era where Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are the norm and vague terms like "accountability" are removed from their contexts and increasingly

quantified, FYW has to respond accordingly because programs involve students and they are the ones affected by this movement especially. Some college writing teachers blame high school English teachers for the quality of the students' writing, and vice versa (in this study, George demonstrates that attitude). In Peter Kittle's essay "It's Not the High School Teachers' Fault: An Alternative to the Blame Game" (2006), Kittle discusses the challenges of teaching high school English given material conditions by focusing more on grammar and mechanics rather than process writing (p. 138). Kittle feels constrained by the curriculum and workload, and he discusses how the material conditions affect perceptions of high school English versus college English courses by teachers and students. Kittle states, "two factors strongly affect the transition from high school to college. First is that the circumstances and contexts of high school and college writing classes are very different, and those circumstances and contexts strongly impact pedagogy. Second, the avenues of communication between high school and college teachers of writing are not nearly as open as they should be" (p. 140). Kittle suggests that high school and college teachers need more direct communication with each other (pp. 141, 143). When teachers stand in opposition to each other, they are emphasizing differences to help position themselves in a particular way (as better than, distrustful of, etc.). Although Kittle's suggestions would benefit both parties, his assertions are complicated by the material conditions of labor in first year writing. For example, faculty turnover and reliance on adjunct labor in first year writing creates an inconsistent workforce that threatens the efficacy of these desired collaborations.

Accountability measures specific to K-12 education also impact the ability for K-16 teachers to collaborate. For example, standardized testing affects the students and

their attitudes towards writing and literacy, and it affects the teachers of first year writing because not only do they have different experiences and histories with literacy and writing than their students, but they also have their disciplinary expertise to contend with, as well as their curriculum and teaching practices. As stated before, the isolation of FYW could contribute to this situation.

Savannah, Emily, and George all make the distinction that first year writing courses are "different" than high school English courses and different from other college courses, and that they are different types of teachers than who students might encounter elsewhere in high school or college. Savannah and Emily claim that stance in part because their students report that to them, and all three position themselves as teachers who have more close connections or frequent interactions with students than other first year instructors and/or professors in other disciplines. High school teachers are characterized (by George particularly) as positioning FYW teachers as rigorous and demanding teachers focused on grammar and mechanics. College teachers are to be feared, and in George's storyline, he has to combat these misperceptions in his job teaching first year writing. He expects students to arrive to his class with a particular knowledge of writing and blames high school teachers and K-12 education in general when students do not have those expected writing skills.

Why do these teachers make this separation between themselves and high school and/or other college teachers rather than focus on collaborating with high school teachers, or at least consider a different attitude towards them? Part of the distinction stems from historical perceptions of first year writing and on the current discourse surrounding college readiness. *If* FYW is a gatekeeper, a place that shuffles students through,

weeding out the "bad" ones, then FYW teachers have a certain amount of pressure placed on them as the ones who determine a students' college readiness. However, many FYW teachers do not want to think about students in those terms, nor do they want to think about their jobs in those terms. Instead, they might benefit more from believing that the work done in first year writing is not only transformative, but also meaningful (and in an ideal sense, one hopes that it could be both). But the constraints (material, institutional, labor, etc.) isolate FYW to a place where some parties misinterpret the work and value of the work that happens in FYW. The response from those who might view first year writing as a service department creates a situation where some FYW teachers acting in response might become defensive and perhaps isolate themselves (intentionally or unintentionally) from other disciplines, further perpetuating the problem. Savannah, Emily, and George's emphasis on difference all highlight the distinction between FYW and other general education courses. The question of why they would make that distinction is reflected in different ways within their storylines as will be discussed later in this chapter.

Through the various interviews, each of these teachers acknowledges several sources of constraints that affect their jobs. For example, as both a FYW teacher and graduate student, Emily is concerned with accountability and feels it is part of being an effective teacher. However, she struggles with balancing her authority in the classroom but also letting students have authority and power. Perhaps this is because the traditional storyline of being a teacher precludes handing over power to the students. Her identity as teacher is complicated by the fact that she has prior teaching experience in different educational settings and levels, and at times felt alienated from her work as a graduate

teaching assistant teaching first year writing. She struggles to find her place in the program so she is hyperaware of the moves she makes within her classroom, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Savannah, Emily, and George direct their frustrations to different parties, but they all emphasize the transformative potential in their role within the university and the power of a first year writing course, even in the face of these constraints. Savannah openly talks about power and constraints with her students in an effort to understand her own position and identity as a teacher. Emily demonstrates resentment towards the institution and the structure of her graduate program. George demonstrates resentment towards the entire K-college education system. These tensions and resentments are integral parts of their identities and storylines, and they rely on them to rationalize for themselves the importance of FYW. They all believe first year writing is a place where great teaching and learning happens—this learning environment is not recognized as it should be, but it is happening. They look to other parties/entities for reasons why tensions exist in their jobs. The following is an example of this mentality. Here George discusses how he believes the education system has failed his students in terms of teaching them important aspects of writing. This particular excerpt begins with a discussion of grammar:

I: Interviewer
G: George

(1) G: As far as teaching the grammar goes,
(2) G: we don't really have the time to address grammar the way we need to,
(3) G: especially not over the last, I would say, four years, 3-4 years.
(4) G: There's been a marked lapse with the quality of the students coming in
(5) G: and their ability to wield grammar.

(6) I: What do you think is causing that?

(7) G: They're not being taught it.
(8) G: I know what's causing it.
(9) G: It's No Child Left Behind.
(10) G: Is that 3-4 year period is when we started having that first batch come in.
(11) G: as incoming freshmen,
(12) G: and we're still dealing with them today,
(13) G: and they have spent 8-10 years being taught how to take standardized tests,
(14) G: how to take state tests,
(15) G: how to take competency tests,
(16) G: how to do federal tests,
(17) G: how to do all these tests for reading and comprehension
(18) G: but based on paragraphs or based on the three-paragraph essay,
(19) G: and for some of them,
(20) G: it's not even you do the introduction and three paragraphs and then the conclusion,
(21) G: it's literally with three paragraphs.
(22) G: And it breaks my heart because we've taught them how to take tests.
(23) G: They've got great test taking skills,
(24) G: but they have no critical thinking skills,
(25) G: they have no analytical skills.
(26) G: They have no ability to respond.
(27) G: They don't know how to summarize,
(28) G: but they can fill in a bubble sheet really well.

(29) G: Even stay in lines perfectly.

(30) G: But that leads us into other things *we* have to cover in composition classes,
(31) G: such as how to think.

In this excerpt, George positions students as passive learners whose main purpose is to take tests to measure their learning. As a result, George believes that testing affects how he provides writing instruction because the students do not have prior knowledge he expects them to have by the time they enter his classroom (lines 1-5). The emphasis on testing creates a situation where he cannot add grammar instruction to his course because he has an obligation to fulfill Southeast State's curriculum within a limited time frame. He still feels pressure, though, to add things to his curriculum that students' prior education did not teach (lines 2, 30-31). George struggles with and is resentful of the

amount of standardized testing students complete during the course of their K-12 education (line 22), and uses testing as an umbrella term for what he feels is wrong with the system itself. What the testing values completely opposes what George believes college level writing values; testing values surface level learning and efficiency, whereas college writing classes value analysis and higher level thinking skills (lines 23-28). As a result, George feels it is his duty (and his colleagues' duty) to teach them "how to think" (line 31). This statement is consistent with the positioning of the students as passive in George's storyline (which will be discussed later) and not in control of their education until they reach *his* class.

The irony is that, in terms of writing instruction, George privileges a more formalist or traditionalist view of grammar, which he indicates in lines 2-5 when he makes a judgment call about his students' lack of knowledge of grammar, and that first year writing teachers feel pressure to correct that lack of knowledge (line 2). So he is not detaching himself completely from what these tests tend to value. Nevertheless, he opposes how the overemphasis on testing has affected students' writing skills. Although he blames the education system and these tests, he also places blame on the high school English teachers, as will be discussed in a following excerpt. George provides examples of how he as an FYW instructor tries to separate himself from both high school English teachers and from other college teachers, and also shows how he privileges the role of FYW in students' academic careers.

5.2. The FYW Instructor as Savior

In this excerpt, George was asked to define his role and his students' role in his classroom. George immediately poses a critique of the American education system:

G: George
I: Interviewer

(4) G: I tell them on the first day of class that
(5) G: if they have been a part of the majority of the American or Westernized education system,
(6) G: that they are screwed up,
(7) G: and for the next sixteen and a half weeks,
(8) G: we will be trying to unscrew them.
(9) G: And, we'll be trying to teach them how to think critically.
(10) G: We'll be trying to teach them introspection,
(11) G: and we will be trying to teach them a number of other things,
(12) G: but more than anything else,
(13) G: my goal for my class,
(14) G: especially with the theme I use,
(15) G: is to teach them who they are up to this point in life.

(16) I: So, in that sense, what is the students' role in your classroom?

(17) G: Well, if my role is that of den mother/life coach/therapist/sometimes exorcist—
(18) G: Then their point is to keep me on my toes.
(19) G: If I don't feel like I'm constantly chasing after something,
(20) G: then they're not doing anything.

In this excerpt, George identifies himself as a savior—a savior from a broken education system. His job, then, is to save his students from an educational career that focuses too much on testing and help them develop identities and/or individuality by taking his first year writing course. The savior storyline assumes that not only is something wrong with the American education system, but that he (as the savior) has a lot of power in his classroom. Taking a cynical stance, George implies in lines 6-8 that something is wrong with the way they have been taught, and he has the power to undo that teaching in a mere semester, which discounts their prior thirteen years of formal education. He feels his duty, then, is to teach them how to think for themselves and to "teach them who they are up to this point in life" (line 15). He believes he has the power to do this through his job by focusing on this in his classroom.

George deflects some of this power, though, through the social force of his statements in lines 8-11 when he uses "we" instead of talking about himself individually. The change from first person to a collective "we" (as first year writing instructors) assumes that other FYW instructors feel the same way as he does, and it also frames FYW instructors as working against K-12 educators rather than working with them. The values of the FYW program in which he works include critical thinking and reflection (lines 9-10), and the flexibility in the curriculum allows him to develop a theme dependent on the students' personal reflection.

Although he uses the collective term "we," he then shifts in lines 13-15 to distinguishing his class from classes within the FYW program. His emphasis on "my class" (line 13; George's emphasis) brings the savior identity back to the forefront because in his class, he is "teach[ing] them who they are up to this point in life" (line 15). In this statement, he emphasizes his role as a transformative teacher (or as a savior) in that his class has the additional benefit of going beyond the writing curriculum set forth by the program and working with student identity.

The issue of power in this excerpt helps expose a contradiction in how George positions himself in his classroom and how his students are positioned. In line 17, he has several identities simultaneously: the life coach, the therapist, etc. Each of these identities helps perpetuate the savior storyline because those professions are helping professions that provide guidance to others, and these identities also give him a lot of power through their connotations. In lines 18-20, George states that his students' role is to challenge him. In lines 17-18, he defines his students' role by creating an oppositional stance to them (through the use of an if/then statement). He does not explain how

students are supposed to challenge him, but his statement assumes that he is receptive to hearing their voices. This again shows a contradiction because the savior storyline presumes a more passive response from students. *He* does the helping/saving. In this sense, George is replicating the system he criticizes. However, what he is teaching them to do (think for themselves, challenge him and the education system) is meant to empower them. As Susan Miller (1991) articulates:

> It is an employment that in the majority of its individual cases is both demeaned by its continuing ad hoc relation to status, security, and financial rewards, yet given overwhelming authority by students, institutions, and the public, who expect even the most inexperienced composition teacher to criticize and 'correct' them in settings entirely removed from the academy. The perduring image of the composition teacher is of a figure at once powerless and sharply authoritarian, occupying the transgressive, low-status site from which language may be arbitrated. (p. 139)

It seems, then, that if students are positioned as capable of learning, thinking, and constructing their identities, it should happen in a controlled environment under George's watch in this storyline. In terms of agency negotiation, the students' agency is limited by the way they are being positioned by George. Also, based on his statements in this excerpt, George's agency is significantly more present/active than the students' agency. The students have gone through the education system that has made them complacent and not capable of critical thinking or reflection, which is what George will teach them to do in his classes. This affects their agency because they are not able to demonstrate it without the help of George or other FYW instructors; in other words, students can negotiate but only minimally and in certain manufactured writing situations like with the writing prompts George has developed for his course. Not only does this privilege the value of first year writing in the students' college experience, but it also overemphasizes

the function of FYW within the university as compared to other disciplines and other instructors within the university; it is in *his* class where they will learn to think.

The storyline of FYW teacher as savior appears in other discussions with George. In the following excerpt, George discusses the difference between himself and other general education teachers, as well as how students work on discovering their identities and writing about themselves in his course:

(1) G: I'm the only teacher most of them have who even recognizes their face.
(2) G: I'm not even talking about the name recognition level yet.
(3) G: They realize that ok,
(4) G: he knows who we are, he recognizes us,
(5) G: even when we're not in the classroom.
(6) G: And he's the only one I've got who's a teacher who knows what I look like,
(7) G: much less knows my name.
(8) G: I'm not some ID on a piece of paper
(9) G: or a signal from a clicker,
(10) G: or some code on ((our course management system)).
(11) G: He knows me, so, yeah, it's a little bit of teacher,
(12) G: it's a little bit of therapist,
(13) G: it's a little bit of den mother,
(14) G: and a little bit of drill sergeant at times.
(15) G: I have been called the "Anti-Christ of the English department."
(16) G: I have been called "Dr. Phil of first year writing,'
(17) G: which I think is terrible because I don't have his money.
(18) G: I wouldn't mind being him if I had his money.
(19) G: But, I think that it is a little bit of all of those things,
(20) G: and that we find ways to incorporate it sometimes into the writing,
(21) G: sometimes we find ways for them to vent in a prompt,
(22) G: sometimes we look at it as a problem/solution piece.
(23) G: Sometimes we look at how can we explore where your lack of time management skills comes in—
(24) G: is this something that's you,
(25) G: something that your family has fostered,
(26) G: something that your friends are producing in you now,
(27) G: and then let's talk about the language of it,
(28) G: and maybe even build <u>that</u> into a cultural piece for them,
(29) G: and fit it in the new curriculum.
(30) G: But, we can't forget that these are kids. […]

In this excerpt, George disassociates himself from other general education instructors by claiming that those instructors do not care who their students are, and he does. These students have no identity (and George is the one who helps them discover/articulate their identities through writing). These other instructors are the agents of the institution whose focus is efficiency—teach the students quickly and efficiently to generate tuition dollars and yet retain them. This distinction reflects the dichotomy between teaching and professing as outlined by Shari Stenberg (2005), where the institutional employment categories reflect particular job functions (albeit narrowly). The professors do the research while the instructors do the teaching and there are sociopolitical implications within the university structure due to this dichotomy (Stenberg, 2005). George's identity as the savior (den mother, therapist, life coach, etc.) also opposes a very clinical/skeptical view of the institution. He uses the term "teacher" in line 1 to describe his job, which indicates a value judgment about his job.

This storyline positions the institution as an entity that does not care about individual students but cares more about the collective group of students; higher education revolves around numbers, not people. This affects agency negotiation because in this storyline, the absence of identity offers no room for students to negotiate. They are compared to inanimate objects (identification numbers, clickers, and codes in the course management system) (lines 8-10) rather than living, thinking, and contributing members of a campus community. In George's class, students are more than that, and he *knows* them (lines 4, 11; my emphasis). These students are still objectified, though, because he groups them together as "kids" (line 30).

George, in his position as a lecturer, demonstrates his agency in this example because he gets to know each individual student, and they know him. The act of recognizing faces—which George can do but other general education instructors might not do—serves two functions: it brings back some individuality and embodiment to the students, but also reiterates the savoir/helper storyline that George adopts. This ability to recognize each individual student in his classes (and for the students to recognize him) connects to his identities as teacher, therapist, den mother, and drill sergeant (lines 11-14). An interesting change occurs, though, when George mentions drill sergeant in line 14, because that label presents a departure from the other labels he gives himself and through that characterization he assumes a more authoritative stance in some classroom situations; the drill sergeant takes a tough stance versus his or her subordinates. George also recognizes that he is positioned by others within his program—as the "Anti-Christ in the English department" (line 15) and the "Dr. Phil of first year writing" (line 16). These two characterizations have very different connotations, though. Certainly the Dr. Phil reference is more in line with how George sees his role as a teacher/helper/savior. The Anti-Christ reference could relate to how he feels his colleagues viewed him before the first year writing program at Southeast State separated from the English department. He also does not note who was identifying him as these labels, or why.

Lastly, in this excerpt George shows how the FYW curriculum allows for him to incorporate writing activities that help students reflect and think about their identities. In lines 20-30, George makes several statements about the curriculum and about the social nature of being, learning, and writing. The curriculum allows ways for students to bring their personalities and voice into their writing, by "vent[ing] in a prompt" (line 21), or

understanding how they act as college students (line 23). He then shifts to talking more about the social nature of learning by indicating different parties (family and friends) who might influence students' habits (lines 25-26), as well as how talking about language and culture affect learning and writing (lines 27-29). The way he frames this statement, though, still assumes a more passive approach by the students—family and friends influence them rather than it be a reciprocal process. His class invites some flexibility and adaptation of the curriculum to individual students if the situations allow. The use of "sometimes" (lines 21-23) address George's attitude towards working within the constraint of the course curriculum.

As part of the curriculum, all of the activities George describes above allow him to further his mission to help save his students by allowing them to discover who they are. This would help students recognize the agency they have through these writing activities, but the social force of the last statement, "But, we can't forget these are kids" (line 30), disrupts that more egalitarian view in the classroom. Rather than being considered equals, or co-creators, the power dynamic still affords George more control and power in the classroom situation. The connotation of the word "kids" could mean inexperience or lack of knowledge, or could refer to the fact that most of the students are traditional-age college students of roughly eighteen years old as compared to him. It is George's job, then, to help them prepare to become adults as they go through their college educations. So, although the university treats them as having no identity, George views his students as having an identity, but one that is not complete or necessarily powerful. This perpetuates the savior/helper storyline because that assumes that the "kids" need to be helped rather than them being capable of helping themselves.

George identifies as someone who is capable of helping others, and it brings him personal satisfaction to do so. His metaphors for teachers indicate that if a teacher is someone who helps, then the rights and duties of a writing instructor are to find ways for students to analyze and reflect on their own experiences and histories in order to develop a better understanding of themselves through writing. This should be done in conjunction with the writing curriculum as outlined by the writing program. Although the savior/helper storyline does denote a particular amount of collaboration and/or camaraderie between teachers and students, it does not necessarily resolve how the teacher faces larger institutional constraints such as from the university at large, nor, in George's case, does it resolve his resentment towards the education system as a whole. Thus, George presents an alternate storyline to represent his attitude toward the institution/education system.

5.3. An Alternate Storyline: FYW Instructor as "Glitch in the Machine"

In this excerpt, George discusses why some students have buy in with the curriculum and with college in general, whereas other students have a more difficult time acclimating to both college and college-level writing courses. George discusses his personality and teaching philosophy as well as expresses his views on how the K-12 education system has affected the students he teaches, and presents an alternate to the helper/savior storyline as he positions himself in relationship to the education system he works within yet actively resists. This storyline has a distinctly Foucauldian influence because George describes the education system as a machine and at some level he recognizes how he acts as a docile body within this system, but yet he knows he is still a

participant. When asked about students' preparedness for class and willingness to work within the first year writing curriculum, George answered:

(2) G: I don't know.
(3) G: The closest that I could guess, and this is a guess

(4) G: is that they are products of the machine,
(5) G: the education machine that their entire academic life has just been pushing them through the classes,
(6) G: no real connection with anyone up to whatever point,
(7) G: and then finally they shut down.
(8) G: They continue on through the machine
(9) G: but now they are a machine themselves,
(10) G: and they stay that way.
(11) G: And a lot of those are the ones who are here because they have to be somewhere.

(12) I: How much are you a part of a machine?
(13) I: Or, are you part of a machine?

(14) G: Well, I'm part of a machine in that our institution is a machine.
(15) G: We are ((a)) corporate machine which makes me queasy to even say. Ugh.

(16) G: But if I'm part of the machine
(17) G: I hope that I am at least a ghost in the machine
(18) G: who sometimes derails it a bit,
(19) G: or shakes it up or points out: 'We need to do some maintenance.'
(20) G: Or, just for whatever reason, you know, sometimes the machine has a glitch.
(21) G: I'm ok with being a glitch,
(22) G: as long as I get the results.

(23) I: […] would you say that's your personality in general
(24) I: or would you say that that's part of your job, to be a glitch?

(25) G: I think it's become part of my job, that—
(26) G: the first couple of times I taught it was strictly expectations by the book
(27) G: and I realized ok, one, this is not my personality.
(28) G: Two, I'm not happy with this,
(29) G: the students aren't happy with this—we're feeding off of that.
(30) G: And three, I'm not getting the results.
(31) G: I'm getting blah—

(32) G: so so work.
(33) G: The classes are blah, so so discussions and lectures.
(34) G: Why can't I be me with this?
(35) G: Which is a little nuts, a little weird, sometimes a lot weird.

(36) G: And definitely non-traditional.
(37) G: At least in what I project.
(38) G: Now, again, I can take the language apart for you
(39) G: and point out all the pieces and so on,
(40) G: we can do that,
(41) G: but we're in a 1000 level class with this
(42) G: so what can I show them that maybe they haven't seen before that's gonna help them?
(43) G: And, if it helps them beyond their academic life,
(44) G: it gets them to another point in who they are as people,
(45) G: that's a bonus.
(46) G: Sometimes it's a class with a service learning project,
(47) G: sometimes it's a class with—like what we're doing is an introspective model.
(48) G: The whole class, the whole ((first course in sequence)) class for me is reflection.

The "glitch in the machine" storyline is reminiscent of Emily's rebel storyline in that they both feel as it is part of their identity to resist the commonsense or taken for granted notions of the American education system. Both express this rebelliousness as a personality trait and recognize how and when rebelliousness is pertinent and warranted within their work environment. Of course, the rebellion is limited to the classroom practices for the most part, either due to institutional, programmatic, and/or curricular constraints. In this temporary stop (that is a first year writing course), George can act as the glitch to disrupt students' thinking. This expresses a particular attitude towards the "machine," but a recognition that the machine might be too powerful as a force for him to combat (and he admits some level of complicity in the system). For Emily and George, this rebel attitude could be a reflection of how they feel limited by their positions (Emily discusses this more so than George).

The storyline of the institution/educational system as a machine begins in line 4, when George discusses how students are manufactured to be "products of the machine." The education system acts as a conveyor belt or assembly line, passing them through

elementary and secondary school until they are deemed college ready when they pass the tests and graduate. Sir Ken Robinson's (2010) speech "Changing Education Paradigms" outlines this very concept that George discusses here (http://youtu.be/zDZFcDGpL4U). The machine does not care about individuality, but conformity. There is little room for creativity or innovation (Robinson, 2010). According to George, students do not learn to be individuals in formalized education and as a result, they are "…now a machine themselves, and they stay that way" (lines 5-7, 9-10). In line 11, George states that this process could contribute to the fact that some students have buy in for the first year writing curriculum and some do not because they are not ready for college or do not have the same writing values as he does.

When asked if he is a part of the machine, George is not comfortable with that association. He does this by first stating he is part of the machine, but then qualifies that response. In lines 14-15, he states that he is a part of the machine because he is employed in education—he is a de facto representative of something he resists. He then qualifies his statement by saying "*if* I'm part…" (line 16; my emphasis); the social force of this statement signals his discomfort with that label because the things he values as a college instructor differ than the values of the institution.

To disassociate himself from this uncomfortable label, George uses two metaphors to describe his position within the education system: a ghost and a glitch in the machine (lines 17, 20-22). George will accept his position as the glitch "as long as [he] gets results" (line 22). The glitch is tied to the operation of the machine, but a ghost does not necessarily have to be part of it. In this sense, being a ghost or a glitch allows him to retain power and agency because they disrupt how the machine operates. He then gives

an example of being a glitch by describing how earlier in his career he had to change the way he was teaching when he was following the curriculum rather than incorporating his personality and teaching philosophy into the course he was teaching (lines 25-33). Following the curriculum, going along with the "machine" was not yielding great work; neither the students nor George were happy with following the status quo.

George believes that his job is to disrupt and challenge rather than comply with the curriculum word for word in order for the ideal teaching and learning situation to occur. In a classroom setting, it is their right and duty, then, to subvert the machine. George defines good work, then, as writing that has personality, goes beyond the status quo and is non-conformist. He teaches them, thorough reflection, how to be "glitches" in the machine too. So in essence he is relying on a part of a process-based curriculum to subvert other aspects of writing that outside constituents might find more valuable (teaching students how to produce "good writing"). Students, in turn, are happier (line 29) and produce better work (line 30).

Identifying as a "glitch" in this storyline allows George to express his frustrations about the education system as well as delineate what he values in student writing. He acknowledges that some students will be amenable to these values while others will not, but George believes that within the context of his classroom, he can prove that he is a glitch. How effective is that strategy, though? George cannot be so disruptive that his job is in jeopardy (he is a non-tenure track lecturer on a contract), but beyond the confines of his classroom, what effect does the glitch have on the larger system? While there are no clear answers to these questions, what this storyline does show are conflicted views George has about the rights and duties of being a college writing teacher. George

wants the freedom in his classroom to teach the way he wants, but at the same time his concern with transferability shows that his agency is affected by institutional values and jargon.

The two identities that George constructs in the storylines above—FYW instructor as the helper/savior and FYW instructor as a glitch—are not the only metaphors that George uses in his interviews, but these two very different storylines demonstrate the tension between George's teaching philosophy and personality, and his job within a system he feels has structural issues. The tension is demonstrated through different constraints on his classroom practices. For example, students' prior educational history becomes a constraint to George's mission to "teach them to how to think." Also, in his job as a first year writing teacher, he is also constrained because he only teaches introductory courses (although he has taught higher level courses in the past). He is unable to see, then, the effects of his classroom practices on other courses in the students' academic career. So he is left to focus on what he can control within his classroom: working within the curriculum but adding his own reflective approach to it.

5.4. Consumer Discourse in First Year Writing: Parallel Storylines of Learning in a Classroom Scene

In comparison to the other participants, Savannah's classroom has more sustained interaction/discussion amongst the students than the other participants' classrooms. Savannah positions herself as someone who facilitates discussion and a problem posing view of learning in discussing her teaching philosophy. Several of the readings and activities students completed during the semester were designed to ask students to challenge their commonsense notions of the role of school in their lives and their identities within school and school discourse.

At one point, Savannah discussed an active resistance to the conception of what a classroom "should" look like, and how students are socialized into school. In the following excerpt, Savannah recalled a particular class in which she asked students to think about their roles (and her role) in the classroom. The discussion, in which she tried to challenge conventional and linear images of teaching, was disrupted by a student who challenged *her* philosophy of teaching:

(1) S: Yesterday we started talking about the classroom as a discourse community
(2) S: and I pulled up, pictures of a classroom on Facebook—
(3) S: not Facebook, Google.

(4) S: So I just typed in 'classroom'
(5) S: and all of the pictures are they're in lines.
(6) S: There's nothing on the walls,
(7) S: there's a single clock,
(8) S: the old teacher standing in front,
(9) S: and so they wrote about what these people believe from these pictures.
(10) S: And we said, 'Where does that come from?
(11) S: What does that mean?
(12) S: How does that work?
(13) S: Um, what are the roles of the people?'
(14) S: And then I said, 'Well, let's look at this classroom? How does that work?'
(15) S: We talked through that,
(16) S: and I had one student who kept saying,
(17) S: 'Well, I'm paying to listen to <u>you</u>.
(18) S: I don't care what other people think.
(19) S: I'm not learning from them,
(20) S: I'm learning from <u>you</u>.'
(21) S: And I think that's just—interesting.
(22) S: I want to play more with that.
(23) S: It didn't—I didn't have time to play with it at that moment,
(24) S: but I do want to bring it up again and say,
(25) S: 'So who are we learning from in here?
(26) S: Are you learning from me?
(27) S: Are you learning from your classmates?'
(28) S: Because I don't even know.
(29) S: I feel like it just gets kind of jumbled.
(30) S: I mean, I'm <u>sort of</u> the ringleader of this
(31) S: because I decide the assignments
(32) S: and I decide the activities,
(33) S: but at the same time they direct where the conversation goes

(34) S: and what they want to learn within that.

In choosing the activity for class, Savannah creates a storyline that projects a particular view of teaching and learning which she actively resists. The storyline is that in these Google images, teachers and students are disassociated from the "real learning," or at least these images project an antiquated version of learning. Using these images as an example of a type of teacher, Savannah reinforces the storyline that the desks in rows with the clock on the wall denotes a particular view that learning is a commodity, that a student should go to class, get the information from a teacher efficiently/in a timely manner, and leave. This supports Savannah's storyline that the learning that happens in her classroom is different than what the learning is like in the images, and she also claims the identity that she is not one of those teachers represented in those images. A "real" writing class, to Savannah, focuses on a process/post-process approach where the desk are not in rows and teachers do not stand at the front of the classroom and lecture.

However, when she recalls her student disrupting these notions, this challenges her identity. When the student says "I'm paying to listen to you," etc. (lines 17-20), these statements stand in opposition to the storyline and identity that Savannah constructs for herself. Her recollection of this conversation shows she is thinking about the identities that are constructed for her (by her students) and how those do not necessarily coincide with the identity she believes she has. In this oppositional storyline, the value of the course is the exchange of information (one-directional) from the teacher to the student for tuition money. This student does not buy into the community atmosphere that Savannah emphasizes in her class.

This contradiction forces Savannah to reassess her identities in her classroom. When she asks, "So who are we learning from in here?" (line 25), she identifies herself as a community member rather than as the expert in the classroom. When the power "gets kind of jumbled" (line 29) the power is displaced and disrupts the narrative that the teacher is "all knowing." Savannah hedges her stance in line 30 when she says she is "sort of the ringleader of this," implying that although she is recognized as the teacher figure, she is not completely comfortable with all that implies. The students' agency is demonstrated in their responses to the questions asked (by other students and by Savannah). The next few lines (lines 31-34) show the "I" statements versus the "they" statements are balanced, which shows she recognizes both her agency and theirs within her classroom. Savannah continues to discuss this particular moment in class:

(53) S: So we were kind of playing with that and kind of talking more about that whole—
(54) S: I get this power thing.
(55) S: And it was in that conversation that he brought it up,
(56) S: and so he was like,
(57) S: 'Well, you know, teachers have a particular knowledge.
(58) S: That's why they're the teacher.
(59) S: If I was smarter than you, I'd be teaching the class.'
(60) S: And so he said, 'I want to learn from <u>you</u>.
(61) S: I'm paying <u>you</u>—
(62) S: I'm paying for you—to be able to teach me.
(63) S: I'm not paying everybody else.'

The above section emphasizes the consumer discourse, or at least a conversation about expertise, because in this excerpt, the teacher's job is to relay his or her expertise to the individual student (line 57, 61-63). The teacher has expertise the students do not have, and because that expertise is "particular" (line 57) they have a certain commodity for which students are paying. If the student possessed the knowledge, then he or she could be repositioned as the teacher, or as someone who has power (line 59). Johanna Hartelius

(2011) states in *The Rhetoric of Expertise*, "Expertise is not simply about one person's skills being different from another's. It is also grounded in a fierce struggle over ownership and legitimacy. To be an expert is to claim a piece of the world, to define yourself in relation to certain insights into human experience….To be an expert, in short, is to rhetorically gain sanctioned rights to a specific topic or mode of knowledge" (p. 1). The notion of expertise troubles Savannah because she wants to believe the power dynamic in her classroom allows everyone to claim writing expertise and she shows her discomfort in her use of hedging and in claiming the "ringleader" identity.

Savannah's discussion of teacher identities reveals the powerful role history plays in understanding the purpose of school. In the following excerpt, Savannah questions where traditional notions of teaching and learning originate:

(64) S: I don't know how people originally decided that students don't know anything,
(65) S: and they can't contribute,
(66) S: but I think it's just this history of the teacher has all the knowledge
(67) S: and you're going to listen to him or her,
(68) S: and then you're going to be able to progress to the next thing
(69) S: and you're going to listen to that teacher until you're finally smart enough to be able to go out into the world.

The statement here constructs a linear storyline of progress through school; students participate in Friere's (1970/2000) "banking model," where they are deemed worthy (by passing a test or earning a certain grade) to move to the next step in the progression. It is the students' duty to listen to the teacher in this type of model if they want to get ahead.

Savannah actively resists this discourse, though, in both the way she conceptualizes her teaching philosophy, but also in the way she frames the course for her students. In turn, she is complicit in a co-produced storyline that what happens in her first year writing course is different than other first year courses, but she cannot escape

fully the damage the system has done in how she thinks some of her students position her (as the all-knowing authority or expert). When asked about how students view their first year writing courses, Savannah replied:

(74) S: I think—and a lot of students keep saying that in these conversations,
(75) S: and have said it previous to that,
(76) S: you know, 'Your class is so different.
(77) S: None of my other classes are like this, and I don't do this,'
(78) S: and they'd bring up their engineering classes.
(79) S: 'We listen to the teacher. Math classes, we listen to the teacher.'
(80) S: So I think they're experiencing a lot of tension that, ok,
(81) S: well this is different than high school
(82) S: but then even when I get here
(83) S: it's not just like it's suddenly every class is, ok, now we can do thinking,
(84) S: now I want to hear your voice.
(85) S: It's just one or two classrooms where they are doing that,
(86) S: and then the rest of it is just I'm going to bestow my knowledge on you.

So, in this case, not only is first year writing different from high school courses, but it is also different than other college courses (such as how math and writing have different goals). Students have to negotiate not only a new learning environment in going to college (including various types of teacher personalities, classroom operations, and content), but also negotiate academic discourse in a place (FYW) that is positioned in particular ways depending on what constituents are involved. In other words, if FYW is viewed as a service department, its location is on the border of "real academic work." Some students feel that this space is transformative and liberating, but the space is operating in a very tenuous position at the institutional level, so how transformative can it be? The first year writing teachers have to negotiate their own agency in classrooms with students of diverse attitudes towards writing, and also in their employment positions at the university. In this example, Savannah's intention of understanding her position in the

traditional classroom exposed a resistance to the classroom community she intended to facilitate.

5.5. The Right to Improvisation

Thus far, rights and duties of the teacher have been discussed in relationship to the larger educational system and the curriculum. In this excerpt, teacher attitudes towards classroom practices will be examined in relationship to rights and duties. Bethany, a lecturer in Southeast State's first year writing program, reveals here what she feels her rights and duties are in the "ensemble classroom" or the active classroom. In doing so, she adopts the storyline of the collaborative teacher. She states:

(1) B: I really try to foster an approach in the classroom
(2) B: and one of the things I have been researching and thinking about lately
(3) B: is the idea of—I've been looking at the idea of improv in the classroom,
(4) B: and one of the major ideas of improv in the classroom
(5) B: is the idea of ensemble,
(6) B: and that we're all part of an ensemble working together to construct meaning
(7) B: out of the moments that we have in the classroom,
(8) B: through the knowledge we bring,
(9) B: and so I think my teaching philosophy kind of—kind of reflects that,
(10) B: and I want to have my students see themselves as equal participants in the classroom,
(11) B: and so I try to make them aware of the power they have within the classroom
(12) B: and make them aware that I want them to feel invested in the course
(13) B: and that what they're doing should be something they feel invested in,
(14) B: because they do have an investment other than just coming to class and getting a grade,
(15) B: and so I want them to feel a part of the ensemble.
(16) B: I want them to see me as part of the ensemble,
(17) B: not just like a person who is on the outside
(18) B: kind of watching them and seeing what they're doing
(19) B: but to see me as a writer, as a teacher, as also a person
(20) B: who is thinking through these ideas with them,
(21) B: and then so I've worked to kind of construct an environment
(22) B: that reflects that philosophy
(23) B: and that they understand that we are all working together
(24) B: to kind of make all of these things happen.

Bethany describes her dialogic classroom by incorporating terminology from the discipline of theater (ensemble and improvisation). These ideas translate into her classroom practices through honoring students' histories and prior experiences (line 8), and collaboration (line 6). Bethany, along with her students, are all ensemble members, so in terms of agency, she wants the agency to be distributed evenly and she wants to be seen as part of that ensemble rather than an authoritative teacher. The focus is on the whole (classroom) rather than each of the parts (students and the teacher). In the "ensemble classroom," Bethany feels students can demonstrate their agency (line 11-14) by thinking about it in their classroom activities. Her repetition of the word "investment" (lines 12, 13, 14) assumes that students feel welcomed and encouraged to become part of the ensemble, and that through their participation they will get a return on their investment: a sense of connection to their classmates, to the discipline, and to learning in general.

In her classroom, Bethany hopes her students acknowledge her desire to be seen as part of the ensemble rather than as another identity. She does not want to be seen as a gatekeeper or regulator of student learning (line 17), but "as a writer, as a teacher, as also a person" (line 19). Although these three identities have different connotations and relationships to the classroom, she wants to be seen as having all three identities simultaneously, and facilitating the classroom as ensemble approach helps her enact these three identities. In the ensemble classroom, which privileges a social constructivist viewpoint (line 6), Bethany feels her duty is to foster community and collaboration along with her students (lines 20-24). Incorporating theater techniques like improvisation in

her classroom helps foster this community. When asked about what the benefits of improv are in the writing classroom, Bethany replied:

(26) B: Well I have a long background in musical theater,
(27) B: but, I <u>really</u> think that a lot of what we do
(28) B: and a lot of what happens in a writing classroom,
(29) B: we spend a lot of time revising,
(30) B: we spend a lot of time talking about our writing,
(31) B: but we also kind of embody these practices that we've taken on over the years
(32) B: that we've kind of understood how we write
(33) B: and think about those things
(34) B: and so I use the improv as a way to kind of illustrate for the class
(35) B: ideas we want to connect to writing or to classroom practice.
(36) B: In terms of some of the things we've looked at
(37) B: are students' responses to each other in class,
(38) B: how classroom conversation should go
(39) B: so it always doesn't come back to me
(40) B: but they're connecting ideas to each other
(41) B: and kind of making them physically embody that idea helps them to see
(42) B: —see that when that embodiment isn't there,
(43) B: when they're actually just having discussion.

Bethany believes her prior experience in theater gives her the right to incorporate these techniques in the writing classroom, and because of her personal philosophy she sees the connection between techniques/strategies used in theater to techniques/strategies used in writing studies, such as revision and peer collaboration (lines 29-30). The most significant idea that connects theater to writing for Bethany is the idea of embodiment. Improvisation in the classroom, including movement, games, and practices, seems a logical connection between theater and writing. Through improvisation, students can practice concepts discussed dealing with writing, and this discussion can be verbal and/or embodied (lines 36-43).

Bethany's explanation of the ensemble classroom reflects how she wants to be seen by her students—as someone who is an equal. This stance is complicated by the

fact that she is the teacher of record for this class, so although she wants to be seen in that particular way, her power is unequal to that of her students. She uses the ensemble to mask the power differential that actually exists between herself and her students. Her resistance to acknowledge this teacher identity will be discussed in the following chapter.

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These teachers believe that their duty in teaching writing is to go beyond the content of the curriculum and teach students (both directly and indirectly) of power inequities in the education system. These power inequities affect them and therefore by extension they are affecting their students too. Their means of expressing their resistance to and/or distaste of the education system and privileging what they see as their own unique position within the university community is to isolate themselves from high school writing teachers and other university general education teachers. In terms of rights, these teachers claim that first year writing has direct benefits to the students, and, for George in particular, it is his right to save his students through his course. These benefits (according to these participants) extend beyond the writing classroom and affect students' holistic wellbeing, but whether or not their courses have the actual desired effects is debatable. However, their emphasis on the importance of first year writing does perpetuate the storylines and identities they adopt.

CHAPTER 6: IDENTITIES (DEVISED AND REVISED)

Identities are arguably the most complicated and fluid dimension of the positioning diamond. Taking a snapshot of an identity (or identities) at work in a particular moment affects the other dimensions of the diamond, just as the other dimensions affect, relate to, and/or rely on the identities to support them. The social aspect of identities is of particular interest here because, as will be discussed, people's histories and experiences with teachers, as well as media and social influences, affect how students perceive their teachers and how teachers define themselves in relationship to those perceptions. In this chapter, the participants articulate who and what has affected the role they play as teacher and the inconsistencies in some of those perceptions. Some participants, particularly Bethany, expose a struggle with their identities in the classroom and feel conflicted about how they demonstrate their agency in the classroom.

What can be learned from the identity discussions that follow is that some of the participants feel a lot of social pressure to fit into a fixed identity of "teacher" for various reasons and that pressure limits what they feel they can accomplish in the writing classroom. When they intentionally try to disrupt the identity placed on them by students or others, they feel uncomfortable because of the response they perceive their students to have.

Theme 1: Who Teachers Think They Are

6.1. When Teacher Metaphors Reveal Conflicted Teacher Identities

There are several instances, some of which have already been discussed, where the participants use metaphors to describe their position or an attitude towards their jobs or circumstances. As Lakoff and Johnson (1980) state:

> Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. (p. 3)

The use of metaphor, then, becomes an integral part of language analysis because it helps identify the "conceptual system" with which the participants interact and in terms of positioning theory the metaphors help produce the storyline. Pinnegar, et al.'s (2001) analysis of metaphor in preservice teachers' application materials demonstrate that focusing on the varied and sometimes conflicting metaphors does provide a useful tool in understanding the worldviews of people in a particular context. Pinnegar, et al.'s study does not account directly for the identities branch of the positioning diamond and the participants were preservice teachers rather than practicing teachers, but their study does provide useful background to this study because they show the connections between metaphors and storylines.

In the following example, Savannah was asked to define her role in the classroom, and her use of multiple metaphors to discuss this role indicates an uncertainty, or at least a reluctance, to identify her role in one static way. Her response reveals interesting tensions in how she wants her classroom to operate, and the difficulty she has with asserting power and authority as the teacher in her classroom. The following excerpt

reveals three metaphors that Savannah uses to describe aspects of her job: coach, facilitator/co-facilitator, and judge. While these three metaphors/identities reveal different aspects of her job, she simultaneously espouses these identities within the storyline of her composition classroom. In doing so, she positions students in two conflicting ways—as in control of their education, but also needing her help to acclimate to college-level work. Although she believes her classroom to be an egalitarian environment, Savannah knows it is no utopia. Her job depends on an imbalance of power, and she notes the struggle with this power imbalance at different points in this excerpt.

By using the first metaphor, teacher/coach, Savannah discusses her role in helping shape students' academic discourse:

(3) S: One thing, especially working with freshman,
(4) S: I feel like I am partially responsible for teaching them the student discourse,
(5) S: and what that needs to look like.
(6) S: So I don't know if ((that is)) the coach role I guess,
(7) S: and helping them out with that,
(8) S: you know, in the future,
(9) S: although I may not expect something.
(10) S: So, it's kind of ok with me if a student emails me
(11) S: and just has the question instead of a greeting and a salutation—

(12) S: and I'll respond to them and say,
(13) S: 'In the future, make sure to include these things
(14) S: because some teachers won't even read your email if you don't address it that way.'
(15) S: So I feel like part of my responsibility is helping them get into this world.

The coach role denotes a helping/guiding role but someone who can also teach his or her players the "rules of the game" in academic culture and introduce discourse conventions through the act of writing in this particular genre (the academic email). Savannah adopts this stance by giving an example of the way she coaches her students in

proper email etiquette between students and professors although she assumes other instructors/professors have a certain attitude and expectation of email etiquette. This is an example of the "student discourse" she discusses in line 4, and is part of her duty as the teacher/coach to correct when a student does not provide a proper introduction to his or her email to Savannah. However, the statement "kind of ok" in line 10 indicates that she is not entirely comfortable with the coach metaphor in that particular example. Savannah struggles with her authority as the coach and demonstrates this struggle through hedging. Her emphasis on being "partially responsible" (lines 4, 15) indicates she feels a shared responsibility among other college instructors (whether or not other college instructors would feel that shared responsibility) to teach student discourse (writing) and academic discourse which includes disciplinary subject matter but also the "D"iscourse (Gee, 2011) of higher education. In this particular example, an email from a student to a professor would include writing, but is teaching/coaching students to write in this particular genre (and correcting them when they do not follow the conventions of this genre) in Savannah's job description? If Savannah was a teacher in another discipline, such as biology or business, would she still feel the same obligation? Or, should all college level teachers share in the responsibility in teaching writing?

Savannah also identifies herself as unlike other instructors/professors by insinuating that these other teachers are more concerned about email etiquette and formalities and would not respond to a student email if these formalities were missing. Since she does not necessarily mind if they do not use these formalities in email communication with her, does this undermine her authority in her classroom? Her response to students when they send her an email without a certain level of formality (at

least in the first email) is to provide feedback and warn them about other professors (lines 13-14). When Savannah states in line 15 that "I feel like part of my responsibility is helping them get into this world," this assumes that the students are not a part of that world and need to be indoctrinated into it and learn the discourse. This statement also assumes she is an insider in the academic world (and she arguably is an outsider given her adjunct faculty status) and she has the power to regulate their knowledge. In this storyline, students are in need of coaching and have less power in this storyline because they do not know the academic discourse that she does, and therefore she has more power and agency in that scenario.

The next metaphor Savannah invokes (the teacher as facilitator) could be seen as similar to that of a coach, but Savannah demonstrates her agency in a more direct and impactful way on writing instruction:

(16) S: As far as the stuff in my curriculum […]
(17) S: well, part of it is a facilitator.
(18) S: I want to help them realize what questions they have.
(19) S: […] I know students have questions
(20) S: and they have been socialized into not asking them.
(21) S: So I want to be able to create a space where they can start asking those questions.

(22) S: So, I guess I'm both a model and a facilitator for that.

(23) I: Where does that socialization come from—
(24) I: that they can't ask questions.
(25) I: Where do you think it comes from?

(26) S: I would say probably testing.
(27) S: And when I've talked to students about that,
(28) S: a lot of them said, 'Well in high school I wasn't allowed to ask a question and not have those answers.'
(29) S: I think a lot of it does come from having to constantly answer a question for a test,
(30) S: and on a test it's not ok to ask a question.

Much like the coach, the facilitator helps guide the students and assumes that the students are lacking in some way (because they do not even know the questions they have) (line 18). But, in using the facilitator metaphor, Savannah is more critical of the students' prior education because she assumes that students have not been able to ask questions if they had them, or that prior education did not value asking questions in the process of learning. Her views on standardized testing become very clear and she feels the need to rebel against that particular facet of the educational system by using her classroom as a place and means to rebel.

Whereas the coach metaphor is in reference to the discourse beyond the classroom, within the classroom, the facilitator metaphor is more apt. The social force of the two particular words she emphasizes, "know" (line 19) and "can" (line 21) show that she has a certain amount of power in the classroom because, due to their prior education that she denigrates, she can anticipate that they will have questions. She also signifies her dissatisfaction with the K-12 system because if she feels that students do not have the ability to ask questions or take charge of their learning, by the time they arrive at college they must be ready to do so. Her classroom, then, becomes a place where students should feel comfortable asking questions as well as take a more direct and active role in their learning.

When asked to expand on her point that students are not able to become more participatory in their own education because of the way the system is set up, she blames the standardized testing that students consistently take throughout their K-12 education (line 26). Rather than asking questions, having the answers is more valued in this system (lines 29-30). The teachers perpetuate this thinking when they do not permit them to ask

questions (line 28). This positions high school teachers as agents of the test. Since the tests cannot answer questions, neither can the teachers. Students, then, have to have the knowledge already instead of inquiring or discovering it. Although testing becomes a source of blame for Savannah, she makes a larger statement about the type of students she teaches in her classroom—that the education system has consistently diminished student agency.

When asked about the students' role in her classroom, Savannah continues to disassociate herself from the type of teaching/learning that she describes in lines 26-30 by showing more of the students' role in her classroom and by criticizing the Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) model of teaching:

(34) S: (12) in a way they are co-facilitators as well,
(35) S: since I'm expecting them to pick up those questions
(36) S: and to really pick up the discussion.
(37) S: I don't really want to have to—I mean I throw questions out there
(38) S: but I don't want to have the IRE sequence,
(39) S: and respond to them and say,
(40) S: 'Ok, now somebody else talk.'
(41) S: I want them to learn how to respond to each other
(42) S: and build that conversation,
(43) S: so I guess they are co-facilitators with me.
(44) S: I am constantly aware of that power dynamic
(45) S: because I can never really get rid of it.
(46) S: As I've been responding to papers I've felt that a lot
(47) S: because it's like, ok,
(48) S: you have control over your papers
(49) S: so you could ignore what I'm saying,
(50) S: but then to what to extent can you ignore it,
(51) S: because I'm giving you your grade?

In this section, Savannah shifts from calling herself a facilitator to her students, to giving them a bit more power when she calls them "co-facilitators" (line 34). In her classroom, students are expected to be active and dialogic (lines 35-36). In the IRE sequence, the

response and evaluation comes from the teacher rather than the students so the teacher retains the control and scope of the conversation.

In her classroom, Savannah asks students to talk to each other and control the direction of the discussion rather than her because that helps "build the conversation" (line 42). When students are active in discussion and "build," they then demonstrate agency. So, in this ideal sense, the students co-facilitate in the classroom. However, even though the power is more dispersed than in the other type of classrooms Savannah describes earlier, she cannot escape her duty as the instructor to do things that are expected of teachers; the teacher as judge emerges because there are grades and there has to be some sense of order in this classroom. Her duty to assess and evaluate student work disrupts the facilitator/co-facilitator metaphor; because she has to respond to student work, she is not co-facilitating its creation, she is facilitating its *assessment*. She is uncomfortable with the fact that through the process of responding to students' written work, she feels she is usurping control over it; she shows discomfort with the authority she has over assessment and grading (lines 48-51). Students could choose to ignore her feedback, but it would not be in their best interests to do so (lines 49-51) because ultimately the course requires a grade for their work. Again the commodification of student work (through the exchange of knowledge for a grade) interferes with Savannah's ideal agency negotiation scenario. Assigning grades negates the philosophy of a process-based classroom in some respects where grades are not as important as progress and change in students' writing.

The three metaphors discussed here show the multiple and conflicting positions Savannah has in her in classroom and in relationship to the education system. Each of

these metaphors relates to different aspects of her job and each has different responsibilities. The teacher as coach guides students beyond the composition classroom; she can help students in other aspects of their academic careers, like communication with other instructors/professors. The facilitator/co-facilitator metaphor is more aligned with Savannah's teaching philosophy and is focused on classroom operations. Lastly, the teacher as judge metaphor concerns an aspect of her job that she finds difficult, the assessment and evaluation of student work. The judge/evaluator metaphor is more like the coach metaphor where Savannah helps and guides the students into academic discourse but the stakes are higher because students' grades are involved. Of the three, she struggles with this one the most because this aspect of her job has the most disparate amount of agency between herself and her students. This becomes complicated as Savannah encourages students to call her by her first name, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

6.2. Bethany Challenges the "Teacher as Authority" Model

Of the five participants, Bethany discusses the challenges she faces as "teacher" the most. She knows that she has to have a certain amount of authority in the classroom as the teacher, but she expresses a lot of discomfort with the concept of authority, as does Savannah. In the following excerpt, Bethany articulates her teaching philosophy, built around the metaphor of teacher as "peer." Bethany feels that this metaphor better expresses how she wants to positioned within her classroom:

(1) B: So I definitely see myself as, I guess, kind of the more experienced peer.
(2) B: I have things I bring in, obviously there are things that they don't know,
(3) B: and that may need help developing ideas on,
(4) B: but, I always come with questions too
(5) B: because the things we are looking at in the class are things that I'm curious about,
(6) B: and things that I have questions about,

(7) B: and ideas that I'm continually working through,
(8) B: so I kind of see myself as, again, involved in the classroom,
(9) B: invested in what the students are doing.
(10) B: When they write, I write, and not necessarily the same things,
(11) B: but, kind of modeling practices of what a writer does
(12) B: and letting them see that I have a process too,
(13) B: and that process is developed over time
(14) B: and that I'm thinking about the writing,
(15) B: and so I want students to understand their investment in the classroom,
(16) B: and so, I kind of try to decenter myself from the classroom,
(17) B: and have them feel like they—that we all have equal share in the classroom
(18) B: while maintaining—they understand still that I'm the teacher—

(19) I: Right.

(20) B: --but seeing my—that I am invested in the class
(21) B: and that I'm not just coming to class to teach them
(22) B: and not care about their ideas and thoughts.

Bethany immediately adopts the storyline with the identity in the classroom of being the "more experienced peer" (line 1). Based on this identity, she believes peers have prior knowledge and histories that they bring to the classroom, and they also have the ability to inquire in a way that is distinct from a teacher (lines 2-7). In that respect, she does not believe she is different from her students as those actions and behaviors form a very important aspect to her class. Through adopting the "teacher as peer" storyline, her rights and duties in that storyline include consistent effort and responsibility for one's learning (lines 8-9). She enacts these rights and duties in the classroom by working along with her students and talking about and showing them her writing process (lines 10-14). She repeats the word "investment" in lines 9, 15, and 20, which indicate that Bethany truly believes this to be good classroom practice and one that is closely aligned with her teaching philosophy; the social force of these statements indicates she wants to believe this is how her classroom operates (whether or not that is what her students believe). In lines 15-18, Bethany attempts to discuss what she feels her place is

within the classroom, and that it is important to her that she "decenter" herself from the traditional view of teacher in the classroom. However, in doing so, she exposes a contradiction in her thinking. In line 17, in keeping with the "more experienced peer" identity, she states that the act of "decentering" makes her feel more like a peer learning along with her students (line 17). She wants to deflect or redirect the authority away from herself. In the next line, though, she states that even though she wants to be the peer, she wants her students to "understand still that I'm the teacher" (line 18).

Although she wants to be viewed as the peer by her students, she cannot simultaneously adopt the "teacher" role in the ways she views teachers (as authoritative, unable to understand students, etc.). She hopes that there is enough of the "peer mentality" in her classroom that her students will not view her in that light (line 20), and reiterates her resistance to her role as teacher that she shifts her thinking again by setting up an oppositional position to the "teacher as authority" model in the classroom in lines 20-22. In her line of thinking, peers "invest" while teachers do not (line 22). When asked about her use of the term "decentering," Bethany elaborated on her definition and why she felt it was important:

(25) B: I think that just because so often,
(26) B: from the experiences that they've talked about and the experiences they've had
(27) B: and the experiences I had before coming to college,
(28) B: it seemed like the teacher was the center of the classroom.
(29) B: Just the way the classrooms are shaped.
(30) B: We talked about that in class.
(31) B: I was like, we talked about discourse and the discourse of the classroom,
(32) B: and I was like, 'How do you recognize me as the teacher in this scenario?'
(33) B: They're like, 'Well, you stand at the front.'
(34) B: I was like, 'Right. Teachers, like all your desks are pointed at me.
(35) B: That seems to be an indicator that I had something that you guys need.'
(36) B: And so I really think—
(37) B: I read, uh, Friere in undergrad—

(38) B: --*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*,
(39) B: but the idea of the banking concept of education just really rubbed me the wrong way.
(40) B: I didn't—I hated the idea that students felt like they—
(41) B: and I remember feeling like I didn't have anything to contribute,
(42) B: I needed to wait until the professor, the teacher, gave me something
(43) B: so I could give it back to them,
(44) B: and that's a much easier way of thinking because it's just a call and response
(45) B: rather than asking people to—to examine, to have discussion and to critically think about things,
(46) B: and so I feel like because I don't want to endorse that model of education,
(47) B: I really think it's important for students to understand that they're in a sense—
(48) B: to borrow the term and to borrow it poorly—like banking in each other
(49) B: and banking in the classroom—
(50) B: everybody is feeding into this community kind of knowledge that's going on,
(51) B: so for that to happen they can't constantly look to me as the center of the classroom
(52) B: because if they continue to see that pattern going on
(53) B: they won't see themselves as having something worthwhile to contribute
(54) B: because they'll still feel like I have the—
(55) B: I'm the only person who has something to contribute to the class.

Like Savannah, Bethany had an open dialogue with her students about their histories in school and how those experiences and histories affected how students positioned the teachers in their courses (lines 35). She discusses decentering in terms of physical space, like the placement and orientation of the students desks (line 34), but also in term of metaphorical space, which is indicative of her "teacher as peer" storyline. Bethany feels that decentering offers a chance for students to disrupt their notions of "teacher" and create a space where students and "the more experienced peer" work together in a more collaborative working environment.

To Bethany, the term "teacher" is a loaded term and relates to Freire's banking model, which she discusses in lines 37-55. In terms of agency negotiation, in the banking model the teacher demonstrates his or her agency and mitigates the ability of students to demonstrate their agency. The peer, however, wants to see a more equitable distribution

or recognition of agency within the classroom. To emphasize her point, the peer takes Freire's (1970/2000) banking model and disrupts it by appropriating the term and offering a new definition for it: "banking" now means thinking about the collective performance over the individual performance, as well as fostering a collegial working environment for peers (lines 48-49). Banking is no longer about depositing information (Freire, 1970/2000) but relates to investment in oneself and others, which Bethany hopes serves as a motivator to her students.

From this excerpt, Bethany actively disassociates herself from a particular view of teachers and by doing so she challenges traditional notions of the persona and function of a teacher within a classroom. The peer storyline allows her to do this because she has to show how her perception of her job and identity differs from both her students and her own preconceived notions of what a teacher is and does. Although this is what Bethany adopts as part of her teaching philosophy, she does not discuss the extent to which students support or participate in this storyline along with her. She asks her students to disrupt the definition of "teacher" but we do not know the extent to which they actually position her as peer rather than as teacher.

6.3. What (Power) is in a Name?

When students arrive at college, they are used to addressing their teachers by a formal name (Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.), which indicates a level of formality and respect to the teacher by the student. In the cases of Savannah and Bethany, they both allow and encourage students to call them by their first names, and do so for similar purposes: to establish a more personal and collaborative classroom environment for their students. Both indicate that some of their students were uncomfortable and/or confused with this

affordance, but in their storylines, Savannah and Bethany gave that right to their students and felt it a necessary affordance within the scope of their teaching philosophies and classroom practices. The following excerpts describe how something as seemingly harmless as being on a first name basis reveals a unique perspective on the agency negotiation between teachers and students. For Savannah, the discussion about how she wanted to be addressed in her composition classroom led to another discussion of the type of teacher she is and the type of teacher she is not. For Bethany, the discussion of allowing students to address her by her first name led to an interesting discussion about what a teacher looks like and how she does or does not fit that model. Both of these discussions ask questions about teacher identity and how teachers interpret how their students position them in the classroom.

6.4. Savannah's Story

In this excerpt, Savannah was asked to discuss the circumstances that facilitate a less formal type of classroom environment. Savannah responded:

(4) S: Well on the very first day
(5) S: I told them they could call me whatever they were comfortable with.
(6) S: But I prefer Savannah.
(7) S: So I did that and I sign all of my emails Savannah

(8) S: and for the first couple of weeks,
(9) S: they would go, Miss Wilson—Miss Savannah
(10) S: and then they'd go, 'Can I really call you Savannah?'

(11) S: I'd say, 'Yeah,
(12) S: you really can call me Savannah.
(13) S: It's ok.'
(14) S: So part of it was just convincing them that, yes, it's all right to do this.

Savannah makes it clear to her students that they can address her as they wish, but she wanted them to call her Savannah (lines 5-6). She reinforces this idea through direct

means (by telling them in class), and through indirect means (by signing her emails with her first name) (lines 4-7). So, although she "coaches" them on other aspects of academic discourse (like proper email etiquette that *other* professors might prefer), she is more flexible and informal with how she wants her students to address her. Some students show their discomfort with calling her by her first name and so Savannah has to reinforce her comfort with it in class when they question it (lines 10, 14). Since she identifies as Savannah, and not as Professor Wilson, or Ms. Wilson, she invites students to call her that name, and some students need convincing, most likely due to their prior histories in school. The agency negotiation in this case is over the power in the name—why are some students resistant to calling their teacher by her first name while others are quick to adopt it? Is it because Savannah set the initial conversation about this on the first day of class? If the situation were different and Savannah had not told her students on the first day of class that it was acceptable to do so, what would have been Savannah's response (or the other students' response) if a student called her Savannah as opposed to a more formal means of address? It took her initial step of speaking about it with her students in order to set the rules of what were acceptable means of address for students to understand their rights in this classroom environment for this particular power dynamic. Although some students still had to negotiate their agency (whether or not to act how Savannah preferred), Savannah believes she established a more effective learning environment through this affordance.

The other major factor Savannah believes facilitates a "comfortable" classroom atmosphere is how certain classroom practices, group work and group discussion, shifts the power dynamic from a more teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered

classroom. In discussing her attitude towards effective teaching, she again disassociates herself from traditional notions of instruction (including certain practices such as the IRE sequence):

(15) S: And then I constantly,
(16) S: from day one,
(17) S: try and throw things at them and keep my voice very quiet during discussion
(18) S: and just let them kind of decide who's going to go next
(19) S: and what they're going to say next.
(20) S: So I throw a question out there
(21) S: and then I'd purposely make eye contact with them and nod to say,
(22) S: 'I'm still with you, I'm still here, I'm listening,'
(23) S: but then not have that IRE kind of thing,
(24) S: where I'm like,
(25) S: 'Oh, that was good, now let me repeat what you said, and throw the next question out.'

(26) S: So I think that has a lot to do with it,
(27) S: and then they do a lot of group work
(28) S: where it's them and I'm not in their faces—

By establishing another routine early on—facilitating discussion in which she minimally participates—she focuses on making her role that of the questioner or facilitator in order to enact a particular role in the classroom (lines 15-17). When class discussions occur, then, the students' voices and ideas are valued rather than her voice and her ideas. The types of questions she asks are not questions for evaluation, which IRE teachers would use, but a different type of questioning that leads students to understanding, inquiry, and analysis. In saying that she does not use the IRE type of questioning (line 23), she signals her distance from that model and that philosophy. She believes the combination of those practices help show her intentions to establish a particular atmosphere in her classroom, one that is expressly different from other college-level classes.

6.5. Bethany's Story

In the following excerpts, Bethany describes an instance in her classroom where her students asked questions about her personal life and made judgments about her appearance because they feel she did not fit the model of what they perceive a teacher to be or look like. This agency negotiation forces both Bethany and her students to conceptualize identities as expressed through clothing, gesture, and cultural values that certain people may associate with teachers and teaching:

(5) B: I think for me, I ((laughs)) part of that ((is)) I don't enjoy being called Mrs. Thompson and I don't know—
(6) B: it establishes a more hierarchical power dynamic in my mind.
(7) B: I want students to see me, yes, as the instructor
(8) B: but more in lines of seeing me as part of the ensemble,
(9) B: part of the work of the class,
(10) B: and I feel like them calling me by my first name
(11) B: kind of establishes that relationship or that dynamic more clearly.
(12) B: Some of them really don't like it because it weirds them out and they don't know how to—
(13) B: they don't like that.
(14) B: They call me all kinds of different things, but I—

(15) B: They call me by my first name and my last name.
(16) B: They'll call me by Miss Bethany, or they'll call me Miss Bethany Thompson,
(17) B: which is like the weirdest one of them all.

(18) B: But I said—I told them the first day of class that 'You guys can call me Bethany.
(19) B: I'm comfortable with that—
(20) B: I understand some of you might not be,
(21) B: so if you'd rather call me Miss Thompson or Miss Bethany it's fine.'
(22) B: But I'm comfortable with that and I just told them very upfront that I was ok with it.

Like Savannah, Bethany tells students on the first day of class they are allowed to call her by her first name, and some students are uncomfortable with that even though they have permission (line 18). Bethany believes that establishing a more formal means of addressing her would negatively affect her identity in the classroom. The formal title

contradicts her teacher philosophy of "teacher as more experienced peer" as discussed earlier in this chapter and "teacher as member of ensemble" (line 8). When Bethany states that allowing them to call her by her first name "establishes that relationship or that dynamic [as part of the ensemble] more clearly" (line 11), she feels that she is putting forth a particular identity that she wants to portray. However, in doing so, she disrupts the students' commonsense notions of how the students believe a teacher to act. Some students, though, resist this disruption and avoid a first-name basis with her. Even with her encouragement and the use of the term "you guys" (line 18), a term used for informally talking to a group of people or reflective of a particular dialect, she is unable to convince some people, so this creates a sense of awkwardness:

(25) B: I think they've pushed the limit a few times trying to figure out,
(26) B: ok she's a teacher but she lets us call her by her first name
(27) B: and every now and then she may—gasp—wear jeans.

(28) B: So we don't know what to do with her, and so I think that they—
(29) B: but I've always pushed back and have like I responded in a very personable manner,
(30) B: not like a really authoritative, like 'No, you have to do this.'
(31) B: Or, I've joked back, but to make a point,
(32) B: like, 'Ok, let's get back on topic.'
(33) B: Or 'No extra credit for you, now let's move on.'
(34) B: Or whatever it might be, and so I think that's kind of just established a rapport with them where they,
(35) B: like a few of them weren't really afraid to speak out and act like that,
(36) B: act more personable or see me more as a person,
(37) B: or talk to me as a person
(38) B: and because I responded back to them as kind of a more experienced peer
(39) B: they kind of picked up and developed that sense of, I guess,
(40) B: group dynamic that's there.

Bethany believes that because some teachers have a particular look and demeanor, her own demeanor causes confusion for some students. These students in turn "push the limit" (line 25) to test Bethany's reaction to them. While some students respond well to

what Bethany has established in the classroom (lines 35-37), others students are trying to figure out how she fits the role of teacher. In these students' storylines, teachers dress a bit more formally and are addressed a bit more formally too. So when Bethany wears jeans to class, for example, this challenges the storylines these students have. In an effort to respond to these students, Bethany uses sarcasm and humor to make her point, which she feels helps contribute to an atmosphere where some people are more apt to call her by her first name (lines 31-34). However, the way in which Bethany demonstrates her agency (in her choice of clothing, demeanor, etc.) is a point of resistance for some of her students. To Bethany, it might not affect her teaching, but for her students it may affect their perceptions of her.

Theme 2: Who Others Think Teachers Are

6.6. What Does a Writing Teacher Look Like?

Bethany noticed that some of her students had perceptions of teachers that exposed underlying assumptions about gender, age, and personal life; in their storyline—a reductionist storyline—teachers are female, older, and have children. These assumptions are problematic for several reasons. In the following excerpt, Bethany continues the previous discussion about allowing her students to call her Bethany and about how her students reacted to her as their teacher. She recognizes how her identity as a younger female teacher challenges the power dynamic in her classroom:

(1) B: I think honestly a lot of it has to do with gender and age
(2) B: because I look young and because I am young,
(3) B: and because I'm female and it's a largely male class
(4) B: that there was kind of a dynamic of like '<u>Who is this</u>?'
(5) B: like just really curious and ((they)) didn't know what to do
(6) B: and when I didn't come in and establish a really authoritative presence,
(7) B: I think they wondered, 'Oh, is she going to be a pushover?'
(8) B: but they've seen that I've required a lot of them

(9) B: and I've asked them to do a lot of things and think critically
(10) B: but I still view them as people,
(11) B: not just students that I need to give information to,
(12) B: and that they recognize that I know their names
(13) B: which I think is a really interesting part of establishing that relationship.
(14) B: I've had several students, not just in that class, but in other classes tell me,
(15) B: 'You're the only teacher I have that knows my name.'

(16) B: Which is really weird to me.

When Bethany describes what she felt was the students' skepticism, she identifies another instance of agency negotiation. In defending herself, Bethany explains her identity in the classroom by distancing herself from the type of teacher she is *not* (much like Savannah does). In lines 10-12, she explains her view that some other teachers treat students as having little or no agency, which is evident in her use of "just" in line 11. Bethany feels her duty in fostering a good teaching and learning environment is to do something as simple as learn their names. She reiterates Savannah and George's sentiments that her smaller classroom affords that, and that benefits the students' investment in her course. Other instructors/professors who do not know their students' names have a different relationship with students and they negate student agency because those instructors have particular views of their students.

As a result of some classroom discussion, Bethany indicated that she had been thinking more about perceptions of teachers and how she is positioned by some of her students as having characteristics that are not "teacher-like":

(24) B: 'She doesn't look like what our other teachers look like.'
(25) B: One of my other students in that class told me,
(26) B: 'All my other teachers have been old, and you're not old, so I think we can relate to you more.'

(27) B: Which, I don't know how true that is,
[…]
(30) B: They've seen that I dress in a way that's a little bit more familiar to them,

(31) B: which I don't know—I'm debating whether this is positive or negative,
(32) B: or, you know, both/and,
(33) B: but so that I'm not as recognizable as a really strong authority figure in the class,
(34) B: although I certainly—they still acknowledge me as the teacher…

College instructors, then, are assumed to be older and therefore students have less of a personal connection to their teachers (line 26). According to this logic, teaching and learning are less effective for students because of the age difference between themselves and their teachers (not subject matter, personality, or other factors). In line 30, Bethany discusses how her clothing choices affect the perception of her as composition instructor, though her perception assumes that an instructor/professor who is also seen as an authority figure dresses in a particular way different from the way she chooses to dress (lines 30-33). Bethany makes a distinction between herself and other instructors by stating, "I'm not recognizable as a really strong authority figure in the class, although I certainly—they still acknowledge me as the teacher" (lines 33-34). In this statement, she understands her role in the classroom, but notes that she still has to have some degree of authority in order to still be viewed as "the teacher." Her choice of clothing masks that authority (line 30).

When asked to discuss the origins of these reductionist perceptions of teachers, Bethany is unsure of where, why, and how these teacher perceptions exist:

(1) B: I really don't know,
(2) B: because I've been wondering about this because one of the students said,
(3) B: 'You're not old, and all of my teachers had had kids,
(4) B: and that doesn't seem to be a thing that you have,
(5) B: so you're just different than all of my other teachers.'

(6) I: He or she just assumed that?

(7) B: Yes.

(8) I: Ok.

(9) B: Just assumed that—didn't ask.
(10) B: But just assumed.
(11) B: And I was like, ok, so I think part of it for 13 years of schooling they've had,
(12) B: teachers who are very similar kind of in age range,
(13) B: although maybe not,
(14) B: but kind of more traditionally a little bit older a little bit more married
((laughs))

(15) B: A little bit more with kids,
(16) B: and dress a certain way,
(17) B: and so I think that that's what they've seen,
(18) B: and so they pick up on when that's switched
(19) B: or when that's different because it looks different to them
(20) B: and they have to figure out what power dynamics are there and what the—
like what that means
(21) B: and just how much freedom they do have in the kind of area.

What resonates in this excerpt is how Bethany feels her students position her as "different" (lines 6, 20) and that they openly question her, which exposes another assumption about teachers: teachers have children (line 4). Bethany attributes this to their prior educational histories (lines 12-16). The labor force of K-12 education is mostly female, and so there are certain gendered implications to their assumptions too. From Bethany's perspective, she too has to negotiate by figuring out how to address/respond to her students' assumptions about her personal life. In doing this negotiation, Bethany's reaction to her students' assumption causes her to revise her identity in relationship to them.

6.7. Bethany and Angela Disrupt Perceptions of "Teacher"

In the following excerpts, Bethany and Angela discuss social views and cultural examples of teachers and how these views have affected their perceptions of themselves as teachers. For Bethany, who shows the most resistance to traditional perceptions of teachers, she believes those who enter into the profession have to combat strong

assumptions from the public about who they are and what they do, more so than in other professions. Angela, an adjunct, uses a pop culture reference to show how she dissociates herself from high school teachers. Both show how their positions are affected by these social and cultural perspectives, focusing specifically on their identities within the classroom.

In this excerpt, Bethany discusses how students have a particular perception of teachers, and how some students only associate them with school. When asked if there are other professions that have similar fixed identities, Bethany replied:

(1) B: I can't. I don't think I can,
(2) B: and I think it's just a really strange thing because I think they only know,
(3) B: if they see you as teacher,
(4) B: they only know how to interact with you as teacher.
(5) B: So that gives boundaries to what they—
(6) B: what their relationship is like with you,
(7) B: so that's comfortable because they know this is how teacher and student interact,
(8) B: but then when you shake that dynamic up,
(9) B: it becomes weird for them.
(10) B: And I can't think of another profession where I would think like that,
(11) B: like you know, I would think of doctors, and I'm like,
(12) B: they go home and have a family,
(13) B: and, lawyers, you know, they might go out golfing—

(14) B: They do things other than be at school,
(15) B: but teachers are <u>just</u> at school, and that's how they live.

(16) B: And I don't know where that comes from. It's weird, that's what it is.

(17) I: Yeah. I don't know either.

(18) B: So, I think ((a student)) sees,
(19) B: I guess it's almost like this idea that teacher is a very public figure
(20) B: but only public figure in one arena,
(21) B: and anything they do beyond that is private, and segmented from teacher identity.

(22) B: It's like that identity is—oh, I just had a thought.
(23) B: That identity is in some way anchored to a location.

(24) B: It's a physical identity,
(25) B: because it's anchored in a school, in an office, in a classroom for, like, a college teacher.

(26) B: Like, it's anchored to a place.

The importance of space and place to the storylines of teachers is inescapable according to Bethany. In lines 1-7, she states that students do not necessarily take into account a teacher's multiple identities and rather try to fix them into a particular identity because answering to the teacher as authority lets students know where they stand (lines 5-7). If students position teachers in one way only, then they can see their role clearly, and there is efficiency to doing so. If teachers are positioned as authority figures, for example, this positioning affects how agency negotiation works in a given classroom or circumstance.

The difficulty for Bethany is that she does not want to be viewed in only one fixed identity within a particular place (school). When she actively shows her resistance to this mentality to/with her students, her students have to shift their perception of her as teacher (lines 8-9). Bethany feels that other professions do not have that pressure, giving examples of doctors (line 11) and lawyers (line 13) as having similar social influence but not the same fixed identity that teachers have. Interestingly, though, she creates a fixed identity for each of these professions through trying to explain they do not have fixed identities, each riddled with particular assumptions about them. Doctors have a family and a home life, and lawyers like recreational activities like golf (lines 12-13). She positions herself in relationship to these other professions by showing how she (as a teacher) does not have the same personal identities and only has an identity tied to her work. Her discussion of public versus private identities in lines 19-21 supports this point. Lastly, Bethany discusses how other careers transcend place, but this is not true for

teachers (lines 23-26). In terms of agency negotiation, Bethany feels she has to disassociate herself from the fixed identity or definition of teacher so that her students may connect to her own position within the college classroom.

Angela also discusses a fixed cultural narrative of teacher, but unlike Bethany she uses the social/cultural perceptions of teacher to show how it affected her choice in becoming a teacher. In the following excerpt, Angela discusses her first year writing course theme of pop culture, but then uses a pop culture reference to discuss what influenced her to pursue a career in teaching. At this particular point in the interview, Angela was asked to discuss how inspiring teachers (pop culture examples of the "inspiring teacher") affected her teaching philosophy and teaching style:

(8) A: […] when I was in high school your teachers are one way—
(9) A: either they are strict,
(10) A: you have to do this,
(11) A: you have to do that.
(12) A: There's no bending the rules.
(13) A: You can't be creative, except for maybe in English class,
(14) A: but there's this one way to write.
(15) A: You have to follow these steps, and I saw ((*Dead Poets Society*)),
(16) A: and I was like, 'Oh my gosh. I don't have to be a high school English teacher.' ((laughs))

In this discussion, Angela is quick to show her relief in seeing a counternarrative presented in the movie *Dead Poets Society* (1989). In the film, the teacher John Keating (played by Robin Williams) showed unconventional teaching methods and resistance to the school's curriculum, much to the consternation of the school's administration. His students initially were wary of his teaching methods, but at the end of the movie the students showed Keating respect and admiration to him although he was fired (*Dead Poets Society*, 1989). This film does show a counternarrative of challenge and resistance to expectations, particular in a male private school setting, but it is problematic in that

when Keating challenged the administration, he views were not valued and ultimately he was fired. Nevertheless, Angela finds this pop culture example to be helpful to her storyline in which she dissociates her teaching from that which students saw in high school (and her own experience as a student). In her storyline, high school teachers act in particular ways (as authoritative and rules-oriented) (lines 8-12). High school English teachers have to teach form and traditional rhetoric (lines 14-15). The film, for Angela, shows alternate possibilities of what a teacher can look like. However, she states that even though college teachers are different from high school teachers, they too cannot completely escape more formalist rhetoric:

(17) A: And even when I got to college,
(18) A: there were a lot of the writing classes that I had that were very A to B to C to D,
(19) A: and you can't go A over here to A2, A3, A4, you know—

(20) A: To B3, B5, you can't make those moves,
(21) A: like so it had to strictly go in this line.
(22) A: And so I saw the movie ((*Dead Poets Society*))
(23) A: and I thought oh my gosh, there is—
(24) A: there's more than just that one step from A to B.
(25) A: You know A1, A2, A3, A4.
(26) A: Then you can go to B if you want to.
(27) A: So, I think that's what I tried to get my students to see is,
(28) A: there's little increments in between that A and B—

(29) A: That you can think about and you can go off in different directions between A and B.

In this section of the excerpt, college teachers are more process-oriented, but particular processes are privileged over others. The linear learning process does not allow for much deviation or exploration (lines 18-21). She positions herself as someone who can offer choice to her students in their writing. Angela believes that seeing an example of a counternarrative in *Dead Poets Society* helped facilitate her agency because she

recognized that linear methods of learning and/or writing were not the only way to learn. This alternate narrative was inspiring to her (lines 22-29) in terms of attitudes towards teaching and learning. Ironically, the teacher in the film was respected by the students and not by the administration because he was not following a strict, formalist method of teaching English (*Dead Poets Society,* 1989). The film does not show what happens after the teacher was fired, or indicate that material conditions somehow did not affect the view of the teacher. When asked to discuss the impact a teacher has on his or her students' attitudes towards writing, Angela reiterated her emphasis on student choice:

(35) A: Oh, I think very—a lot.

[…]

(44) A: If you have students write about things that they are not interested in,
(45) A: they're going to hate writing.

(46) A: If you give them a choice,
(47) A: ok, we're going to talk about this broad sense of—
(48) A: I picked pop culture and you.
(49) A: If you like something in pop culture,
(50) A: and you get to choose what to write about,
(51) A: you're going to get a lot better work from that student who—
(52) A: who likes what they're writing about
(53) A: than if I assign them something to write about and they don't like it—

(54) A: They have no interest in it.
(55) A: They don't—they could go through the steps and find information on it,
(56) A: but they're not going to be passionate about it.

For Angela, teachers have a lot of power and influence in determining students' interest towards writing; teachers are the arbiters of freedom and choice in their classrooms. Much of this power stems from the perception that if students think learning is interesting and fun, then they will like the subject (lines 51-53). Angela uses this causal relationship between interest and quality writing to support her choice in the theme for her course. In

terms of agency negotiation, this means that Angela's students will demonstrate their agency by writing about their interests and that will lead to better quality writing. Although Angela exercises her agency in determining the content of the course, this opens up space for her students to take a more agentive stance in their learning in her writing course.

Theme 3: Classroom Work

6.8. Success in Class Discussion

During the course of the classroom observations, I witnessed two very insightful and active class discussions that the teachers felt were particularly successful (one in Emily's class and one in Bethany's class) and I discussed these classes with them in their interviews. In Emily's class, her students read an article related to grading and then discussed as a full class the use of grades and plagiarism in college. In the class discussion, students discussed what defined plagiarism, why it happens, and how teachers sometimes (according to some of the students) plagiarize their course materials. Emily, when facilitating class discussion, reminded them that discussion was part of their participation grade, and marked down in her notebook who spoke during the course of the class discussion. This may or may not have affected the scope of the discussion, but it should be noted. In Bethany's class, her students were asked initially to write about quotes dealing with technology. Students then had a full class discussion about the role and influence of technology in their lives. The majority of students in the class participated during the course of the discussion, with Bethany speaking very infrequently so as to not disrupt the discussion.

During the course of these specific classroom observations, both classes of students were active and talkative. In the following excerpts, Emily and Bethany reflect on what they felt were particularly meaningful class discussions. To Emily, what characterizes this discussion as successful relates to the concept of inquiry, which is an integral part of Southeast State's writing program. To Bethany, this successful class refers to the way in which the students acted within the class itself.

6.9. Emily's Story: An Emotional Response

(1) E: I'm trying to get them to think beyond the classroom.
(2) E: And I'm trying to—
(3) E: implicitly I'm trying to get them to challenge authority without overthrowing my classroom ((laughs))—
(4) E: because I am an authority there.
(5) E: So of course I don't want them to rebel completely,
(6) E: but I want them to think critically about the system,
(7) E: and that ((class discussion)) showed me that they were.
(8) E: And that doesn't bother me—that was—
(9) E: it bothers me actually that some of their professors just copy down stuff from an article
(10) E: and then make a PowerPoint
(11) E: and then don't mention—I assure you, they're not lying, it's just—

(12) I: Why do you think teachers can—think they can do that?

(13) E: I don't know.
(14) E: I came away from that class with more questions than answers and that--
(15) E: that to me indicated it was a really good class.
(16) E: Yeah, actually, I'm getting a little teary-eyed.
(17) E: That class really—
(18) E: that was the best class in a long time,
(19) E: because it really got me thinking,
(20) E: and I know they were leaving thinking

[…]

(21) E: It was like, you know, they were really thinking.
(22) E: And they were thinking thoughts beyond what I've ever conceived them thinking,
(23) E: and so they're—anyway, I like to go to class and I like to learn.
(24) E: I mean, I know I'm the instructor,

(25) E: but I want to learn something too and that doesn't always happen.

In this excerpt, Emily immediately begins to discuss power and authority in her classroom in relationship to her position as teacher/graduate student, and echoes her previous discussion of rebellion. In line 3, she indicates that students should be rebels (and she encourages that) but only up to a point; there is a line where she feels that if crossed the power would swing to the students and she could not retain her power in her classroom, because she is "[…] an authority there" (line 4). In the type of rebellion that she encourages (to rebel against the "system" but not necessarily against her as part of the system), the education system is positioned as oppressive and in need of change (lines 5-6).

In the context of this class discussion, which was about academic integrity, she felt the students were rebelling against a particular aspect of the system that they felt was unfair, the academic integrity of teachers. Some of the students felt that it was a double standard that some teachers did not provide references in their classroom materials (like in their assignments, PowerPoints, etc.). Those within the system (or who have some semblance of power according to these students' perspectives) had certain affordances while the students' behavior was heavily regulated. For example, if students did what they claim some of their teachers do, they would potentially face academic integrity violations within their institution. This point frustrates Emily (line 9), but beyond that, Emily highlights her satisfaction that her students were rebelling in a way from what they previously knew. When inquiry happens, when "[she] came away from that class with more questions than answers" (line 14), that was an indicator of a successful class because her students were participating in inquiry. However, towards the end of this

excerpt, Emily makes a value judgment about the role of the instructor in the classroom (lines 24-25) consistent with how she discussed the role of the instructor in the beginning of his excerpt (the teacher having a sense of authority in the classroom).

The assumption inherent in her concluding statement is that in the classroom, the students always learn from the instructor while the instructor *may* learn from his/her students. She contradicts herself in saying this because it assumes that in order for her to learn, her students have to assert their agency, but they can only do so within the limits she sets. This is reminiscent of both her discussion of the "box" and Savannah's discussion of the "fence" in previous excerpts.

6.10. Bethany's Story: Is My Voice Even Necessary?

This excerpt, in which Bethany reflects on the discussion dynamic of a particular day in class, raises questions about how much power the teacher's voice has in the context of a full class discussion. Bethany explains her struggle with wanting to contribute to what she felt was a very interesting and pertinent discussion about technology but also wanting the students to sustain a conversation without her voice overtaking theirs:

(1) B: Yeah. […] and so when I was thinking about jumping back into the conversation,
(2) B: for me, I wondered what kind of a power move that was,
(3) B: because I was like, they're doing so many interesting and good things on their own
(4) B: and they don't need me in this moment,
(5) B: and so if I jump back in,
(6) B: is that going to squelch that,
(7) B: or can I push them to keep going further?
(8) B: Can I be a contributor, but not like supreme overlord of this conversation?
(9) B: So those were some of the things I was considering—

In this moment she was aware of her voice and the power it had, and this causes her to rethink her role in the context of this class discussion. Her choices, to interrupt the

conversation or to let it continue, have different consequences and display different power relationships. And if she chose to interject, there might be different consequences there too—depending on how her interruption would affect the course of the conversation, she could be seen as a "contributor" or as a "supreme overlord" (line 8). These two characterizations inherently have vastly different power relationships; a contributor denotes a collaborative atmosphere whereas an overlord implies a usurpation of power from subjects/students. In the next section, Bethany discusses her choice not to interrupt the conversation at that initial moment she thought about doing so:

(10) B: --I was like, I'm just going to sit back and let the conversation go.
(11) B: And then there were things I wanted to say too,
(12) B: and so I think that that's an interesting dynamic
(13) B: and something to think about for other students in the class.
(14) B: You know, and I feel like we have—
(15) B: I feel like the class is a good natured dynamic of, you know,
(16) B: we joke and they pick on me about my clothes and I pick on them about whatever it is…

Bethany was comfortable with letting the students self-direct the conversation without her voice, and the "good natured dynamic" of the class (line 15) affords that ability to have class discussion in that manner. However, there was a point in which Bethany did decide to add to the conversation and in the following section she rationalizes her role in contributing even though she feared it might derail the flow of conversation:

(17) I: Well, you did jump in, so did you feel like it did—come to a halt?

(18) B: No, I felt like they kept talking because they were invested in what they had to say
(19) B: and it kind of steered the conversation a slightly different direction
(20) B: but it kind of allowed them to focus on more detailed ideas that I was asking them to think about,
(21) B: and again ideas that were more involved in the framework of like rhetoric and composition things we were thinking about,
(22) B: so it kind of steered the conversation they were having
(23) B: and it kind of gave them a name for some of things they were talking about.

From this response, Bethany ultimately felt that her role when she did choose to participate was more along the lines of the contributor identity rather than the overlord identity. In her participation, she was able to relate what her students were talking about back to a conversation about writing in a way that did not threaten her intent to be the contributor (lines 18-23). This is in part due to the students' attitude toward the discussion (line 18) and her act of "steering the conversation" and "giving them a name for some of things they were talking about" (lines 22, 23) rather than stopping the conversation or speaking in a more authoritative way.

6.11. Challenging the Authoritative Narrative: Bethany Discusses Shifting Identities in a Moment of Negotiation

In the following excerpt, Bethany recalls a past teaching experience in which she had to deal with classroom management issues. In this example, a group of students was not participating in class discussion and was disruptive. Bethany ultimately had to address this group in a way that she felt directly contradicted her teaching philosophy; she had to take an authoritative stance in response to them and she was conflicted about her actions in the class. Bethany's focus on the "right teacher moves" and "wrong teacher moves" here indicates the pressure she feels to act a certain way in the classroom:

(1) B: It was really frustrating for me
(2) B: because I felt like I was making all the right teacher moves,
(3) B: or how what I saw as the right teacher moves,
(4) B: and I couldn't get them to enact what I wanted them to.
(5) B: And so I guess it was kind of the clash of agency on both sides,
(6) B: and also trying to figure out my identity in the classroom
(7) B: because I don't assume that authoritative identity very often,
(8) B: and so when I <u>did</u>,
(9) B: I was frustrated with myself
(10) B: because I felt like it wasn't true to the pedagogy that I'd set forth in the class,
(11) B: which is confusing to students and disruptive to students when you switch identities on them.

(12) B: It's hard for them to know who you are and recognize you in that scenario,
(13) B: and then it makes them wonder did—is she really—
(14) B: is this [a] student-centered, group discussion oriented teacher?
(15) B: Is that really what's going on,
(16) B: or, does she still have this other more traditional authoritative teacher identity as well?
(17) B: And is there something she's really wanting from us?
(18) B: So it was really frustrating for me because I felt like I had made all the right teacher moves
(19) B: and I couldn't affect what I wanted to happen in the class in the way that I wanted it to happen,
(20) B: and so it really made me question what identities were the students seeing themselves in
(21) B: and what identities were they seeing me in,
(22) B: and how did those identities recognize each other or not recognize each other.
(23) B: Because if they didn't recognize the teacher identity that I was enacting,
(24) B: then they didn't know how to respond in that moment.

To Bethany, the "right teacher moves," devised from her prior teaching preparation and teaching experience, are to maintain a classroom atmosphere that is civil and collaborative. "Right teacher moves" also include handling student behavior in a manner consistent with her teaching philosophy and teaching style in a non-authoritative way. The fact that she had to change her position within the classroom—from a "peer" to an authority figure—aggravated her as indicated through the social force of the repetition of word "frustration" (lines 1, 9, and 18). The "clash of agency" (line 5) occurred when the group of students exercised their choice not to participate in the full class discussion and be off-task. Bethany, in her own agency negotiation, could decide to ignore them and carry on her full class discussion with those students who were not in this group, or confront the group. She chose to confront this group of students, which as she described caused her to deviate from the role she likes to think she plays in the class, that of a peer. Deviating from that role was "frustrating" to her, and "confusing" to her students (lines 10-11). However, the confusion is what *she* felt her students might have when in fact she

does not know if they were confused or bothered at all from the incident. This feeling causes her to imagine what her students might say about her in response to her actions. In lines 13-17, Bethany imagines that her students—as a result of this one moment—would question her position in the classroom. What this actually does is reveal her insecurities regarding how she handled the disruptive students. Bethany's concern about action and reaction is exposed in lines 20-24 and again in the following section where she was asked to elaborate on her use of the term "right teacher moves":

(29) B: Right. Well…based on kind of ideology I bring into the classroom,
(30) B: I guess, you know, right and wrong—they are very limited terms.
(31) B: But, um, right teacher moves,
(32) B: and for me I was thinking,
(33) B: I was thinking in the pedagogy classes that I've had,
(34) B: the different ways to deal with students and student conflict,
(35) B: and so I remember thinking through, kind of different identities like,
(36) B: well, ok, you can make this if students do this,
(37) B: you can kind of try and approach them this way,
(38) B: and so in terms of—
(39) B: I didn't want to all the sudden assume all that authority in the classroom
(40) B: that I had worked really hard to kind of share throughout the classroom—
(41) B: that I had worked really hard not to bring myself as the center of attention,
(42) B: and I don't know that students were as bothered by this scenario as I was,
(43) B: because I just couldn't figure out what was going on,
(44) B: and I felt like it was really interesting that,
(45) B: like, I felt like the right thing to do was to try and ask them to be included in
(46) B: —and 'right thing to do' is such an interesting idea that what I wanted them to do
(47) B: was to see what we were doing and be invested in it.
(48) B: and so the moves that I needed to make that happen
(49) B: would be to show them we're all investing in this,
(50) B: this is important,
(51) B: we value this in this class,
(52) B: to remind them these things,
(53) B: and so I did those things,
(54) B: but those things didn't seem to communicate and so then I had to start
(55) B: doing things, making moves that were not as comfortable for me in the classroom culture that I tried to construct.

When Bethany saw this scene unfold, she began negotiating with herself about possible ways to handle what was happening in her classroom while maintaining the conversation for the rest of her class. She referred back to her teacher training (line 33) and thought about possible outcomes and consequences for different ways of handling the disruptive group, indicating that the way she handled it would reflect back on how people viewed her as a teacher (lines 35-38). Bethany prefers to be seen as a collaborator and facilitator rather than an authority figure. Her preferred teaching style is predicated on transparency and shared power with her students. So when she decided on a course of action (to ask the students directly to stop what they were doing and rejoin the group discussion), she first approached this discussion in a way that highlighted her preferred teaching style (lines 46-47) focusing on the classroom community and the "investment" they have in what happens in the classroom (line 49). By framing the initial confrontation in a way that supported her teaching philosophy was an act of agency negotiation, but ultimately it was unsuccessful and she had to start making the "wrong teacher moves" and employ more of an authoritative stance in the classroom (line 54-55). Although this showed another example of agency negotiation, Bethany was not pleased with her behavior but felt she had to exercise authority to diminish the agency of those who were not participating in the class effectively.

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The identities that the participants construct and enact in their classrooms are greatly affected by several factors, but what this chapter reveals is that these teachers feel students have a lot of power in putting pressure on these identities. Seemingly insignificant details such as names, clothing, and appearance at the surface have nothing

to do with writing instruction, but as the participants discussed here, these things provide students and teachers the opportunities to negotiate the role of the teacher within the writing classroom. In moments of conflict, disagreement, or a mismatch in expectations, teachers choose to demonstrate their agency in accordance with or divergence from their teaching philosophies. It is in these moments of agency negotiation where teacher identities are under constant revision by the teachers themselves and those with whom they interact. Tensions surround identity formation because teachers' jobs are inherently social and are impacted by people, circumstances, and working conditions. Therefore, close attention to identities working within a storyline provides a space to think about the identities we employ in the contexts of a work environment. What is most striking about these particular examples is how the participants struggle with the concept of authority. Within their classrooms, they want to be perceived as someone who is not authoritative (and for some, that means being seen as something different than a "teacher"), but someone who has expertise. So, they do not want to claim authority within the classroom necessarily, but cannot claim it within the institution due to their employment status, ultimately becoming a source of tension for them.

CHAPTER 7: HOW TO EMPLOY AGENCY: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH

What we can learn from Savannah, Bethany, George, Emily, and Angela is that their relationships to the educational system and their perceptions of teachers and teaching affect the positions and storylines they compose and enact significantly. These instructors, generally speaking, feel as though they are separate from K-12 education, but also separate from the higher education system; they draw a line between themselves and other teachers while simultaneously reinforcing historical attitudes towards first year writing. So, although some claim to have more agency than high school teachers, or want to disassociate themselves from high school teachers, they still feel they do not have the agency that other teachers in higher education do, or at the very least the higher education system operates separately from them. First year writing, then, is an intermediate step between K-12 education and higher education.

Although they are a part of this system, they resist it too. This resistance is directed at different sources: George shows resistance towards the entire education system; Bethany and Angela show resistance towards a traditional teacher identity; Savannah shows resistance to the education system by encouraging her students to question it; and Emily shows resistance to her institutional status. Resistance becomes central to each participant's identity within the academy, affecting how they act in a given context, and how they perceive their rights and duties as they relate to their jobs. This resistance, though, could be a reflection of how they see themselves and their

positions within the university as it relates to power and agency, and also how they want to be seen as teachers of writing operating through a process/post-process curriculum. Their capacity to act is mitigated by their isolation. They also enact opposing identities and ideologies depending on the context as a result of this isolation.

7.1. Fabricating Pieces of the Machine: How and Why First Year Writing Teachers Develop a Sense of Isolation

George's discussion of the educational system as a machine is quite useful in thinking about these teachers' positionality within the institution. His "glitch in the machine" narrative demonstrates his distrust of this system, and in their own ways, the other participants show they are "glitches" too. Each of the participants in this study feels a sense of resistance to something or someone. What is most striking, though, is that most of the teachers in this study feel a sense of isolation—isolation from the university at large and to some extent from the curriculum that they are asked to teach. For example, the idea that first year writing is somehow different from both high school English classes and other college general education coursework, and by extension they are different types of teachers than what students might encounter, forces these teachers to view their work as separate from these other areas (and they interpret that separate equals "better than"). They say this or act as though their work is more meaningful or more influential than other courses serves as a means to cope with various sources of tension (with their teaching practices, conflicting curricular values, institutional status, etc.).

What this attitude accomplishes is debatable. From the teachers' perspective, isolating themselves from other teachers can afford them a sense of security or pride in their work and bolster a sense that they are participating in meaningful change in

students' academic careers. The discussion of the FYW teacher as savior (in George's analysis) reflects that attitude. However, this is a false sense of security; they are actually limiting their opportunities for agency negotiation because they are intentionally cutting off lines of communication from other teachers.

They are fabricating their own piece of the larger institution (the machine), carving out a place and space where they feel a sense of power over their work and their position within the university. Savannah, when talking about the IRE sequence, used the term "fabricating" in a negative connotation to describe how this classroom practice privileges control over students' responses. Ironically, that same term can be used to describe how the participants of this study privilege control over their classrooms (even though they do not want to appear to be doing so). Sometimes, like in Emily's case, teachers might appear in the classroom as more directive or authoritative in their classroom practices. In other instances, such as in Savannah's case for example, the discomfort with taking on a powerful role in the classroom is unsettling. Both she and Bethany hesitate to be directive in class, as they both discussed in their interviews when they gave examples of students challenging their position in the classroom and/or their classroom practices. To be directive negatively affects the storylines and identities they want to enact for themselves. They want to have a sense of power outside of the classroom, but hide the actual power they do have within their classrooms. Bethany does this, for example, by claiming her role as the "more experienced peer" in the classroom rather than as "the teacher."

In essence, these teachers are complicit in and are products of the system, which is reminiscent of Foucault's concept of power/knowledge, due to their active participation

in a system that oppresses them (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). But can they be blamed for expressing distrust, discomfort, and/or resentment of the larger machine? Much of this tension is caused by their working conditions. As they work in an institutional context, they constantly have to renegotiate their position within it, and their own attitude towards it. *These teachers fabricate boundaries for themselves out of alienation.* This finding echoes Schell's (1998) discussion of contingent laborers. The lack of resolution in this tension is indicative of the complexity of working in academia, a system fraught with hierarchies, order, and gender bias. Even though *people* often change and/or move through the system, the *structure* of higher education has maintained stratification of power for certain people who work within it. For the most part, first year writing teachers are either removed from the larger conversations or have little power in this hierarchy as they are mostly non-tenure track faculty, adjunct laborers, or graduate assistants (who need to negotiate and manage the student/teacher binary). Their institutional status is low. To manage this, they feel they must separate themselves from others to foster a sense of power in their jobs.

These teachers fabricate boundaries for themselves as a defense mechanism. This defense mechanism allows FYW teachers to retain the relevance and importance of FYW courses in general. Thinking that the work they do is important and transformative is empowering for teachers. There is fear, too, caused mostly by the working conditions of teachers in first year writing. Those teachers who work on semester-to-semester contracts might have a sense of fear in keeping their jobs, and so they might feel a need to protect them. Also, those who are alienated from the system might try to cobble together a sense of power and agency in their classrooms since they are not afforded that

power from the structure of academia. *These teachers fabricate boundaries for themselves out of fear.*

Looking at the language of these limits (the educational system as a "machine," the curriculum as a "fence" or a "box," and the definition of "teacher" as a singular and static identity), these teachers are building boundaries to separate themselves from other people/entities as the connotations of those words indicate. They are looking at the parts of the machine rather than how the whole machine operates because it is what they can control. Their philosophical stances set them in opposition to other pieces of the machine that are larger or have more power, like standardized testing, educational policy, hierarchy, etc. But at the same time, the different sources of power (teachers, students, the classroom community, the curriculum, first year writing, the university, etc.) are pressing on these boundaries. For example, Emily encourages her students to take chances and be "rebellious," as she wants to be, but only within limits she sets. She maintains control in her classroom because she does not feel control in her position within the university. The fence metaphor Savannah uses achieves the same effect—the teachers have a certain semblance of power within a constructed writing situation, but she also feels fenced off from other teachers in higher education because she adopts the narrative her students tell her about being a different teacher than who they encounter elsewhere. She feels more receptive to being a "coach" or "facilitator" as opposed to the judge figure who assigns grades to student work because those labels demonstrate less overt power over students.

The language the teachers use in describing their role in the classroom, often taking the form of metaphors, reveals inconsistencies in power relationships (in their

classrooms and in their jobs) and agency negotiation. For example, the "peer" and "ensemble member" labels Bethany uses to describe her role in the classroom ignores the power she does have in the classroom; she does not want to acknowledge that she has more power than her students. This storyline is supported by her discussion of how she is different than a "teacher," someone who is mostly likely female, older, married, and has children. She believes that she is "non-teacher-like" and therefore can be a part of the ensemble. Angela also resists assumptions about who teachers are by setting up a dichotomy between the "good teacher," a creative teacher who encourages student choice and freedom, and the strict teacher. They adopt these metaphors and labels as their identities shift at different points in time and in different circumstances as their language reveals, which is reminiscent of some of the teacher identity studies cited earlier, such as Bullough, Knowles, and Crow's (1992) findings on teacher metaphor used by new teachers.

7.2. Sources of Blame/Sources of Authority

A crucial discussion that emerged from the participants' responses centers on the issue of authority in their jobs. The resistance that they show, through overt and covert means, and directed at different sources, does show how agency negotiation becomes complicated when pressures of the university/institution are inescapable. Therefore, agency (taking into account Ahearn's (2001) definition) is always affected by the participants' position within the university in mostly negative ways.

The positioning theory analysis reveals how conflicted the participants are about these positions, and it affects these teachers' attitudes towards agency and agency negotiation, particularly in the cases in which they feel they offer opportunities for

students to demonstrate agency while choosing not to exercise their own in some situations outside of their classrooms. Teachers focus on student agency in the classroom because their own agency within the institution is limited, and they talk about student agency often to avoid thinking about their own agency. Teachers focus on the classroom, rather than advocating for their own rights within their working environment or discussing labor issues both within and outside their programs because they can control what happens in their classrooms. They cannot control external factors or how the institution views them.

Ironically, although they do control what happens in their classrooms to some extent, they do not want to claim authority within their classrooms as discussed earlier. This is a direct contradiction to how the participants want their students to perceive the participants' actions (as less authoritative). The process movement supports identities these teachers want to have. They, for the most part, resist formalist conceptions of "the English teacher." They construct an ideal teacher, characterized by social/constructivist and/or critical epistemologies. At times they embody these constructed identities, and at other times they replicate traditional and/or outdated versions of what it means to be a teacher. The contradictions in what they say versus what they do stem from various sources of tension (students' histories, institutional status, approaches to teaching writing, etc.), and these sources affect them both overtly and covertly at any given point in time. For example, some students' histories affect perceptions of teachers. The participants know this and try to act in ways that resist historically entrenched educational values. Agency negotiation, then, has to include recognition of external constraints that affect classroom practices.

This study has sought to understand how first year writing teachers of different employment classes (graduate teaching assistant, adjunct, and non-tenure track lecturer) create and enact their sense of agency, and how they negotiate that agency with their students within the contexts of their classrooms. When these teachers describe instances of agency negotiation, they revealed tensions in the way they understand their role in the context of their classroom and the university at large. These tensions are important to discuss with a broader audience, as they are representative of workers' voices, voices that are marginalized in various ways and through various means. Although writing program administrators have been lauded in their advocacy efforts, it is very important to hear as many perspectives and voices as possible, especially from adjuncts and graduate teaching assistants who have more tenuous locations relative to the university in order to provide more information and perspective to their advocacy efforts. First, we must acknowledge and learn about people's work experience as well as curricular and programmatic values of first year writing programs and departments and then act collectively to improve the work that happens in that space. We must support those who do not recognize the agency they do have. For example, more studies need to be conducted to focus on how adjuncts, who often are on a semester-to-semester contract basis, are interpreting and implementing curricular values. Studying both labor practices within composition programs and how the programmatic/curricular values of these programs are interpreted by the laborers within them would be very valuable to the field.

What was unique about studying Southeast State University was the amount of curricular and programmatic change that the program experienced during the course of this study. The working conditions in Southeast State University's first year writing

program are not necessarily different from the working conditions in many other rhetoric/composition programs all over the country, though, so based on the findings and discussion in the previous chapters, a number of suggestions and discussion points can be made as a result of the findings in this study:

1. One of the most important results of this study is that the more we hear instructors' voices—from all employment classes—the more realistic a picture we can gain about working conditions and how they impact what happens in composition classrooms. More studies centering on teacher agency in the classroom, focusing on particular aspects of the positioning diamond such as rights and duties (as delineated in their job descriptions and as they interpret those job descriptions) would provide a clearer picture on how tensions in academic labor affect classroom practices. Analyzing teacher metaphors that emerged in the storylines as a means for teachers to express how they perceive their relationship to academia can be a useful tool in teacher advocacy.
2. Instructors need an outlet to voice issues with authority and they should have these opportunities. This involves having direct discussions about and with the sources of authority and how to better work with those constituents. This includes programmatic/departmental sources of authority (such as writing program administrators or English department chairs) as well as larger institutional authorities that affect power and agency for instructors working within composition programs. These discussions should be shared with students as well, as they need to know how academic labor is affecting their teachers' work experiences, and in turn their educational experience. Even though that could

very well incite fear in those participating, we need to have those uncomfortable discussions. Discussions of power in the classroom will lend to a more political classroom, one that will hopefully provide a place to foster social change and activism.

3. Positioning theory has proved useful as an analytic tool for understanding how instructors describe instances of agency negotiation. By investigating how storylines, identities, rights and duties, and social forces of an instructor's position function (or how these instructors position students in these instances of agency negotiation), this study exposed unique perspectives from instructors of differing employment classes. This is important because the multiplicity of voices needs to be heard. Perceptions of the curriculum and ideologies within the first year writing program at Southeast State University changed as the curriculum did. Although change inevitably occurs in all programs, those working in the context of that change have differing levels of agency due to constraints and their past labor experiences and therefore might have a range of responses in reaction to that change (they might react positively, or with resistance or apathy, etc.). First year writing programs considering major programmatic and/or curricular changes can learn about how those changes are converted into classroom practices. We need to know more about how theory is put into practice by classroom teachers. When curricular and/or programmatic change occurs in first year writing programs, it is imperative to have as many voices as possible working within that program or department to have input into how to implement emerging rhetorical theory into practice. Conversations about the origins of the theoretical underpinnings

initiating the changes, as well as desired outcomes and assessment of these changes have to have involvement from all parties who teach within these programs. Change is inevitable, but it is how the changes are framed that will make the difference between resistance and effective teaching for some instructors.

4. Even though there have been several studies regarding labor in rhetoric/composition programs and about academic labor in general, this study shows that better communication within these programs, across employment classes, needs to occur. More discussion is needed about how the university at large perceives first year writing programs, and more direct communication between university administration and their perceptions of first year writing programs needs to take place. These instructors need information about what writing students do outside of first year writing and how their role is perceived as teachers of general education coursework. This could take place within professional development opportunities within first year writing programs, and should be sustained conversations taking place frequently and over time. It is important for first year writing instructors to know the types of writing assignments that are asked of students in different departments and programs across the university instead of treating first year writing as an isolated program.
5. In addition to conversations regarding the positioning of first year writing programs within universities taking place, first year writing programs and the instructors working within them can benefit from talking about material conditions of academic labor across disciplines. These teachers need more

awareness of systemic issues that plague first year writing and higher education; they need to know how the (broken) system works. More discussion between first year writing instructors and instructors (lecturers, adjuncts, and graduate teaching assistants) in other departments on campus would help open up lines of communication with each other about workload and labor conditions. This will help ameliorate the isolation some instructors feel, and also help first year writing instructors understand the real working conditions of instructors (as related to pay, course load, and institutional prestige) in other departments rather than speculating about them. This, in turn, could empower first year writing instructors to have honest conversations about the conditions of their labor and also help them learn about how salary differences across disciplines might reflect and reinforce particular institutional values about those disciplines. The results of these discussions could impact their bargaining rights and/or salary equity.

6. Writing program administrators can get a better sense of how instructors of all employment classes are understanding and interpreting curricular and/or programmatic changes by commissioning studies similar to this study. As discussed earlier, positioning theory can be a vital tool in analyzing the language instructors use to describe their experiences at a given point in time. In WPA-led events, having direct and honest discussions about teacher agency (what constitutes teacher agency, what mitigates teacher agency, and how agency is enacted and co-created in the classroom) can empower instructors. Making these discussions a central focus in faculty development programs could be the place to have these discussions, as well as in graduate teaching assistant training and/or

coursework. However, if a writing program administrator did conduct a similar study, she or he might influence how participants respond to particular questions given the WPA's supervisory role, and so in terms of study design, someone who is not in a managerial role should be the main researcher.

7. Moreover, it is important to recognize that not all instructor experience is similar, nor should it be. The tension between institutional and programmatic change and individual experience should be recognized and complicated in order to foster change from a grass roots perspective. Hearing more voices, not just from tenure-track faculty or writing program administrators, is vital to this change. Even within employment classes, no instructor's experience is the same. This rationale impacted the study design in that teachers within the same employment class (Savannah and Angela, for example) were treated as separate case studies rather than compared directly to each other, as their experiences were not the same. Identifying the factors that are impacting an instructor's individual experience, and identifying the multiple perspectives of those factors is very important. Not only are teachers negotiating agency in their classrooms but they are also negotiating in the context of their institutional status and their own teaching philosophies and attitudes towards writing.
8. More communication is needed between high school English teachers and first year writing teachers to understand the goals, constraints, and teaching methods of English/writing curriculums at the high school level and the college level. Some of the instructors in this study made assumptions about what type of writing instruction happens at the high school level without necessarily knowing first

hand the material conditions of teaching high school English or in K-12 education in general. Organizations such as the National Writing Project and its subsidiaries (which facilitate professional development opportunities in K-college writing instruction) would be ideal for these types of discussions and collaborations to occur. Other national professional organizations such as National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) could be other outlets for reaching out and forming interest groups related to cross-collaboration. Some of these organizations have a strong digital presence and instructors can facilitate these groups electronically rather than just in person, which is often more difficult to coordinate and is also expensive for travel depending on where the conferences are located in proximity to the first year writing program sites. These organizations also have local, state, and/or regional affiliates that could foster opportunities for professional development.

All of the above recommendations require more time and effort on the part of all instructors, and that is not easy or necessarily a welcome change for those working under adverse material conditions. For example, professional development that takes place at particular times might preclude some lecturers or adjuncts from participating. Those instructors on a 4/4 course load or teaching at multiple universities might not be able to do that easily. Writing program administrators' work would also be taxed in undertaking research projects such as this study. Many of these recommendations require funding, and in times when colleges/universities are streamlining budgets and cutting discretionary spending, this would not be an easy task. Changing attitudes towards first year writing and what it can do for higher education requires a shift in values—more direct funding

for research, course releases, lower caps on student enrollment in first year writing courses, etc., would be a sign of good faith and support from colleges.

7.3. Work/Voice/Act: Study Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

As stated previously, positioning theory has not been utilized much in the field of rhetoric/composition, and this study and analysis proves that it is a useful tool in understanding the language practices of composition instructors. Although this study does show how positioning theory can be used to analyze language practices or instructors who are working in a first year writing program, more research needs to be done to accurately represent the multitude of experiences in any given writing program. More voices, particularly from adjuncts and graduate student teachers, would be helpful for writing program administrators, laborers in the academy, and the general public to learn more about working conditions in college composition, as there are many misperceptions surrounding composition (such as what constitutes "good writing"), teacher identity, and teacher agency, even from those who are working within the field.

This study discusses the experiences of five composition teachers (two non-tenure-track lecturers, two adjuncts, and one graduate teaching assistant) who all worked within the same program during the duration of the study. Through interviews and classroom observations, positioning theory proved useful in exposing tensions and instances of agency negotiation at a given point in time and in a given context. This study was limited by working with a small set of case studies and in the fact that no campus administration or students were interviewed. Future research could develop the methods of this study, perhaps conducting a more sustained ethnographic study of a first year writing program and include these voices. Extending the time frame would allow

the researcher to interview more participants and conduct more observations. It would also be interesting to hear students' voices when asked about the same examples of agency negotiation in the classroom that the participants found noteworthy.

Additionally, future research should focus more on how the participants function as part of a writing program, rather only looking at teacher agency in classroom practices. There are constraints on teacher agency as they negotiate their place within the program, and understanding and exposing these negotiations as they relate to job satisfaction, attitude towards authority, and institutional pressure would be fruitful areas for future research.

7.4. The Machine is Broken

The complexity of being a college composition teacher is both a source of inspiration and a source of tension. Those who pursue this line of work have to learn and understand how to navigate through and negotiate with an institutional system that provides relative flexibility and freedom in the classroom but rigidity in terms of working conditions. When college writing teachers are positioned as authoritative (by students) or isolated (by themselves and by their institution), it discounts the truly remarkable teaching and learning that can happen in a classroom as well as a stronger sense of agency by the teachers. Agency negotiation is an integral part of their job, one that should not be minimized or ignored. Resistance is not a bad thing and is a natural experience in most jobs no matter the industry. In many cases, resistance stems from the need for change or a greater awareness of how material conditions affect the ability to do one's job. Writing teachers, though, need to employ their agency to advocate for their

right to be the types of teachers they want to be, but also be respected for the labor-intensive work that is integral to teaching writing and literacy studies.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview #1 (to be conducted prior to any classroom observation):

1. How long have you been teaching here and in what capacity (GTA, adjunct, lecturer)?
   Please tell me about your prior educational and work experience in higher education.
2. What factors affected your decision to work here?
3. How would you describe your teaching philosophy?
   What or who has influenced your teaching practices?
   Do you revise your teaching philosophy periodically? If so, what are the circumstances that affected this revision? If not, why not?
4. How would you describe your role in the classroom? What is the students' role in the classroom?
   What do you enjoy about teaching?
   What do you dislike about teaching?
5. Tell me about your thoughts about the new curriculum.
   How have your classes been affected by the new curriculum?
   How would you define literacy, and how do you teach your students about literacy?
6. Tell me about how you designed the assignment sequence in your course. How do these assignments fulfill the goals of the course?
   How did you develop your assignment sequence? Did you consult other people or materials in the development process?
   Do you use a textbook in your classes? What are your views on the textbook choices?
7. How would you define the word "agency"?
8. How do you feel agency affects how you do your job? Tell me about an instance where you felt your agency was demonstrated.
9. How would you define the word "expertise"? Who has expertise in the teaching of writing?
10. In your professional life, what are your areas of expertise? How did you develop your expertise as a writing teacher?
11. Do you have any questions for me?

Interview #2:

1. What have been some successes in your classes this semester? Tell me about a particular instance where you felt your class was successful.
2. What are some things you would like to change about your classes this semester?
3. How would you describe the working environment here? Is there anything you would change about your working environment?
4. Do you feel as though any factors in your work environment impact your classroom practices? If so, how do they affect classroom practices?

What instances of collaboration amongst faculty in this program have you participated in or have heard about?
What interactions do you have with program administration and campus administration?
What instances of collegiality amongst faculty in this program have you participated in or have heard about?
Tell me about the interaction amongst faculty of different employment statuses (GTAs, adjuncts, lecturers).

5. Do you feel there is a genuine sense of collegiality in this program? If so, why? If not, why not?
6. How do you handle disruptive/offensive behavior from students, or other discipline issues?
   Was there ever a time when a student challenged his or her grade on a paper or portfolio? If so, how did you resolve the situation?
7. Was there ever a time where you were unsure of how to handle a discipline/behavioral issue? If so, how did you end up solving the situation?
8. Have you ever been disappointed in a student or a class? If so, what were the circumstances of this situation and how did you handle it?
9. Has there ever been an instance in your classroom that has caused you to question yourself or your teaching? What was the situation, and how did you handle it?
10. Have you ever had to sacrifice your teaching style or philosophy because of some constraint (curricular, programmatic, or dealing with classroom operations)? What were the circumstances, and how did you handle the situation?
11. If you observed a colleague's class and found his/her teaching style to be completely different than yours, or far from the program's mission and philosophy, what would you do?
12. Do you find a big disparity in the teaching styles and teaching philosophies within the program itself? Please explain.
13. What do you think your students expect from you as their teacher in terms of classroom management and content of the course? Do you find their expectations in line with your expectations from them?
    Tell me about your views on peer response. Do you think it works effectively in your classroom? Why/why not?
14. Do you have any questions for me?

The remaining questions will stem from data collected during classroom observations (I anticipate 3-5 additional questions). Specifically, I am looking for particular instances of classroom management, different types of class activities, the type of instruction, how the teacher relates to the students, students' behavior in general, and elements of the new curriculum.

<u>Interview #3:</u>

1. As the semester draws to a close, please reflect on your classes this semester. What is going well, and what would you like to change if you could?
   Tell me about your current workload. Has this changed over the course of the semester?

2. Tell me about your views on portfolio assessment.
3. Tell me about your process of responding to student writing.
   Who or what has influenced your view of responding to student writing?
   Have you thought about how your students respond to your feedback? If so, have these thoughts changed your feedback practices?
4. Do you think other responsibilities (job-related, school-related, or other) affect your feedback practices? If so, how?
5. Tell me about your thoughts on program leadership.
6. What motivates you as an employee in this program to provide your highest quality instruction to students?
7. Do you feel professional development is emphasized in this program? What are the expectations for PD as you interpret it?
   Do you regularly attend program meetings and/or program professional development? If so, what are your views on the content of these meetings? If not, why not?
   Do you feel professional development is important to your job? Why/why not?
   Do you regularly attend professional development opportunities outside the program? What type of professional development do you participate in?
   Do you think professional development should be compensated in addition to your current salary?
   What topics would you like to see covered in professional development opportunities?
8. Do you feel it is important to read relevant literature in the field of rhetoric/composition in order to do your job? Is this encouraged by the department or by colleagues?
9. Do you feel you have a good balance between work responsibilities and your other responsibilities (family, personal, civic, etc.)? Why/why not?
10. Do you feel supported by the program and/or the university? Why/why not?
11. How do you think first year writing teachers should be evaluated by students and by the department? Is this different than the current evaluation process as you understand it?
12. Do you have any questions for me?

The remaining questions will stem from data collected during classroom observations (I anticipate 3-5 additional questions). Specifically, I am looking for particular instances of classroom management, different types of class activities, the type of instruction, how the teacher relates to the students, students' behavior in general, and elements of the new curriculum.

APPENDIX B: TRANSCRIPTION NOTES

Adapted from Powers (2005):

(#) = timed pause in seconds

[overlapping speech between participant and interviewer]

<u>word</u> = the word was emphasized by the speaker

((…))= comments from researcher

[…] = some speech is omitted

— = speaker shifts to a new/different utterance

Note: Each interview was transcribed verbatim, then revised to remove stops, false starts, etc. Each interview was divided into excerpts and then into numbered lines.