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PRAGMATISM, DISCIPLINARITY AND MAKING THE WORK OF WRITING VISIBLE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

by

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PRAGMATISM, DISCIPLINARITY AND MAKING THE WORK OF WRITING VISIBLE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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University of Nebraska, 2010

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This dissertation outlines how Pragmatism, as a philosophy richly conceived, can act as a useful intervention on three levels ranging from the pedagogical issues surrounding teaching writing teacher to labor issues Composition. In contemporary writing center scholarship, conversations about the utility of theory are hotly debated. Throughout much of its disciplinary history, much writing center scholarship has taken a decidedly best practices approach to its research. This emphasis on applicability is challenged by the trend in some pockets of the field that have incorporated a theoretical bent into their work. The effect of this work has been met with skepticism. This text argues that an approach centered on Pragmatism does not force us to choose between practicality and a theoretical framework because the way I am using Pragmatism accounts for both. Within the field of Composition and Rhetoric, the "pragmatic" turn has been used to describe how scholars advocate for understanding institutions as rhetorical entities capable of change. This idea has both been met with resistance and championed as a paradigm shift. This dissertation contends that what's missing from the scholarship is a deep inquiry into Pragmatism as a philosophy with an in-depth history can inform contemporary debates in the field. Pragmatism informs perennially thorny debates surrounding the use of contingent faculty in writing teaching. Using Dewey's 1940 writings as President of the

AAUP, I argue issues of academic freedom are largely ignored when scholars write about the material conditions of non-tenure track faculty.

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Chapter 1: The Hidden Presence of Pragmatism in Composition

At the tail end of my 50-minute daily commute, there's a billboard on the side of the road featuring a happy young woman in graduation regalia smiling broadly at me. Beneath her pearly-white smile the sign reads, "Real learning for real life." While the university likely intended this advertising campaign to read in the most straightforward of ways—"go here and you'll find success," the elated graduate combined with the emphasis on "real" learning embodies for compositionists a much larger and more complicated problem currently being worked out on a disciplinary level with implications for higher education writ large.

The billboard represents a conceptual shift in higher education that drifts away from a traditional liberal arts curriculum and into a more practically-oriented vision of what colleges should be. The university advertising on the billboard, a baccalaureate degree-granting institution with an accelerated program designed to meet the needs of non-traditional college students, is one of the more explicit examples of this trend, to which the declining importance of the humanities can be attributed. Even at traditional land grant state colleges and universities, the most popular majors include management, business and other pre-professional programs designed to introduce students to a specialized career path.

If current trends persist, there is ample reason to believe that writing and the study of writing will not meet the same fate as their belle-lettres relatives. For better or for worse, Composition is a field that fits into the paradigm of the corporate university. This is neither inherently good nor inherently bad, but it is something for which scholars in the field have to

account when we discuss our role in higher education. Being aware of how we can use our "practicality" as a way to increase our institutional standing while at the same time being mindful of the social justice principles that jump-started the field in the first place (and which may be at odds with the practical vision of higher education) is a philosophical conversation that will be of utmost importance in the 21st century.

Partly as a response to the corporatization of the academy and partly as a way to make sense of a postmodern higher education landscape, composition researchers have started to rethink the term pragmatism as a way to theorize the discipline's institutional positioning. There are a number of scholars who believe the "pragmatic turn" in Composition will help program administrators and researchers make disciplinary expertise more intelligible to stakeholders both within and outside the university. Scholars in this camp argue that doing this work within the existing macro structure of the university is the most effective way to reform institutional practices because, as Richard E. Miller writes, "education has been a business for well over a century and is sure to remain one for the foreseeable future" (203). For critics like Miller, putting into practice a vision of reform necessitates becoming entrapped by the structure itself. By understanding institutions as changeable rhetorical constructions, we are best able to locate possible sites of resistance and reform.

At the core of this Pragmatist resurgence is the idea that our institutions are not faceless monoliths too daunting with which to be engaged, but rather a series of real people who are capable of being persuaded and who make a series of interconnected decisions. In fact the pragmatism-based argument of James Porter and his colleagues won one of Composition and Rhetoric's highest honors, The Braddock Award, in 2001 for the article "Institutional Critique: A

Rhetorical Methodology for Change." The central claim of the essay is that a brand of pragmatism based on the local, changeable circumstances of a given institution were subject to change through smartly deployed rhetorical action. The widespread acclaim of Porter et al.'s essay signified a move in Composition and Rhetoric that "eschews theoretical abstractions in favor of a materially and spatially situated form of analysis" (613). Porter's call to not just explain how structures work and point out when they are problematic marks a shift away from postmodern critical theory and attempts to change the conditions of real people in real places through direct, observable action.

Despite its resonance within the discipline of Composition and Rhetoric, the arguments of Miller and Porter and the like also have been met with a striking amount of resistance. Critics of the pragmatic turn in Comp/Rhet argue that the fundamental logic of its reform methods acquiesces too easily to the results-oriented, profit-driven conditions created by academic capitalism. For these critics, when compositionists accept the existing terms of work within higher education and embrace a fundamentally unprincipled system, the opportunities for authentic and lasting structural change decline. Pragmatism, then, becomes less a realistic way to do the work of reform than a weak-kneed bow to authority. As Marc Bousquet writes, "What troubles me the most about the pragmatist movement is the way it seeks to curb the ambitions of our speech and rhetoric." For Bousquet, the pragmatist account dictates that all non-market idealism will be dismissed out of hand and that "complicity with domination" is the only way to effect institutional change (512). This "complicity with domination" Bousquet describes would likely trickle down to students as well. In a higher education environment where students often are treated as consumers of a product, a case articulately can be made that an inability to see

beyond an existing capitalist schema reduces the potential of students to see beyond their sometimes unwitting acquiescence to capitalism. Instead of being capable citizens who uphold a democracy as a result of their education, students, lacking the ability to critically assess what's around them, are reduced to functionaries in a fundamentally exploitive system.

To critics of the pragmatist turn, the move away from theory and towards pragmatism is linked closely to the corporatization of higher education. As scholars like Slaughter and Rhoades who have written extensively about the corporatization of the university point out, the distinction between private interests and public responsibility frequently are becoming more blurry. From students being targeted by credit card marketers at the student union, to federally funded researchers holding equity in private corporations, to prospective students being advertised to on billboards, the business of higher education has become more apparent in the higher education landscape of the 21st century. Because the corporatization of American higher education never has been more pronounced, the need for critical theory never has been greater. In a sense, institutional reformers championing the approach of Miller and Porter are akin to the successful graduate advertised on the billboard—utilizing a problematic system to suit their own needs with no certainty of lasting, intended results.

On a disciplinary level, Composition and Rhetoric is at the center of this conflict. Throughout its marginalized history when the teaching of writing within English departments was regarded as auxiliary to the teaching of literature, Composition has existed in order to serve what was seen as the legitimate interest of the university, which in the past was the individual professor's disciplinary research. The work of teaching writing was left to a contingent and largely female labor force who taught under poor working conditions for little pay. The

marginality of Composition within English departments led to a long, hard struggle for academic legitimacy (Berlin; S. Miller; Crowley). Within roughly the last 15 years, Composition and Rhetoric has emerged as a legitimate academic enterprise with at least modest respectability within the academy as a scholarly discipline. The fastest-growing subfield of English Studies is Comp/Rhet and more and more Comp/Rhet specialists are gravitating towards leadership positions within English departments, colleges of arts and sciences and even whole universities.

A materialist view of Composition's ascendancy would say that is no accident and did not happen for the reasons one might expect. Far from being the result of a long, hard struggle by disciplinary pioneers, Composition's rise "has a great deal to do with its usefulness to upper-management in its legitimating the practice of deploying a revolving labor force … to teach writing" (Bousquet 500). In Bousquet's mind, the discipline's complicity with academic capitalism plays a significant role in its status. On the other hand, Porter et al. cite the burgeoning material changes to the discipline as evidence that Composition's track record for enacting change is strong. Since the 1970s, the professionalization of the teaching of writing has included the establishment of graduate programs, the increased value of researching writing, and "if nothing else, we now have a field where once there was none" (614).

Thinking about the history of Composition and Rhetoric is important because questions about the discipline's role in the university are not going anywhere— they are just changing in scope. Specifically, the role of writing at many sites of higher education has shifted from remediation to an educational point of emphasis. In disciplines all across the university, the importance of studying writing for all students, not just ones tagged as remedial, has been realized. From Writing in the Disciplines programs, to Writing majors, to the increased valuation

of writing centers, the financial and ideological commitment to writing in higher education presents a series of potential opportunities for Composition to become an integral part of the educational mission of higher education in the next generation. Unlike in any prior historical moment, Comp/Rhet will have opportunities to be part of the life of a university in previously unimagined ways.

Composition and Rhetoric has the potential to play a very prominent, public role within the future of higher education. While this increased institutional stature is exciting, special care must be taken to insure the changes happen in principled ways. To extend the metaphor, it likely would not be worth selling out our old friends and forking over our tater tots just to achieve greater status within the institution. Successful and sustainable writing instruction depends largely on how well writing program administrators, including writing center directors, are able to recognize emerging trends in higher education and effectively communicate what we know about good writing instruction in response to a wider audience both within and outside higher education. Amongst the important question this line of thinking raises for Compositionists is how success will be defined as writing and the teaching of writing is opened up to the larger university. Whose definition counts? Do WPAs and writing center directors have to be willing to cede some control over how successful writing is defined in light of increased institutional visibility?

A deep inquiry into how Compositionists best can do this work requires taking a more thorough look at the rich philosophical history of Pragmatism as well as analyzing how pragmatism and materialism can compliment one another in an effort to establish a coherent framework for disciplinary decision-making on both micro and macro levels. In this book, I will

explain how Pragmatism can be used to mediate in philosophically and ideologically consistent ways a series of issues facing the field of Composition and Rhetoric as well as writing center scholarship.

In an effort to lay the foundation for my argument, I will devote the rest of this chapter to an examination of the history of Pragmatism and explore how the philosophy has been incorporated into Composition and Rhetoric scholarship and outline the major ideological resistance to the idea. After doing this groundwork, I will explain how the reapplication of "real" Pragmatism will continue to be refined through the course of this project. I will pursue four main questions:

—How can a detailed treatment of pragmatism as a philosophical movement with a rich history help us better understand the pragmatic turn in Composition research?

—How can emerging academic disciplines like writing center scholarship work to establish institutional credibility while at the same time challenging existing structures embedded within them?

—How can pragmatism, richly considered, help us think about the ways we make the work of writing centers intelligible to external and internal stakeholders?

—What can Pragmatism offer as an ideological framework that will help writing teachers and administrators respond to external institutional pressures and negotiate issues within the discipline?

A History of Pragmatism

Pragmatism asks its usual question. "Grant an idea or belief to be true," it says, "what concrete difference will its being true make in anyone's actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experiences will be different from those which we would obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is the truth's cash-value in experiential terms?"—William James, *Pragmatism* (1907)

When early pragmatists like William James asked us to consider the material consequences of our theories, it marked an intellectual move away from capital-P Philosophical questions and attempted to locate a theory of praxis where the validity of our theories and beliefs was tested against the outcomes of real events. The effects of pragmatism were felt in a wide range of disciplines from the social sciences to psychology to law, and they continue to be advanced, most notably, by analytic and legal philosophers. For the pragmatist, theory and practice are inseparable because theories are only useful to the extent they can mediate practical actions (Macklin 279). While pragmatist philosophy has taken on a number of different tracks, ranging from Dewey's progressive interpretation to Rorty's use of pragmatism as philosophical criticism, a core tenet of this mode of thinking holds that our sense of reality always is mediated

by and constructed through language and that the ambiguity and bias inherent in discourse always leads to an unstable reality.

Simply put, pragmatism holds that lasting change cannot occur without simultaneous attention to both the theoretically experimental ideas and the practical application necessary to make these ideas real. The benefits of practically applying ideas are dependent on the validity of the ideas themselves and vice versa. For the Pragmatist, knowledge is a mode of doing because it enables us to interact with the world (Quest 220). Reading Pragmatism this way enabled John Dewey's interpretation of the philosophy to become more public and also acted as a foundation for Compositionists and Rhetoricians who base a great deal of theory on inquiries into the rhetorical situation. Dewey explains that "For ordinary purposes, that is, practical purposes, the truth and realness of things are synonyms" ("Philosophy" 190). Because the only things we know for sure are ones which we've experienced (ex. don't touch the stove because it's hot) the best our theories can do is to act as a guide for our future interactions with the world. Simply put, values and theories are hypotheticals that serve as the starting point for inquiry and the validity of that inquiry will be determined by the public consequences of their implementation.

C.S. Peirce put a slightly different emphasis on pragmatism. It was his contention that it was impossible and not very helpful to know everything there was to know about the way all things fit together. Instead, what he advocated was an understanding that our experiences are so limited that only the decisions that would get us to a more favorable destination are worthy of our attention. For Peirce, humans' ability to evolve rested heavily on the ability to keep making these small decisions with increasing degrees of complexity. Peirce saw hope in such a reading of knowledge because this type of "provisional optimism" would guard us against both

positivism and idealism (Brent 19). When William James credited Peirce with founding this intellectual movement, he was paying homage to an early articulation of the idea that the value of knowledge is contingent on its worth in the tangible world.

For administrators of writing programs, including writing centers, and Compositionists interested in engagement with others outside the discipline more generally, the pragmatic maxim that the ability to determine consequences is a more useful measure of truth than thinking about the essence of something seems salient. However, as I discuss later in this chapter, Composition and Rhetoric as a subfield of English Studies has been slow to warm to pragmatism of any strand. What has been done deals mostly with classroom interactions and semiotics and we haven't turned to pragmatism to guide our institutional decision making much at all. One of the reasons for this might be the idea that in practice, pragmatism has led to a kind of short-sighted vision that reduces highly complex material into a reductive form of idealism or a mode of thinking long on quick fixes that uphold the status quo and reform only the interests of those in power. James Mackin points out that short-term solutions to problems are always more visible than long-term consequences and many times these short-term solutions emphasize profit or cost-saving as opposed to a utilitarian social good over the long term (301).

In my view, however, this criticism is a misreading of pragmatist philosophy because there's no theorist who advocates for short-term economic interest over long-term social well-being. The problem is that we don't (and can't, for that matter) have an adequate methodology to determine the long-term efficacy of our rhetorical action. It's not that pragmatism is reductionist or inherently capitalistic, it's that consequences that don't have an easily identifiable bottom line are hard to assess. Consider Dewey's idea that the ends and means of something always are

bound up inextricably in one another ("Later Works" 214). The value of the end is determined by the way we consider the means. Simply put, when the end is not easily discernible, how can we measure success with any certainty? While a pragmatist assessment of outcomes must be comfortable with the ambiguity of measuring progress through a variety of means, I would argue that we make these kinds of choices every time we decide something. In Chapter 2, I show how creatively thinking about practical judgment is a necessary component of any program administrator's job. I also would go as far as to say it is irrational and wrong-headed to go into any situation concerned completely with the end without considering the means along side it.

It is my intention in this book to highlight how every reflective practitioner who makes decisions or tries to make any institutional reform uses a version of pragmatism whether it is named or not. A more in-depth look at pragmatism in Composition and Rhetoric would help us become more mindful of our practices not just in the classroom, but in our institutional decision-making as well. As opposed to taking what we know and value about writing as dogmatic and transmitting those values across the university, thinking about those values from a pragmatist stance would allow the kind of inquiry where what we know is just an impetus for further inquiry and reflection as opposed to a fixed end.

In this next section, I briefly will examine materialism as a critique that critics of pragmatism often cite. While both pragmatism and materialist critique are concerned with examining the structural conditions that form institutions, a materialist critique argues for imagining structural change in grander terms. I want to explain how the various applications of materialist critique have a history as rich as that of pragmatism and question whether the two schools are as opposed as some critics have thought them to be.

Comp/Rhet's Treatment of the History of Pragmatism

In the critically-acclaimed HBO crime drama *The Wire*, methodical and precise detective Lester Freamon languished on the margins of the Baltimore Police Department for the bulk of his career. Assigned to monitor the department's pawnshop after charging a politically-connected local business owner with a crime, the quiet, reflective detective completed his duties in obscurity for the better part of a decade. Eventually, the higher-ups in the departmental bureaucracy forgot about Freamon and he was called out from behind the desk to assist in an investigation involving a major player in the city's drug trade. After his promotion, Freamon used his shrewd investigative instincts to uncover major clues in the large-scale operation. Quietly, as if he never had left, Freamon began to make in-roads with the police department's brass and by the time the television series ended, he'd established himself as one of the premier detectives in the city's homicide department.

Freamon's fall from favor and his subsequent return in some ways acts as a metaphor for pragmatism's potential place in Composition and Rhetoric research. Never far from the discipline's practice, but often detached from its theory, pragmatism has been at best nodded to for what it can tell us about our classroom practices and at worst dismissed as weak-kneed subservience to existing academic structures that preferences academic capitalism over institutional reform. In this section, I aim to detail existing literature that takes up the idea of pragmatism in Comp/Rhet and argue how these conceptions, both positive and negative, fail to account for the rich intellectual history of the pragmatist movement.

Discussions about pragmatism in Composition and Rhetoric historically have taken two main forms. Ann Berthoff's well-known book *The Making of Meaning* argues that C.S. Peirce's conceptions of pragmatic semiotics are worth noting because they provide a philosophical test for the potential value of other rhetorical theories. Central to Berthoff's argument for the relevance of Peirce is the idea that psychology and politics are intertwined to the extent that a study of each of them as foundational will lead to positivist thinking that is ultimately antithetical to the notion that writing is a socially-constructed process. More commonly, Comp/Rhet scholars have invoked the more civic-oriented pragmatism of John Dewey as a way to articulate the praxis of process-pedagogy and critical theory in the writing classroom.

While Berthoff's utilization of pragmatist philosophy takes a decidedly rhetorical approach, Stephen Fishman offers pragmatism as an alternative to a more radical pedagogy centered on critique. What Fishman suggests in his essay "Teaching for Student Change: A Deweyan Alernative to Radical Pedagogy" is that a Deweyan approach to the classroom "is an effective alternative to radical or confrontational pedagogy." Fishman contends this mode of teaching is not intended to shy away from conflict, rather that "conflict must occur within the context of appreciation for cooperative inquiry and the virtues which sustain it" (344). In his case study example, Fishman looks at an approach to handling contentious topics in a class discussion. In this instance, Martin, a student who proffers a series of objectionable comments that Fishman, as a teacher, finds deeply troubling, is allowed to articulate his ideas without immediately being challenged by the teacher. Instead, Martin is listened to and his ideas are subjected to the class's scrutiny without the teacher stepping into the debate. In approaching the discussion in this way, the teacher exercised the Deweyan principle that people cannot be handed

ideas like bricks by either the lecturer or other students. The role of the teacher in this moment was to ensure each speaker in the discussion directly engaged with the topic as careful listeners and considerate speakers.

Berthoff's semiotic approach and Fishman's attempts to use Pragmatism to rethink the fairly common pedagogical problem of what to do with the contentious student who raises a problematic worldview in the classroom are connected by their explicit attempts to name Pragmatism in what they were doing. Furthermore, these two cases highlight the paradox of Pragmatism within Composition circles—on one hand, attempts to name Pragmatism as what the discipline does have not been engaged with very deeply, but on the other hand, Pragmatism's mark is all over the work that we do.

As far back as 1980, Janet Emig labeled John Dewey's influence on the field as "everywhere in our work" (12). While the field of Composition rarely mentions explicitly pragmatism as a philosophical movement, Dewey's association with the American philosophical field is undeniable. Tom Newkirk later tries to use Dewey's way of conceptualizing experience as a bridge between process-oriented, student-ownership championing and E.D. Hirsch's highly questionable call for what he termed "cultural literacy" that emphasized subject-specific knowledge (199-208). Other scholars have looked to Dewey more for what his philosophy of education can tell us about the teaching of writing. For example, in *Radical Departures,* Chris Gallagher inquires more deeply into the Deweyan notion of progressivism. Stephen Fishman posits that one of the reasons Dewey's work does not figure more prominently in Composition Studies is because he "says so little specifically about writing" (315).

While numerous scholars in both Education and Composition have taken up Dewey's work for what it can tell us about education's purposes, Donald Jones (1996) is one of the only composition researchers explicitly to name pragmatism as a way to rethink our classroom practices. For Jones, "Dewey can help us realize a pragmatic theory of agency, one that creates a new theoretical context for the best aspects of two supposedly competing pedagogies: writing process and postmodern composition instruction" (2). Jones saw pragmatism as a way of thinking that neither erased the experiences and expertise of any given writer nor ignored the postmodern view of knowledge as a socially constructed experience made possible through dialectics with competing cultural norms.

Pragmatism's explicit influence on writing center scholarship similarly has been slight. Beth Carroll published a narrative in *Praxis: A Writing Center Journal* that chronicled her development of a tutor training course centered on pragmatic philosophy. Carroll described the desire for a theoretical framework to negotiate the theory/practice binary in writing center work. Drawn to more inquiry-driven writing center research like Beth Boquet's *Noise from the Writing Center* and Nancy Grimm's *Good Intentions,* but worried new tutors might not be able to identify with the abstractions, she contends pragmatism can be used in a consultant development program because the philosophy "refuses to separate" theory and practice (2).

A common thread running through both Comp/Rhet and writing center scholarship is the way pragmatism's influence looks exclusively at the relationship between teacher and student and director and consultant. One of the primary goals of this project is to explicate how a re-reading of pragmatism can help inform and theorize our professional work outside the classroom or writing center. For too long, pragmatism has been relegated to the pawnshop of our

scholarship, recognized only in passing for what it helped us think about in a different historical moment. After tracing the history of materialism in Composition, I will consider the criticisms of pragmatism and suggest that while many of these criticisms indeed are warranted, they are based on problematic interpretations of the philosophy.

Pragmatism as the Anti-Theory

A common complaint leveled against Pragmatism is that the changes it may enact within institutions are too small in scale to have much lasting effect. Furthermore, critics believe the philosophy to be short-sighted and ahistorical. The alternative, to critics like Teresa Ebert, is a form of critique that views the role of education as the gaining of the recognition that each time we act, we are continuing a series of historical practices that uphold and sometimes challenge the ideology of those in power. Speaking back to postmodern critics who contend the role of critique is an outmoded, modernist conception, Ebert argues, "Critique is the cornerstone of feminist political practices and struggles against exploitive orders of differences produced in global-patriarchal capitalism" (810). The role of critique functions as an agent of institutional reform by exposing the "concealed operations of class and underlying socioeconomic relations connecting the myriad details and seemingly disparate events and representations of our lives" (816). To its detractors, what critique offers that Pragmatism doesn't is a wide-angled lens through which all salient variables are accounted for and lasting change occurs as the result of class solidarity and collective action, not the well-intentioned whims of a few people within the embedded system.

Convinced that dismantling a broken, exploitive system through a careful study of the oppressive material practices in Composition was preferable to working within the system for

smaller, more individualistic changes, materialist critics used their research platforms to articulate what could be in the field. For instance, Bruce Horner, in his book *Terms of Work for Composition: A Materialist Critique,* studies how the material practices of Composition can help us understand how the identity of Composition is shaped by actors both within the field and the wider university. In *Terms,* Horner argues how considering the teaching of first-year writing as real work done by real people with real physical constraints placed upon them can help us better to understand the institutional constraints placed on writing teachers. For example, Horner highlights how the teaching of Composition historically has been shown to be a matter of public interest much more than the happenings in other pockets of the humanities. Citing the perpetual expectation of industry for colleges to produce students who "know how to write," Horner contends, "Work in Composition is recognized for, or is defined as, the production of economic capital in the form of the commodified literacy skills to meet society's demands" (16). This is an important insight because Horner recognizes how closely Composition's identity to stakeholders outside the discipline often is tied to producing a tangible product—in this case, students who are prepared to handle the writing demands of a white-collar job. For Horner, this presents Composition with a dangerous temptation to succumb to an outcomes-based agenda and a pressure to turn out quality products (namely the literacy practices of students).

The likely complaint against Pragmatism in this instance rests on the idea that it doesn't go far enough in effecting change. Making smaller gains within the existing system won't be enough to alter fundamentally the existing system in which these gains are embedded. To put it another way, a critic like Horner likely would argue that tweaking the pay of contingent faculty

or developing a responsible set of objectives for a first-year writing class won't go far enough to count as institutional reform.

It is my contention throughout this book that Pragmatism does provide a way forward in our efforts to do institutional reform because it calls for us simultaneously to account for acting within the reality of the situations we face in our professional lives every day while maintaining our ideological principles. For example, one of the problems with Bousquet's glib indictment of the Pragmatism in Porter et al.'s essay is how easily he dismisses the importance of the idea that institutions are not faceless, unchanging monoliths beyond our understanding. What's valuable about Porter et al.'s contribution is pointing out what we all know materially to be true in our daily lives (Negotiating budgets is a rhetorical act, etc.) but is abstract and distant in our writings about institutional reform. Criticism often does not teach us how to negotiate the nuts and bolts of these interactions while Pragmatism requires us to be mindful of both.

Reclaiming Pragmatism

The main reason why the pragmatist/materialist debate matters is that it fundamentally makes Compositionists ask ourselves how institutional reform best can happen. Answering this question makes us call into question some deeply rooted ideological stances and for some, these stances are diametrically opposed. Positioned like two politicians running attack ads against one another, the pragmatists and the materialists each are guilty of unilaterally rejecting the theoretical stance of the other. My fundamental argument contends that the existing literature's positioning of materialism and pragmatism as binary opposites stems from a misapplied definition of pragmatism and that, if considered more carefully, the conditions for sustainable

institutional reform in Composition can happen best when the two modes of thinking compliment one another instead of competing. I believe that behind every action within an existing system, the ethical considerations we choose to take up should be influenced by the theoretical possibility of how things should be, but like Miller, I believe that enacting or implementing any theory means attending to the material realities of the existing structure.

In his essay "The Arts of Complicity," Richard E. Miller talks of attention to the pragmatic in the writing classroom with a goal "to provide our students with the opportunity to speak, read and write in a wider range of discursive contexts than is available to them when they labor under the codes of silence and manufactured consent that serve to define the lived experience of subordinates in a culture of schooling" ("Arts" 27). If the goal is to teach Composition in a manner consistent with Pragmatism is, as Miller writes, to teach students to be attentive to the rhetorical contexts in which they're participating, even if it's hard to say what those contexts will be in the future, then it is hard to be against pragmatism pedagogy in Composition. After all, who's against students who can speak back to oppositional power structures in articulate and meaningful ways? However, the word "pragmatism" often shows up as a criticism of an unprincipled decision-making process that creates a short-term gain for an individual. For critics like Teresa Ebert, pragmatism is a theory-rejecting, patriarchy-upholding ethnocentric "alibi for actually existing capitalism" (Quango-ing 5). Ann Berthoff's detractors claim that her style of pragmatism often denies political activism and Bousquet contends that adhering to pragmatist philosophy limits the ambitions of our speech and rhetoric.

But how did pragmatism get such a bad reputation? Why did pragmatism become the word to describe deceitful, unenlightened and unethical decision-making processes? There are a

couple reasons why critics of practices that are in some way considered pragmatic revile the term so much. For starters, William James's famous line about its "cash value" equated the philosophy with a market-driven bottom line. It's easy to see why critics, especially ones with theoretical, Marxist predilections, would pounce on such a statement—after all, from a historical materialist prospective, the profit made from the cash value of something is dependent on the exploitation of the worker/producer. Also, there is an inherent power relationship when it comes to this conception of the pragmatic. Being pragmatic about something implicitly means one has a voice in the process already and holds some degree of power over another in an abstract sense. In a more concrete sense, the meaning of the term pragmatism has been popularized to mean "A practical, matter-of-fact way of approaching or assessing situations or of solving problems" (*American Heritage Dictionary* 4th ed., 2006). In common American parlance in 2008, pragmatic often is used in practice as a synonym for practical. Thinking about pragmatism and the pragmatic for its contemporary usage absolutely compels us to think of the word as describing an anti-theoretical way to get what you want done however possible, ethics be damned.

Unfortunately, when the common modern uses of pragmatism are conflated with the philosophical school of thought with a rich intellectual history, pragmatism suddenly becomes a dirty word. Perhaps this accounts for why no scholars, aside from Roskelly and Ronalds, choose to name Pragmatism explicitly for what it could tell us about the way institutional decision-making happens. Perhaps this is why, despite widespread praise for Berthoff's work, no one elected to continue this scholarly thread.

Ronald and Roskelly

Roskelly and Ronald offer romantic/pragmatic rhetoric as a way for teachers to "question their own practices and beliefs and to give them theoretical support for the beliefs they continue to hold." They offer this critique as a way to: a) Avoid a brand of cynicism endemic to jaded teachers; b) Consider both pedagogical principles and storied experience as legitimate means of knowledge-making; and c) Bridge the gap between theory and practice. They call it "a philosophy that embraces both idealism and practicalism, individuality and social responsibility, inquiry and faith" (3). They argue most teachers are pulled in one direction or another, either falling back into the abstract comfort of theory or clinging to their instincts in light of the local context in which they practice. Romantic/pragmatic rhetoric is offered as a way to bridge the gap between theory and practice because scholars need to find a way to demonstrate the often unquestioned assertion that theory and practice go together (26). *Reason to Believe* offers scholars, and more importantly, teachers reading scholarship a chance to see themselves as embodiments of theory and like any pragmatist text, it contends theory is not necessarily valuable unless its consequences lead to greater practical understanding.

Careful to point out that Romanticism and Pragmatism are intellectual movements with a rich history, Roskelly and Ronald contend the words romantic and pragmatic have taken on meanings that are greatly distanced from the intellectual movements with which they are associated. For Roskelly and Ronald, the words are condescending descriptions of intellectually lazy theoretical positions or worse, outdated, naïve notions that are distanced a great deal from reality (24). Instead, *Reason to Believe* argues that many thinkers, from Paulo Friere to Cornel West to bell hooks advocate for teaching practices bearing a great deal of similarity to the

romantic/pragmatic stances taken in the book. Throughout *Reason,* the authors detail how some of the most widely respected and influential thinkers in Composition are influential precisely because they are able to articulate an intelligible theory of education that will have real effect on real people in real classrooms.

The book concludes with a series of anecdotes and teaching profiles of educators who successfully have incorporated romantic/pragmatic rhetoric into their classrooms. Roskelly and Ronald profile a high school teacher who works primarily with at-risk freshman at an economically under-served school. In a class designed to teach students about meter in a poem, a young teacher named Bill Buczinsky manages to design an in-class writing assignment that foregrounds student experience in a discussion about the technical aspects of a poem. His students write harrowing tales about neighborhood violence, restrictive parents and the doldrums of schooling and the romantic/pragmatist teacher then uses the students' own words to teach the subject-specific lesson of the day. This is one of an unabashedly hopeful set of narratives that act as a deliberate rhetorical choice for Roskelly and Ronalds; after all, they introduce romantic/pragmatic rhetoric as an alternative to the cynicism that they see in teachers regarding the role of theory in the classroom.

That Which Follows

Despite its sometimes sanguine rhetoric, in the end, *Reason to Believe* soberly calls for "theory to be responsible for its consequences" (165). The importance of Roskelly and Ronald's blending of American romanticism and American pragmatism for educators is the idea that individuals and systems are challengeable and changeable although sometimes these changes are

tacit or veiled in some way. While Roskelly and Ronald target individual teachers as their audience, I believe their arguments can be extended to include the institutional and public spheres where writing program administrators, writing center directors and Composition scholars also engage in pedagogical relationships. Like Ronald and Roskelly, I believe that a new look at pragmatism, "despite its diminished status in the latest context of theory might be in order right now" (27). However, I aim to take the arguments brought forth in *Reason to Believe* and extend them outside of the classroom and into the spheres of higher education policy-making and intra-institutional collaboration.

It is not my goal, however, to claim pragmatism as the only effective way to make institutional change. This project aims to blend the progressive virtues of pragmatism with the insight gained from materialist critique. As I will try to show throughout the book, both critique and pragmatism are necessary for getting different answers for different purposes. I believe that when studying institutional decision-making, having a richly conceived notion of the past (critique) tempered with a sense of considered hope (pragmatism) will assist in making the best range of choices we can possibly make. At the risk of sounding Pollyannaish or naïve, I believe there needs to be space in Composition (and the academy writ large) for both experimental thinkers working at the edge of our understanding as well as hermeneutic intermediaries who work within the existing system to enact change that's responsive to both disciplinary expertise and the external concerns of other public stakeholders.

In this book, I hope to enact this hybrid mode of institutional reform by taking up both micro- and macro-level concerns of Compositionists and those interested in institutional reform more broadly. Chapter 2 argues that because writing center scholarship so often has positioned

its researchers as having to make the false choice between scholarship centered on tangible, applied approaches or a theoretical bent, an approach to writing center inquiry centered on Pragmatism accounts for the necessity of doing both. I would venture that all practitioners, to a certain degree, meld theory and practice together whether they are conscious of it or not. Recognizing in our research how the politics and practices of writing centers inextricably are linked will allow researchers a way forward as the discipline's scholarship matures.

In order to confront the changing dynamics in the relationship between writing centers and the larger institution, Chapter 3 is devoted to examining how practitioners could use metaphor and metonymy in original ways to make their work more intelligible to stakeholders across campus. Consistent with a version of Pragmatism that advocates for simultaneously being mindful of both short-term material ends and a comprehensive understanding of the issues facing writing centers vis-à-vis the rest of the institution, I question how engaging with the metaphors circulating around writing centers might compel conversations about the utility and pedagogy of the learning site that could lead to a greater understanding of the practices writing centers employ.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus away from institutional dynamics and the field's scholarship and examines how the link between Pragmatism and writing centers exists on a pedagogical level as well. This chapter argues that writing centers are Pragmatic places not solely because they function as useful sites within the university that help produce better writers, but because the pedagogy employed in our consulting habits and tutor training programs retains features consistent with the educational practices advocated by the Chicago Progressive Pragmatists. Examining the role of play in writing center practices highlights how the writing center can be a

unique site of learning within the university because its pedagogical practices and institutional ethos run counter to regimented and streamlined trends within higher education.

In this book's final chapter, I explain how contemporary ideological differences regarding labor issues in Composition misread Pragmatism and how this accounts for the debate being framed in unhelpful ways. Furthermore, I use Dewey's eminently pragmatic writings about the nature and purpose of academic freedom to explain why reevaluating tenure can help the field get beyond what I perceive to be an impasse in the debate.

Throughout this project, I attempt to show how thinking in more considered ways about Pragmatism can help writing program administrators and writing center directors respond to the very real everyday situations they face with the intellectual wherewithal to make considered, thoughtful decisions that should guide their practice as well as make what we do with writing intelligible to external stakeholders across our universities and communities who need to continually understand our pedagogy and philosophy. It is my contention that we can serve our students, our universities and our communities best when we are not constrained by theory/practice binaries and instead attempt to meld what we believe and what we do in thoughtful and responsible ways. I believe Pragmatism is a philosophical lens through which we are able to do this work.

Chapter 2- Bridging the Theory Practice Gap in Writing Center Scholarship

"I have a story," Anna said one day at the end of a staff meeting. "It's kind of funny and kind of not, but anyway, I just laughed about it. You see, this girl I was working with asked me what I was at the beginning of our consultation. After I told her I was Mexican, she told me that was cool, as if there was a wrong answer to that question, I guess."

Sam wrote on our writing center's wiki, "Student A has applied twice to medical school, so the stakes are high. In a word, his persistence is admirable and his desire unquenchable. Being a member of an underrepresented community, he has created a personal narrative informed by his commitment to helping 'others.' A 'conduit' to heal, he professes, whereby his education, and not the channel through which his good intentions certainly flow, reigns supreme. We've worked together four times, and my greatest desire is to see him through fusing these worlds together: desire, education, personal success, altruism (in the form of his ability to help others heal). I can tell his heart's in it, but were we to be so lucky as to succeed with heart alone."

Phil came to my office one day and said, "Mike, I just had the weirdest consultation and I mean weird in a good way, I think. You see there's a professor from China who met with me and wanted to talk about the possibility of bringing writing center principles back with her to Beijing, but then we started talking about bringing the actual writing center back with her to Beijing through some sort of interfacing program that would allow us to do synchronous consultations. She's coming back on Monday to talk more and I feel as if I'm kind of out of my league, but really, I know I'm not. This is what we're supposed to be doing."

Taken together, these anecdotes represent the work of consulting in a writing center. They are real, embodied moments which are representative of the enormous challenges and potential of writing centers as a site for teaching and learning. From these examples, all coming within a month of each other in the Writing Center I help direct, questions about the authority, access, and globalization in higher education are raised in ways that simultaneously demand that our consultants think quickly and reflectively about issues the field has struggled with for the better part of a generation. In this chapter I will argue that because the unique demands of writing center work require its teachers to balance immediate intellectual dexterity with the seemingly incongruous idea of deep reflection, political pragmatism offers a useful heuristic for thinking about these difficult issues.

It's worth noting that in these three brief anecdotes, our consultants, not our directors, our researchers or our administrators, are the ones situated on the front lines of these stories and must face them daily in their consulting lives. In their 1999 essay, "Postcolonialism and the Idea of a Writing Center," Anis Bawarshi and Stephanie Pelkowski "posit that the writing center can become what Mary Louise Pratt has termed 'a contact zone'" (42). While I admire Bawarshi and Pelkowski for incorporating post-colonial theory into writing center scholarship, I contend that the writing center has been and will continue to be a contact zone whether we acknowledge it or not. Stories like Anna's and Sam's tell us as much. Stories like Phil's document how the work of consulting creates unexpected encounters with bigger structural questions often considered to be the work of administrators and directors. Binding all three of these stories together is the idea that these immensely complex ideas that still are being worked out by professionals in the field

are being met head-on by the students who work in writing centers. Since calls for more writing center research have been answered by students and directors alike, richer conceptions of the work of consulting and administrating in writing centers have emerged. As the body of writing center scholarship expands to include a more holistic understanding of what it means to do one-with-one writing work, it also presents a more elaborate intellectual framework for our tutors to negotiate. As this chapter will show, these exigencies would occur even if writing center scholars never wrote about them, but the fact that they have creates an increasingly complex body of scholarship for new tutors to access.

For some writing center scholars, this is not a positive development. At the 2008 International Writing Centers Association conference, questions were raised about the expectations we have for our consultants. In his plenary address, Harvey Kail asked if attending to the complicated work of addressing issues of technology and racism in a writing center was asking too much of consultants and taking away from the primary focus of writing center work—collaboration. My argument in this chapter will attempt to address this question in three distinct but related ways. First, I will explore how recent trends in writing center publications have advanced the discipline's scholarly work in progressive ways, but still are met with some resistance from certain pockets of the field. Then I will use Anna, Sam and Phil's anecdotes to explain why attending to issues of difference, globalization and access are inseparable from collaboration. I conclude this chapter by explaining how political pragmatism broadly conceived can help writing center practitioners reconcile the immediate, tangible needs of a writer with a long-term goal of transforming the institutions to which we belong.

One of the most invigorating and complicated aspects of writing center work is the mystery surrounding the writers who walk through the door. Only in the writing center can a teacher work with an entomologist studying the mating habits of beetles followed by a freshman who wants to refine a thesis statement followed by a meteorologist studying the effectiveness of wind turbines in Central Turkey. The breadth of experiences makes each day different and the rewards plentiful. However, the writing center is also one of the richest sites for students to confront directly the problematic power dynamics and assumptions accompanying academic literacy in our colleges and universities.

"What are you again?"

"I can tell his heart's in it, but were we to be so lucky as to succeed with heart alone."

As writing center practitioners began to push for disciplinary credibility within higher education, publishing scholarly work was seen as a way to establish writing center work as a legitimate academic enterprise. In his essay, "Theorizing the Writing Center: An Uneasy Task," Pete Carino argues that doing this scholarly work not only will advance what we know about the teaching of writing, but also improve the traditionally marginalized institutional status of writing centers. This call to theorize writing centers was answered in three distinct ways: case studies (Clark; Kinkead and Harris; Meyers-Breslin), new metaphorical ways to consider the

institutional positioning of writing centers (Stay; Mullin and Wallace; George) and contributions to edited collections that emphasized a "best practices" approach to writing center work (Meyer and Smith; Olson).

While these early modes of scholarship were important because they signaled that writing center practitioners were committed to the theorizing of writing center work, the usefulness of the texts themselves is questionable. The typical case study detailed the logistics and administrative issues unique to one writing center, included some speculation about the reform efforts underway to fix the outlined problems, and made a move at the conclusion towards more generalized points about writing center work that readers could apply to their own practice. When the writing turned to actual consulting practices, the texts often were written like how-to manuals that offered up trite nuggets such as, "my feeling is that if students are able to incorporate a catchy introduction, they should, but if not, a straightforward one will be quite acceptable. Often, when students stop worrying about being witty or cute, they are able to write introductions much more easily" (Clark 102). In fairness, many authors of early writing center scholarship were working under material constraints that either did not reward them for publication or took up so much time that any texts that were not of practical benefit did not resonate. With that said, however, advocating for consulting practices that did not challenge or help students negotiate the status quo of literacy in the university reinforced traditional and often problematic writing pedagogies and did not in fact advance the interests of writing center scholarship in substantial ways. The importance of early writing center scholarship lay not so much in its substance but in its sheer presence. At a time in the discipline's history when writing

center work was considered to be adjunct to the real teaching and learning happening in colleges and universities, the fact that practitioners started "doing" scholarship functioned to establish scholarly credibility for the field.

As writing centers proliferated in colleges and universities across the country and writing center scholarship increasingly was recognized as a viable scholarly pursuit, more writing center directorships opened up that were tenure-line faculty positions. Coincidentally, the disciplining of writing centers corresponded with a new thread of scholarship within the field. This work, while not eschewing the practical, theorizes writing centers in ways that are a) more consistent with other academic disciplines and b) upping the intellectual ante for writing center discourse. By reading theory onto writing center practice, scholars like Grimm, Boquet, Denny and Geller et al. apply philosophies and ways of thinking from disparate disciplines to advance both the discipline's theory and practice. From postmodernism to queer theory to Jimi Hendrix, ways of knowing from a variety of existing disciplines have helped writing center scholars parse together a quilt-like canon for trying to explain what's known and what's possible in writing center work.

In Good Intentions, Nancy Grimm explores how conceptions of what it means to be literate factor into the daily work of consulting in previously unexamined ways. As the first monograph-length publication dealing exclusively with writing center work, Good Intentions fused speculation about the daily work of writing centers with literacy theory and postmodernism. The larger logic of Grimm's book explicitly spells out how the work of writing centers intrinsically is tied to how literacy is valued in higher education. If writing centers are to serve students in ethical ways, Grimm argues, they must "learn to articulate the tacit cultural

expectations carried in academic literacy and suggest ways to negotiate with those expectations that go beyond mere acceptance or rejection" (50). The naming of this function of a writing center is important because it calls on writing center administrators to account for this work in staff education and also calls on consultants themselves to be reflective about their own institutional positioning in a way that only focusing on the production of writing does not allow.

Similarly, Harry Denny draws upon queer theory to better articulate the spatial purpose of a writing center in academic institutions. Denny outlines the ways queer people create subcultures and support systems designed simultaneously to help one another and to develop collaborative coping mechanisms designed to handle integration and interaction with the larger society productively (49). He goes on to argue that the writing center functions in very similar ways for students negotiating their own identities as students pursuing higher education. In the writing center I help direct, for instance, we often talk about ourselves to students by describing what we do as "lending a sympathetic ear" and "helping negotiate and decode the various writing assignments you'll be asked to do in the university." Denny's revisiting of queer theory for how it can inform the work of writing centers is similar to Grimm in that he takes an interdisciplinary approach to informing both how we think about and how we practice writing center work.

The interdisciplinary approach to doing scholarship that Grimm and Denny undertook in their research is fairly straightforward and acknowledged. Grimm cites Foucault and Denny directly applies queer theory to the physical and human geography of writing centers. What's not so apparent is how this appropriation of ideas from other contexts and subsequent application to writing centers enveloped a paradigm-shift that compelled the discipline to question some

fundamental assumptions about the work of writing centers. By applying ideas developed elsewhere to writing center work, the scholarship took up an interdisciplinary ethos that sets writing center work slightly apart from the field of Composition more generally. For instance, in Beth Boquet's Noise from the Writing Center, the writing center community is pushed to see beyond the mundane and bureaucratic details of writing center work and instead to push on the limits of student experience in a "high-risk, high-yield" conception of consulting (77). Far from being an abstract platitude about what constitutes good consulting, Boquet's re-conceptualization of writing center work leads into places that frequently challenge the status quo.

Early in her chapter titled, "Channeling Jimi Hendrix," Boquet tells the story of a struggling student who comes to the writing center because her basketball coach did not want to see her become academically ineligible for the season. The student-athlete and her consultant met weekly over the course of the semester and during that time, the consultant and the writer discussed not just writing, but the shared experience of academic difficulty. The player remained eligible, the consultant felt good and Boquet's story could read simply as the problematic teacher-as-hero narrative or serve as fodder for a year-end report justifying the existence of the writing center. Boquet then tells us that the student transferred schools at the end of the semester because she developed a passion for a major that her current college didn't have. To Boquet, this was a success story. A student developed a newfound interest in academics and an increased confidence in her ability to succeed in college. What was actually important about the story for Boquet, though, was the questions it raised about the legitimacy of the writing center as an agent of retention and the role of empirical research in assessing the viability and worth of writing

centers writ large: "So I am suspicious of the neat, clean, efficient research like that on writing center-letter grade correspondence because I suspect it actually tells us very little at the same time that it fails to tell us a whole lot" (50). Stories like these call into question basic notions about what makes good consulting good, how to make writing center work intelligible and whose interests writing centers really serve. This kind of disruptive scholarship compelled the field to become more reflective about its work and challenged administrators and consultants alike to take a more holistic and macro-level approach to day-to-day work in the writing center.

However, there is a contingent of scholars in the writing center community who don't believe this recent trend in the discipline's scholarship is positive. In fact, if anything, it is perceived to be disruptive in the same way that an off-topic question from a student in a classroom would be: a minor annoyance designed to distract from the real purpose. In his ethnographic study, Learning Capitalist Culture: Deep in the Heart of Tejas, Douglas Foley outlines how high school students attempt to subvert the direction of an individual class period through a variety of means with varying success. Most of the time the students' goal in playing these "making out games" is to draw attention away from the subject matter and on to themselves (113). In Foley's book, the students are rebelling against a regimented schooling system that reinforces the social and economic order of a small Texas town. If we think of writing center scholarship as the institution of school in this case, then Grimm's and Boquet's work represents the students attempting to slow down the mechanistic flow of the school day.

Critics like Christina Murphy would then be the school administration. In her sometimes scathing review of Noise, Murphy contends that Boquet simply dresses up tired truisms about the role of writing centers in impressive fashion through her creative use of metaphor, pop culture references and the sheer likeability of her prose. Still Murphy says, "I see Boquet's call for change as written with a new twist or angle through its broad-ranging images drawn largely from music and popular culture, but actually not that substantive when the call and the images are examined in some detail" (6). In her most stinging indictment, Murphy contends that without these new images and metaphors about the role of writing centers in institutions, Boquet's conclusions could easily be "dropped into a tutoring manual from a decade ago" (7). Murphy acknowledges how nicely Boquet lays out both the administrative and pedagogical challenges facing writing center work, but says these issues won't be solved by innovative references to music theory and encouraging our consultants to "jam" with students. Instead, Murphy asks a rhetorical question thinly veiled as critique, "Or will we get there by some truly new ideas and some genuine honesty about our current circumstances and challenges in the writing center?" (8). Critiques like Murphy's argue that books like Noise, rather than being ground-breaking shifts in writing center scholarship, are akin to the kid getting up to sharpen his pencil for the third time—trying to be subversive, but not really doing anything altogether out of the ordinary.

Grimm's Good Intentions faces similar scholarly ire. To critics, the book simply names what most practitioners of writing center work already do—see the center as a site of competing literacies where different stakeholders' subjectivity leads to many competing narratives. Postmodernism and in turn Grimm's call to action are to Kevin Davis a "no brainer" and

something that he "find(s) most educated people do most all of the time" (9). Far from being the rebel high schooler looking to escape a mechanized educational experience, to Davis, Grimm herself is a "nervous-conservative mainstreamer suggesting radical subversion to a bipartite audience: those who will never hear or those who have been true radicals for decades" (9). While few critics dispute the larger logic of Grimm's work, most dismissals of it contend that reading postmodern theory onto writing center research is nothing eventful in and of itself. Critics contend that books like Noise and Good Intentions, far from being what I call disruptive scholarship, don't really have all that much new to say. About Good Intentions, Suzanne Diamond wonders "what fundamentally new strategies does it offer" (8) while Davis didn't "find anything particularly enlightening" in the book (9).

The fundamental difference between critics of books I term to be part of a progressive trend in writing center scholarship and those who embrace the work of Boquet and Grimm seems to be a matter of applicability. What is apparent in the critiques leveled by Davis and Murphy is dissatisfaction with the lack of specific recommendations for how writing centers should proceed in the future. Murphy's sneering dismissal of the abstract idea of consultants "jamming" with student-writers is indicative of a deeper-seated discomfort with approaches to writing center scholarship that do not include a new and specific "best practices" sort of recommendation. For Diamond, looking at what Grimm can tell us about writing center work won't do the discipline any tangible good because she equates the de-centered nature of postmodernity with an abstract relativism that won't advance the discipline's understanding of good writing center work. While it's true that a consensus definition of postmodernism is hard to come by, Diamond's main

problem with the book seems to stem from an inability to think about writing center work without incorporating "best practices" logic. She labels postmodernism as "dangerously open-ended—and maybe disingenuous when we are talking about the ways individuals must sometimes initiate new—dare I say, better [her emphasis] social and pedagogical practices" (8). Even though books like Noise are indeed silent about specific recommendations about how reform should be enacted, the negative reviews outlined so far in this chapter represent a schism that is likely to cause a considerable amount of disciplinary conflict in future writing center scholarship.

At its best, theory pushes the limits of what we know and slowly trickles down to inform the larger culture. It is not meant to work like a toaster's instruction manual or a high school guidance counselor's "How to Succeed in College" brochure. Instead, it is designed to make us re-see and revise the nature of things and cause us to adjust our worldview accordingly. While Davis and Diamond are correct to point out there is not much practical guidance in Noise and Good Intentions, indicting the books for what they never meant to be seems just as (if not more) problematic. For instance, when Davis talks about postmodernism being something that most smart people he knows already practice, the assured subject position Davis himself writes from is problematically ironic. When Murphy claims that what Boquet does in Noise really isn't that different from what appears in decade-old tutoring journals, she doesn't fully take into account the history of writing centers and how they inextricably were tied to perceived institutional need and remediation (Carino; Boquet, "Secret"). Even if Murphy is right to suggest Boquet doesn't offer much by way of directly improving tutoring, to suggest writing centers should speak back

to the kinds of hegemonic institutional forces they've historically been up against with candor and snarky subversion represents an important metaphorical shift in how writing centers define themselves. The importance of this shift leads writing center work away from the practical ways to deal with budget constraints ("we've found getting a vending machine to be a great way to earn extra money" [Clark]) to a self-actualization of sorts where real scholarly work regarding literacy, language and writing can happen.

But far from being just a petty academic fight on the pages of writing center texts and journals, the real events happening to real people in our writing centers merit the kind of critical and reflective attention that a deep scholarly inquiry can offer. For example, we only need to look at Anna's example for why thinking hard about our work in the fashion that Grimm asks us to matters. The question, "what are you" takes up the kinds of questions that are not separate from collaboration, but rather integral to the kind of collaborative work done in writing centers. What can Anna's experience tell us about issues of expertise in our writing centers? What can the student's motivation for asking the question in the first place tell us about the often unconscious expectations that students who visit the writing center continue to hold? Is the student's question simply a head-on acknowledgement of difference or is it more malicious in intent? Aside from the big questions about writing centers, authority and race that Anna's story brings up, there are also pressing questions that are much more immediate. For instance, how did Anna react? How did her reaction frame the collaboration moving forward? Would she be within her bounds to refuse to work with the student if she deemed the question sufficiently virulent? If so, what does that say about the role of writing centers as an alternative space for teaching?

Similar questions can be asked of Sam's example as well. In this story we see a student who presumably had been beckoned to academia with the promise of a better life and adequate support only to find that personal qualification was determined by the same kind of rigid traditionalism that had kept people like him out of higher education in the first place. As for Sam, as the writing center consultant he is faced with some deeply complicated ethical questions about how best to work with Student A. The complications involved with writing center work painfully become apparent on both a theoretical and practical level. Here we see how writing center consultants have a set of hard choices to make each time they work with a student-writer. In this case, Sam had to reconcile his desire to see the student succeed with his nebulous role as a teacher in the writing center. For instance, if Sam knew the words that Student A needed to reframe his application letter, should he violate a core writing center value and give the student the language to express his thoughts and ideas or would that be the same as "writing his paper for him"? On a theoretical level, this story speaks to the idea that the writing center has within its capabilities both the potential to act as an agent of change within the university in terms of how literacy is conceived as well as to maintain the status quo.

I tell these stories not because I have any definitive sense of how these situations should be handled or theorized, but to note the importance of seeing them through a theoretical lens. Like Grimm, I believe writing centers should "pay much more attention to the ways institutional habits, practices, assumptions and perspectives inadvertently oppress some students" and "submit such unconscious behavior to reflection to work to change habits and attitudes" (108). Conceptualizing writing center work in this way compels us to think not only about the short

term effects of our consulting actions, but the chance to meld theory and practice in reflective ways that not only will advance the credibility of writing centers as a scholarly discipline, but more importantly will allow us to be more engaged consultants, administrators and teachers of writing.

While being reflective about our practice is an integral part of what a considered writing center pedagogy might look like, Phil's ongoing series of consultations about going global with writing centers shows how casting a keen eye on the future is important too. Fortunately, more and more writing centers are becoming viable institutional bodies that have the luxury of thinking about online consulting with writers on the other side of the world instead of questions like "will we be here in two years." But with those challenges come important questions about who gets to define the identity of a writing center. Writing centers should aim to hold up our end of the institutional bargain by being accessible, responsive and accountable to people across campus and across the world who are interested in writing, but at the same time, we can only say yes to so many new projects without losing sight of what we do best—working with writers one-with-one. When Phil told me that he was prepared to have these kinds of talks with writers, I believed him. I also believe practicing mantras like "high-risk, high-yield" helped him see the potential in the consultation instead of deferring to an administrative authority.

The critical backlash against recent trends in writing center scholarship seems to frame the debate in problematic binaries similar to the materialist/pragmatist debate in Chapter 1. In this case, practicality and immediacy are placed against deep reflection and the abstractly theoretical. Kail's concern that we are inundating our tutors with too much responsibility brushes

up against Grimm's grand calls to hold ourselves accountable for structural injustices perpetuated by the writing centers in which we work. Also, as in Chapter 1, I believe introducing pragmatism to the conversation might be a way to bridge the misperceived dichotomy between theory and practice in writing center work and scholarship. Unlike in Chapter 1, however, I will spend the rest of this chapter looking specifically at what political pragmatism can tell us about the work of writing centers. As Anna, Sam and Phil's stories all show, doing the work of writing centers in responsible and ethical ways requires both immediate response and deep reflection. In the best case, the kind of reflective practices that Grimm and Boquet ask writing center practitioners to take up inform the immediate responses our consultants give to writers and our administrators give to stakeholders both within and outside the institution. I believe introducing political pragmatism to the work of writing center scholarship matters because we have reached an impasse between writing center practitioners who believe that useful knowledge in the field directly will help the work of one-with-one writing teaching in a "best practices" sort of way and those researchers whose work does not lend itself as easily to the practical, everyday happenings of writing centers.

Political pragmatism first appeared in the early 20th century when African-American writers like W.E.B. DuBois and Carter Woodson first infused classical pragmatism with the libratory political traditions of the Harlem Renaissance (Hutchinson). Following Dewey's sentiments about the all-encompassing nature of our experience, nothing is outside of what we see, feel and hear, including the political. As opposed to classical pragmatism which sees problems as disruptions in experience that need to be dealt with, political pragmatism draws

upon existing critiques and theories to supplement experience in order to imagine the possibilities at work in what we don't know yet. Audrey Thompson in her essay "Political Pragmatism and Educational Inquiry" argues, "Political pragmatism starts from political descriptions rooted in the experience of work, but aims at forms of change not yet envisioned as possibilities—not yet imaginable under current conditions. Thus, it does not start from the designation of problems. It starts with the acceptance of trouble ahead" (430). Thompson gives the example of how African-American parents must be explicit about the kinds of racial injustices their kids will face in order to a) develop response strategies to be employed when they are followed around a store by a clerk or pulled over by the police and b) theorize the experience in ways that sufficiently prepare them for the sting of daily injustices brought on by race (431). For Thompson, the actions of these black parents are an example of political pragmatism that provides both survival knowledge and an opportunity to inquire more deeply into the systemic conditions that combine to create the immediate situation.

For writing centers, reading political pragmatism onto new threads in the scholarship potentially could help us better articulate why the everyday work of consulting cannot be separated neatly from the other social exigencies that shape collaboration more generally. In other words, political pragmatism does not privilege immediate action or reflective inquiry because in order to make lasting social change, both have to be attended to. For the African-American children and parents in Thompson's example, attending to the practical events of being followed around a store is a matter of survival while the talk that attends to such events is the beginning of imagining new social arrangements. I don't see this hypothetical example of

Thompson's as altogether different from Anna's lived experience in our writing center. The same kinds of tensions at work when a student-writer questions the authority of a consultant based on her brownness play out when a young black child begins to be hardened by the realities of living in a raced America.

For all kinds of understandable reasons, the idea that any discussion of coping tools children use to handle the immediate situation of racism is accompanied by a deeper reflection into the social conditions of what precipitated the act in the first place goes unquestioned in Thompson's example. It is hard to imagine that a parent whose child was the victim of racism for the first time does not even hint at the material, structural and historical forces that go into the event. Even harder to imagine is the child not bothering to ask "why." I would argue that it would be equally irresponsible to not attend to these same conditions in writing centers as well.

When Anna's story came up in our staff meeting, it is conceivable that we would discuss what to do if a writer questioned the authority or expertise of a consultant more generally and think of scripts consultants could use when situations similar to Anna's occurred again. We easily could spend our time together talking about ways to survive when "problems" like the questioning of consultant authority interrupt our daily experience of working in a writing center. Focusing exclusively on survival mechanisms for consultants, though, negates the possibility of using this experience to begin collectively to imagine what a new social arrangement in higher education would look like or, to put it another way, eliminates the possibility for our writing centers to act as a site of social justice within the academy. By infusing political pragmatism, our inquiry "is understood neither as a response to some interruption in experience, nor as a willed

problematizing of experience, but as the ongoing activity of meaning-making in communities wherein knowledge is a contested commodity. It is, in a strong sense, the refusal of ignorance" (Thompson 434). Questions of authority in peer tutoring, race in the writing center and expertise in higher education should not be considered as problems to be dealt with, but rather conditions of the ongoing political, social and cultural arrangement that is higher education. Simply put, Anna is still going to be a Chicana writing center consultant whether we choose to talk about the nuances of her racialized experience or give her a set of canned response strategies.

Yet if we continue to argue that asking our consultants to think hard about the conditions under which collaboration happens is asking too much, as Kail suggests, or if we continue to critique books like Noise for not providing enough practical advice about consulting practices that are actually new, then we run the risk of reinforcing the same status quo that helped create an environment that makes questions like "what are you" seem reasonable. Because we cannot theorize authentically any experience beyond our own and because we need to figure out how to talk to writers in authentic ways during real consulting moments, it equally is important to attend to the stories we have to tell and give advice. I believe it would be a mistake to privilege one or the other because, as Dewey taught us, it is difficult to ascertain when attending to the immediate morphs into an ends in view.

On another level, political pragmatism is consistent with how writing centers historically have tried to reposition themselves in the face of institutional misunderstanding. For decades now, writing centers have been pushing back against problematic conceptions of writing center work such as a site for remediation, a fix-it shop for broken papers and a hospital where sick

writers can get well enough to participate more viably in academic life. These conceptions of writing centers are "pragmatic" in exactly the kind of way I'm not arguing for in this book— the kind that equates "pragmatic" with "practical." Sure, it would be practical for students and professors to have a place where their prose was edited in a way that would polish up their written products. To see the writers and the writing as problems to be dealt with and solved in a writing center cause us to turn our attention away from the real structural and material issues that cause the "problems" and instead focus our attention on students by considering them to be deficient in some way.

Fundamentally, what sets writing center scholarship apart from other disciplines is the credence lent to the expertise of the peer tutors who perform the everyday work of writing centers. In writing center scholarship, the scholarly contributions of tutors extend the idea of collaboration in significant ways. For instance, for the past 25 years, the National Conference on Peer Tutoring in Writing (NCPTW) has been held concurrently with the International Writing Centers Association conference. In this space, student-tutors and faculty members present their research, stories and theories side-by-side. Publications like the Writing Lab Newsletter and the Writing Center Journal devote a significant amount of space to the findings of peer tutors and books like Podis and Podis's Working With Student Writers: Essays on Tutoring and Teaching mostly are comprised of contributions from peer consultants. While it's true that the majority of the scholarly contributions by peer tutors tend to follow the same kind of "best practices" structure of early writing center scholarship, the more important point their contributions illustrate is their active involvement in the scholarly life of writing centers.

It follows then, that as the professional trend in writing center scholarship evolves to look more like Grimm and Boquet's work described earlier, that with the right coaching, tutor contributions will follow suit. In fact they already have. At the University of Illinois-Chicago, the writing center staff produces a student-led writing center handbook that enacts the kind of political pragmatism I am calling for in this chapter. Along with this tutoring manual, the UIC Writing Center also hosts a student-run conference on topics like race and identity and publishes a blog devoted to anti-racism in the writing center and a creative writing journal.

In their tutoring manual, Working with Writers: Theory and Practice, the student-consultants at UIC carefully combine the one-with-one work of writing centers with the theoretical constructs that shape the consulting work. With chapters like "Theoretical Reasons for Practical Tutoring" and "Policies Promoting Learning and Growth for Everyone," the text meshes components of critical pedagogy with the more traditional approaches to how to teach in a one-with-one setting. For instance, in one section involving creating dialogue with writers and framing consultations in a strengths-based approach, the tutoring manual combines what's been documented in writing center work for a long time with long-overdue attention paid to issues of difference. The tutors posit, "When we consider the quality of our tutoring sessions, therefore, we should consider our ability to negotiate differences in matters like class, race, gender, sexuality, and religious belief" (5).

As opposed to providing a series of hypothetical scenarios a student-tutor in the writing center might encounter, the UIC manual asks a series of difficult questions designed to interrogate the consultants' own identity and experiences as learners and to think hard about the

ramifications of those experiences in the writing center. For instance, in the chapter titled "Your First Session," the manual details in explicit and direct ways the order of a typical consultation. From an ordered list of concerns a consultant should address when working with a student paper to the informal ways of beginning and ending a consultation, this directive chapter gives its audience of tutors some eminently practical advice about how best to conduct a writing center session.

On its own, this chapter reads like a typical "best practices" approach to training writing center consultants. The advice is sound, the practices seem reasonable enough and the dare I say "practical" feel of the chapter is indeed helpful to new consultants. When I first started consulting fresh out of my M.A. program, a chapter devoted to painting a picture of what the "typical" writing center consultation might look like would have done me good considering I had never taught in a one-with-one setting before. However, chapters on the logistics of consulting are placed side-by-side with advice and questions related to making the writing center a "safe zone" for gay, lesbian and transgendered students and a with set of guidelines designed to eliminate discrimination of all forms in the writing center. As a whole, this document orients new consultants navigating an unfamiliar pedagogical terrain while creating a culture of inquiry designed to help these new consultants tap into the underneath of their experience. In other words, this student-authored document embodies political pragmatism and in my estimation, answers Kail's question of "are we asking too much of our consultants" with a definitive no. More realistically though, the answer to this kind of question will not be settled on the pages of a journal or book but is being decided by consultants who do the daily work of writing centers.

The inescapability of the social, political and academic pressures bound up in writing center work recently was illuminated by a story one of our consultants told. It is a story with literal life-or-death implications.

Gavin, a graduate student consultant in our writing center, spent the bulk of his writing center appointment consulting with student-athletes in our new satellite center located in the athletics complex. Near the end of the semester, a student on an athletic scholarship came in for help on a paper. This student, hailing from Watts, wrote in heavily accented black English and his well-intentioned and supportive professor recognized the viability of his ideas, but wanted him to write in a standard academic dialect. Before the consultation even began this student-athlete began telling a story familiar to writing center consultants—the one about how he needed to pass this class to stay eligible for athletics because if he didn't he would lose his scholarship and have to leave school. As Gavin listened, the story changed. The student told Gavin in harrowing detail about his two brothers who were both gang leaders back home and both had been murdered in the past year. The student couldn't even attend the funeral of one of his brothers because a bounty had been placed on him and he couldn't return to Watts.

I tell this story not to sensationalize or romanticize the work of writing centers but to illustrate how even one of the most fundamental of writing center objectives—to help students understand the linguistic and rhetorical codes necessary to succeed in higher education—sometimes has potentially dire ramifications that go far beyond producing text. On one level, it is clear this story sanguinely suggests what writing centers do is important, but as compelling and important as this story is, it's one that has been told before. What this story also suggests hasn't

been articulated as clearly. Gavin, as a consultant, had to act. Locked in a moment of praxis where pedagogical intuition, writing center theory and ethics all converged, Gavin had to apply what he knew and help the student get a grade on his paper that would thwart a bus trip back to the place he went to college to escape.

How Gavin responded is of little consequence to this chapter. He could have responded in a number of different ways ranging from taking out his pen and using his academic expertise to rewrite the student's sentences to a grammar lesson regarding standard written English. While not a response strategy recommended by best practices literature, under the circumstances, it is easy to see why he would feel as if the exigencies of the consultation made this the most ethical choice. He could have taught the student a few helpful nuggets about the mechanics of Standard Written English and sent the student on his way—after all, writing centers are in the business of making better writers, not better writing (North).

What is important is that the support Gavin receives through staff development mechanisms should prepare him to respond and reflect upon vexing situations in considered ways. If it is too much to ask our peer consultants to do this kind of work, then it is too much to ask them to consult in the first place. In the Spring of 2009, the UIC Writing Center held a symposium titled "American Demographic: Name Yourself" and the student-athlete in Gavin's story returned for another semester. These stories, along with many others being told in staff meetings around the country, reinforce what we've long believed to be true about peer consulting—our students are up to the challenge. As writing center directors and writing program

administrators, it is our responsibility to support them in such endeavors and political pragmatism can act as a framework for thinking about this work.

Chapter 3- Writing Centers, Metonymy and Institutional Discourse

It was the middle of the afternoon on a suffocatingly humid late August Nebraska day. Rushing back to campus after lunch with a colleague, I was self-conscious about the beads of sweat testing the resolve of my undershirt, but not about the subject matter I was set to talk about with a group of poetry students. I was headed to Professor Harris's class to talk about the ways writing centers work with creative writers and had looked forward to the visit all day. When our writing center established an undergraduate peer tutoring program for the first time, it was this professor who heard our call for creative, fun, smart people interested in doing the work of writing teaching and supplied us with three students who became the nucleus of our staff. Because of his enthusiastic response to our work and the value he seemed to place on the work writing centers did in the university, I hoped this visit would be the start of a fruitful collaboration as our writing center tried to connect with creative writers in new ways.

Professor Harris's class seemed like a logical place to start doing this work because this veteran teacher had long been interested in alternative forms of feedback. In his creative writing classes, he consistently explored alternatives to the traditional Iowa Model of workshop because he valued the dialogic interaction surrounding conversations about writing. In our previous talks about the nature of response, this professor seemed to share our sense that the most productive forms of feedback served as an invitation to the writer to keep writing. He also seemed to recognize what we did was far more than fix commas and develop thesis statements. When he invited me to talk to his class about the writing center, he enthusiastically stated that he never knew writing centers could fill this role for his students.

As I talked about the writing center to this group of aspiring poets, I spoke of the myriad ways the writing center could offer forms of feedback that built upon the ones they'd be exposed to in their workshop-based class. One-with-one feedback, a sympathetic ear lent to them by other writers, an actual audience for their work—I talked about all these things in my 10-minute introduction to the work of the writing center. As I finished, students asked a series of engaged questions about how to reach us, what kinds of writing they could bring and who they would work with upon visiting the center. After I dutifully answered these questions, Professor Harris said something that chilled me more than the feel of air-conditioning on my still-sweating forehead.

"They won't even put a dunce cap on you if you come," he joked.

At the time, I made a joke about budgetary shortfalls prohibiting us from ordering a new one before stressing one final time that the writing center was not primarily a site of remediation, but internally I cursed this professor who theoretically should have known better. After all, we had talked about the history of writing centers' well-documented effort to shake the stigma of remediation and the conversations we'd had about our shared sense of good feedback and our commitment to working with creative writers should have indicated that the writing center was more than just a place for struggling writers, but for exceptionally gifted ones as well. It's equally possible Professor Harris meant the joke as an ironic addendum to the presentation and was trying to subvert the misconception of writing center work by acknowledging its problematic nature head-on. Whatever the professor's intentions were, the lack of context in the

jibe reinforced the very stereotypes we sought out his help to dispel in the first place. The professor's comment illustrated that even though writing centers have come a long way from their remedial past, making our work intelligible to the larger university still needs to be a primary objective for directors and writing program administrators.

Professor Harris, a likeable and jovial guy with a penchant for wisecracks in faculty meetings, later apologized for making a bad joke. I don't believe this ill-timed attempt at humor necessarily rendered our previous conversations futile. I also don't tell the story to make the professor out to be a villain. Nevertheless, this story underscores how deeply entrenched the idea that writing centers are places where only struggling students visit can be, even with someone who is philosophically on board with how we teach writing. If this is a joke that has been internalized by someone who actually has taken the time to entertain conversations about writing center work, how are writing centers perceived by faculty and administrators who haven't done so?

Fortunately, on many college campuses the study and teaching of writing has been an administrative point of emphasis of late. On our campus in particular, two Compositionists have been hired over the past three years to oversee our writing center as well as a new Writing in the Disciplines initiative. This commitment to writing speaks to the ways our administration recognizes the importance of responsible writing teaching as well as the contributions our robust writing program makes to our institution. However, these new responsibilities mean that more campus-wide conversations around the work of writing are happening and that the ways in which Compositionists talk about their work are taking on a new level of importance. A 2008 study conducted by Chris Thaiss and Tara Porter at UC-Davis found that 47% of survey respondents

worked on a campus with a WAC/WID initiative (http://mappingproject.ucdavis.edu/programsurvey/survey_closed/postSurveyResults/). This number is up considerably from the only other large-scale WAC/WID survey conducted in 1987 which found just 38% of respondents taught in institutions with a WAC/WID program (McLeod and Shirley). In many of these initiatives, writing centers play a significant role. In her essay, "Writing Centers and WAC," Joan Mullin argues that writing centers and WAC/WID programs "form strong partnerships … for examining the ways faculty and students think about writing, learning and evaluation" (185). Now, as much as any time in the past, it is paramount for teachers of writing to be able to teach not only students, but also faculty. Stories such as my class visit to Professor Harris hint at the complicated challenges writing center directors and writing program administrators face when undertaking these new initiatives.

In this chapter, I will discuss the ways writing centers have tried and continue to try to establish a disciplinary identity within institutions where a fundamental misunderstanding of the work of writing centers too often persists. I will trace the way metaphor has been used to reinforce these misunderstandings as well as explain why using metaphor and metonymy to reframe the institutional perception of writing centers can help create a more accurate portrayal of the space. As an alternative I will draw on Otto Santa Ana's idea of "insurgent metaphors" as a way for writing center scholars and practitioners to rethink the ways we use metaphor in our scholarship and institutional dealings. Finally, I will conclude the chapter by suggesting that exploring how metonymy functions in discourse about writing centers and potentially could open up new opportunities for sponsoring conversations about the institutional roles of writing centers in ways that align with the version of pragmatism I'm suggesting in this book.

In order to capture the somewhat problematic and complex relationship between writing centers and metaphor, I believe it is important to look back on how writing centers historically have defined themselves and been defined by others. Because writing centers don't have the same kind of traditional connections to disciplinarity other facets of the humanities do, the need for self-definition always has been apparent. In his essay "What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Our Metaphors: A Cultural Critique of Clinic, Lab and Center," Peter Carino traces the problematic associations between writing centers and metaphors. He pointedly explains how the early metaphor of WRITING CENTER AS CLINIC unabashedly positioned writing centers as a site of remediation. Early writing centers of the 1940s and 1950s often were titled "writing clinics." As Carino rightly points out, the idea that the writing clinic was a place where students could go to get "cured" of the disease of sick paper "degrades students by enclosing them in a metaphor of illness" (39).

Fortunately, this semantic blunder faded away into obscurity, but the link between writing centers and remediation already had been established on a structural level. Just as the WRITING CENTER AS CLINIC metaphor gave way to new metaphors in the late 60s and early 70s, the open admissions movement allowed historically under-served student populations access to higher education for the first time. The confluence of these two events is significant because more students entering colleges and universities lacked the expected kinds of fluency in academic English. As Mary Soliday, among others, points out, this led to the perception of a literacy crisis in higher education where "expensive programs designed to meet the 'special' needs [of open admissions students] caused critics of the movement to 'wave the red flag of declining standards' in American higher education" (106). The idea that a special place in the

university must be carved out for students who had the audacity to write in non-standard English combined with early metaphorical conceptions of writing centers to define the purpose of writing centers as a site where students could go to get their grammar corrected.

In her history of writing centers, "'Our Little Secret': A History of Writing Centers, Pre- to Post-Open Admissions," Beth Boquet details one such site at the University of North Carolina. At UNC, the operative metaphor had changed from WRITING CENTER AS CLINIC to WRITING CENTER AS LABORATORY, but the baseline function of the work done in the "lab" had not. If a student at this university wrote a paper the instructor of the course deemed deficient in some way, the letters "cc" appeared next to the student's grade. In this case, "cc" is presumed to mean "composition condition" and the student was expected to go to the writing lab to be tested. Writing centers conceptualized in this way served as a site of remediation and punishment as well as a place to be "cured" of the disease of illiteracy. In other words, the student was "sentenced" to the writing lab. The UNC case is worth noting not only for its pedagogically unsound conceptions of students, but also because it was defined as a "writing lab."

Because it was not her intention to critique the WRITING CENTER AS LAB metaphor explicitly, Boquet elides the underneath of this metaphorical shift. Carino, on the other hand, discusses the implications of this shift in great detail. To Carino, the metaphorical shift was an attempt to reframe the definition of writing center work and describe it as a site of inquiry where problems are addressed and solutions offered. The idealized version of this metaphor likened the work done in a writing lab to the kinds of work undertaken in a traditional scientific lab. However, Carino acknowledges that a confluence of material forces within institutions

prohibited the potential of the metaphor from being realized; as a result, the majority of writing labs looked more like the one in the UNC example. As I will discuss in greater detail later in this chapter, the metaphor of WRITING CENTER AS LAB was doomed to fail from the start because universities already had appropriated the term "lab" to mean an adjunct to an already existing set of subjects.

To Carino, the WRITING CENTER AS LAB metaphor "suffered pejoration because students went to the lab only because they wanted to or instructors in a first-year composition course singled them out for remediation" (41). Unlike other courses in the sciences where, as I will argue later, the metonymic function of the term "lab" was seen as an integral component of the students' understanding of the subject matter, classroom instruction was deemed to be a sufficient method for teaching students how to write. As the UNC example shows, only students determined to be remedial needed to go to the writing lab. As Carino rightly points out, "To require the lab of only basic writers was to infuse the metaphor with connotations of punishment meted out to those who dared to be ungrammatical" (41).

With some notable exceptions (Purdue's Online Writing Lab for example) the majority of sites within colleges and universities where students now go for the one-with-one teaching of writing overwhelmingly are called writing centers. In an effort to be, in Steve North's words, "a kind of physical locus for the ideas and ideals of college, university or high school's commitment to writing" using "center" as a metaphor works to subvert the historically marginalized status of writing centers by redefining the work done in the space itself as integral to the work of the university (446). As opposed to being a place where students can get their prose fixed so faculty can carry on doing the "real" work of the university, now writing centers increasingly are seen as

sites integral to the responsible teaching of writing. Even with the increased professionalization of the discipline and its increased status on many campuses, old definitions of writing center work die hard. As the Professor Harris example indicates, writing center directors and consultants still are forced to do the hard work of explaining what exactly it is we do in many different institutional contexts.

The question of how writing center practitioners make their work visible and accessible to other institutional stakeholders remains pertinent. What place, if any, does metaphor have in our continued efforts to make our work understandable and visible? How can we best combat the long legacy of being braided to remediation and reframe the metaphors that have resulted in so much misunderstanding and so many poor pedagogical practices?

In the conclusion of his book Brown Tide Rising, Otto Santa Ana offers a heuristic for the creation of insurgent metaphors designed to reframe problematic public narratives. As opposed to the creation of entirely new metaphors that may seem abstract or hard for the public to grasp, Santa Ana recommends repossessing existing metaphors and shifting their scope to create a more accurate and socially congruent representation of the discursive subject. I believe it is helpful to examine how Santa Ana's insights at the end of BTR might be applied to the more micro, institutional level discourse about writing centers and what exactly these new metaphors might look like.

For Santa Ana, the first rule about insurgent metaphors is to not talk about the insurgent metaphors. Since the goal of recasting the metaphor is to propose viable alternatives to the established discourse, drawing attention to the rhetorical act itself would allow the debate to be reduced to a series of semantic quibbles that would not only confuse, but bore the target audience

into apathy. Jeffrey Mio, a cognitive psychologist, conducted an experiment regarding the persuasiveness of metaphors and found that not all were created equally. For Mio, the most effective new metaphors were the ones that resonated with some previously established reference point in the study participant's mind.

These points should matter to writing center practitioners for two potentially important reasons. The long history of writing center scholars writing about the metaphors we use to describe the work we do has been well documented earlier in this chapter. From Carino to Bouquet, a great deal of quality research has been devoted to explaining why writing centers are not labs, clinics, fix-it shops, et cetera. However, if Santa Ana is right, the field has approached its treatment of metaphors in somewhat ineffective ways. By drawing attention to the construction of the metaphors themselves, we are setting ourselves up for not being heard. Instead of reframing the conversation in more responsible ways, we have turned the conversation into a series of semantic explanations of the past that don't fundamentally change the way writing centers are perceived institutionally. Talking about why the metaphors used to describe writing centers historically are wrong-headed may resonate with the readers of discipline-specific journals, but such actions do very little to change the framing of the discourse in institutions.

A caveat: I'm not arguing that previous research regarding metaphors and writing centers is wrong or dismissible as mere choir preaching. After all, Carino's important essay has helped writing center practitioners develop a collective memory that helps us better understand the field's current institutional positioning. What I am arguing, however, is that the field has accumulated a history within institutions of higher education where the problem of being

incorrectly defined by others is more complex than it used to be. The explicit tie between writing centers and remediation is more veiled. For instance, it is rare (but not unheard of) for a professor to write "GO TO THE WRITING CENTER" in menacing red ink on a student paper, but when I introduce myself as the Associate Coordinator of the Writing Center at UNL, a response like, "Good for you—my students need all the help with writing they can get" is fairly common. Few colleagues would dare ask us to "fix" a student's paper, but the writing center too often is expected to play the role of surrogate instructor who deals with the dirty work of teaching writing while the faculty member teaching the course deals solely with the disciplinary subject matter. To this end, not much has changed since the days of labs and clinics. While writing center practitioners might have a more polished professional identity and have accumulated a broader body of scholarship, outsiders' conception of writing center work hasn't evolved correspondingly. Tracing the history of writing center metaphors shows that sometimes it's harder to disentangle a problematic one than to create new ones. In the case of writing centers, the effect of metaphor is bound up in much more than semantics. A confluence of institutional factors worked and continues to work to reappropriate the metaphors practitioners use to describe the work done in writing centers. I believe this complexity warrants a fresher look at the way metaphors can be considered and revised in order to generate a more complete understanding of how writing centers function as a site of teaching and learning.

In doing this revision work, I believe it is worth considering what the effects of Santa Ana's study could be for writing centers. For Santa Ana, doing this kind of work "requires recognizing the current prevailing metaphors that give shape to today's prevalent world view" (316). For writing centers, this means taking stock of the metaphors historically used to describe

writing centers and figure out which one, if any, could be subverted and repossessed in the "insurgent" way Santa Ana recommends. In Santa Ana's study of the prevailing metaphors surrounding immigration discourse, he surveyed hundreds of newspaper articles about issues related to immigration. Two metaphors most often seen, NATION AS HOUSE and NATION AS BODY, nearly always acted to dehumanize and vilify Chicano immigrants. Santa Ana pointed to examples that likened immigrants to pests in need of controlling, the "brown hordes who keep coming," and to a heavy burden placed on the "shoulders" of the American nation-state. To be effectively insurgent meant seeking and constructing metaphors that could be "linked to conventional constellations" people already had in their minds about the nation and immigration (315). As opposed to considering immigrants as "flooding" or "infesting" the nation (house), a potentially effective way to alter the metaphor would be to outline how today's immigrants continue to "build" America's future (303). An insurgent way to reframe the NATION AS BODY metaphor then could be, "Immigrants are the life blood of the American economic system because they work the jobs that keep the economy going." In the insurgent "building the house" example, Santa Ana easily could have created a new metaphor that more accurately would reflect current transnational demographic changes and trends towards globalization that fundamentally challenge the idea of what it means to be a "nation." Instead, he used a metaphor people were familiar with, NATION AS HOUSE, and reapplied it in a way that drastically altered the conceptual distance between equating immigrants with a catastrophic domestic occurrence and equating immigrants with something that will make the house/nation better and stronger.

Implicit in Santa Ana's analysis of insurgent metaphors is the idea that the terms employed to frame public discourse on a subject must be engaged with no matter how

problematic they may be for the groups inaccurately depicted in the metaphor. In other words, just because Latino immigrant groups and writing center practitioners are ready to move beyond the constraints imposed on them by misguided metaphor doesn't mean the rest of the public will follow suit.

Santa Ana's speculation surrounding insurgent metaphors recognizes the necessity of simultaneously engaging with and resisting the language of the dominant in ways that are consistent with other attempts to subvert problematic ideologies both in Composition and critical theory. Far from being a sophistic trick, looking at solutions to problems that encourage a better ends in view while being grounded in the present discursive setting has become an increasingly utilized method of reform. In her rich and nuanced inquiry into the relationship between English Studies and the Spellings Report, Kristie Fleckenstein points out the importance of articulating how the discipline can help forward the agenda of the report while still challenging the problematic aspects of its agenda. She writes, "Oscillating between compliance with the Cartesian perspectivalism of the Spellings report and resistance to it … offer(s) a potential site for sustainable reform, which individual institutions, administrators, and faculty can implement in concrete ways that best serve the needs of their unique situations" (106).

Fleckenstein's call both to engage with and challenge structural norms is consistent not only with Santa Ana's speculation, but also makes somewhat unlikely allies out of Adrienne Rich and neo-pragmatists in Composition. As does Brown Tide Rising, Fleckenstein calls upon administrators and faculty to engage with structures through their existing discursive elements in a manner consistent with Porter et al.'s observation that institutions are rhetorical constructions capable of changing. As Chapter 1 details, a central premise of the neo-pragmatist turn in

Composition is the idea that institutions are not monoliths, but places changeable through social practice. Fleckenstein also draws on Adrienne Rich's poem "The Burning of Paper Instead of Children" to speak back to the problematic portions of the Spellings Report. Fleckenstein (and many contemporaries in English Studies) likely know all too well that engaging with the pedagogically incompatible outcomes of the report require the understanding that "this is the oppressor's language/ yet I need it to talk to you" (117). Reading across such disparate texts, I believe they all are consistent with the form of pragmatism I'm advocating in this book. In this chapter, Rich and Fleckenstein's insights highlight the necessity of engaging with the language already circulating through public discourse. What Santa Ana adds is how metaphor informs the social practice of reappropriating language. As I indicate below, metaphor and pragmatism do indeed compliment one another, but simply studying metaphor for writing center practitioners may not be enough.

In his essay, "Feminism and Pragmatism," Richard Rorty argues radical political transformation can happen only when marginalized groups attain "semantic authority over themselves" (249). For Rorty, the best we can do is hope that ideas and metaphors used to describe something new will be absorbed into popular discourse and become dead metaphors. When this happens, ideas and viewpoints that once seemed crazy because they didn't acquiesce to the status quo now seem like literal truth. Rorty argues that the success of Galileo's views about the solar system cannot be attributed to the truthful validity of the ideas in and of themselves; rather "as time went by, they (scientists) succeeded in having the language they had developed (the Earth orbits around the sun) become part of the language everyone spoke" (250). In other words, it was not only astronomy and physics that helped vindicate Galileo, but the

semantic reframing of the narrative in publicly acceptable ways created the conditions for this new truth to be understood. While Rorty's musings about the relationship between metaphor and pragmatism does not mirror Santa Ana's exactly, there are similarities between the two theories that help speak to the questions about the self-definition of writing centers. The most obvious difference is that Rorty feels more comfortable creating new metaphors to reframe narratives than Santa Ana acknowledges. Yet both theorists agree on the importance of establishing autonomy over identity and using metaphor as a way to do this work. For a pragmatist, metaphor functions like a photograph, drawing our attention to certain characteristics of something that we might not have noticed otherwise. For Donald Davidson, metaphors don't really "mean" anything—they simply allow us to see better the relationship between disparate things. In his essay "What Metaphors Mean?", Davidson, a pragmatist philosopher, doesn't care about the capital-T Truth value of metaphor because the only truth that matters is the pragmatic effect of the metaphor in the listener. For Davidson, what we should consider when we think about metaphors is "how the metaphor is related to what it makes us see" (444).

To this end, both Santa Ana's theory about the role of insurgent metaphors and pragmatist philosophy support the idea that thinking about ways to repossess historically problematic writing center metaphors would serve the interests of writing center practitioners who want to better explain their work. For instance, telling a group of biology faculty that what we do in the writing center looks a lot like what happens in a lab would be successful if it helped the biologists better understand the importance of writing centers. For Santa Ana, a statement like "writing center work concerns itself with collaboratively searching for a more nuanced understanding of writing and the writing process" would work to undo the problematic

conceptions of writing centers that earlier metaphors helped to create and sustain. For pragmatists, the differences between the writing center and a scientific lab would not matter much, if at all, as long as the metaphorical representation of the writing center in the minds of the biology faculty worked to help achieve a more pedagogically responsible understanding of what a writing center does.

Unlike the first two chapters in this book, where I argue in favor of looking to Pragmatism for help in negotiating the impasse currently happening in two disciplinary debates, I am less convinced that a Pragmatist reading of metaphor sufficiently addresses the complexity bound up in questions related to writing centers and institutional positioning. For the remainder of this chapter, I will attempt to explain exactly why this is so, as well as suggest an alternative heuristic for undertaking intramural conversations about writing centers. With that said, I think it is important to acknowledge the importance of Santa Ana's concept of insurgent metaphors as well as the validity of the contribution to metaphor made by Pragmatists. As I have demonstrated so far in this chapter, rethinking how metaphor can be used to better explain writing centers at the very least will prevent the discipline from repeating the mistakes of the past. What drawing on Santa Ana as well as Rorty and Davidson clearly shows is that, while it is impossible to control the metaphors already in circulation that frame discourse, reappropriating the terms of the metaphor in a way that works to thwart further marginalization is a possibility. To that end, I easily can imagine situations where employing the suggestions of Santa Ana would be advantageous. Using insurgent metaphors could open up new opportunities for writing centers that otherwise would not exist without employing some kind of new metaphor. These efforts

would in turn help create the conditions under which more responsible writing teaching could occur. The importance of this should not be understated.

With that said, however, metaphor is not always the most opportune rhetorical construct to employ when writing center practitioners talk about our everyday work to those outside our discipline. I believe this to be true for two related reasons. First, the line between metaphor and metonymy within the context of writing centers needs to be explored more than it has been currently. Secondly, if we acknowledge and are forthright about the metonymic relationships that complicate our institutional dealings, what we find might open up room for conversations that would lead to a richer understanding of what writing centers do.

In order to better articulate what this might look like, I would like to revisit the WRITING CENTER AS LAB metaphor. As I noted earlier in the chapter, this metaphor was problematic from its inception because at the same time the term "lab" commonly was used to describe writing centers, it simultaneously was being appropriated by colleges and universities to mean something different than "a place providing opportunity for experimentation, observation or practice in a field of study" (Merriam-Webster Online Edition). As Carino points out, the practice of calling the space where hands-on learning supplemented the work of the classroom in American higher education was commonly called a "lab." Instead of being a place where hypotheses were tested through experimentation, this new lab commonly became little more than a one-credit add-on to existing courses, especially in the hard sciences, where students did "hands-on" work designed to enrich their classroom experience.

While Carino correctly indicts the structural flaws affecting writing centers when he traces this development (i.e. the assumption that students needed to have a lab in order to learn

biology, but only struggling writers needed a lab to understand writing) he does not account for how the structure and design of these new academic "labs" failed to retain the characteristics commonly associated with scientific labs. In many of these new labs, the same kinds of innovation and experimentation endemic to scientific labs conventionally conceived gave way to a set of rote, but hands-on, series of experiences designed to accentuate a predetermined learning experience for students. A 1993 report by the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences believed this trend to be one of the main reasons why a fundamental misunderstanding of what it means to do science persisted among the general population. In order to stop the trend from continuing, the AAAS contends schools must “recast typical school laboratory work” because “the usual school science ‘experiment’ is unlike the real thing” (9).

While many pockets of science education have moved towards an inquiry-based pedagogy in the 15 years since the AAAS report, the same problematic characteristics of the science lab persist. In the handbook for new teaching assistants at the University of California-Santa Barbara assigned to teach a lab section of an introductory Chemistry course, proclaims teaching in a lab setting to be "easy as P.I.E." (HYPERLINK "https://bl2prd0101.exchangelabs.com/owa/redir.aspx?C=73d501c1e5ba49b0ae07fe268bf8809d&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.oic.id.ucsb.edu" \t "_blank"www.oic.id.ucsb.edu). While this acronymic play on words calls for new TAs to Plan, Implement and Evaluate their lab sections, the recommendations given to these teachers highlights how the lab experience for students likely looks much different than the experience professional scientists have in a lab. Among the recommendations given to the TAs: "know exactly what the students are supposed to learn and why" and "administer frequent quizzes" (HYPERLINK

"https://bl2prd0101.exchangelabs.com/owa/redir.aspx?C=73d501c1e5ba49b0ae07fe268bf8809d&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.oic.id.ucsb.edu" \t "_blank"www.oic.id.ucsb.edu).

I use this example not to pass judgment on the relative effectiveness of these teaching practices, but to highlight how "lab" in the context of higher education now often has a metonymic relationship with the conventional definition of the word. While it still stands to reason that using the WRITING CENTER AS LAB metaphor when talking to faculty from the hard sciences might make the kind of associative connections Santa Ana recommends, the usefulness of the metaphor itself is called into question in complicated ways. What if the chemistry faculty listening to the metaphor interpret "lab" to mean what it metonymically has morphed into for students as opposed to the lab work they are used to in their own professional practice? More importantly, could WRITING CENTER AS LAB even be an insurgent metaphor in light of its evolution into metonymy?

The linguist and philosopher Anthony Wilden defines metonymy as “the evocation of the whole by a connection. It consists in using for the name of a thing or a relationship an attribute, a suggested sense, or something closely related, such as effect for cause … the imputed relationship being that of contiguity” (198). The difference between metaphor and metonyms is a crucial distinction in this context because metonymy depends largely on associative language which can trick us into believing metonyms are more natural or truer than the more imaginative metaphor. As Jakobson and Halle point out, metonyms are associated with “contiguity and closeness” in contrast to the imaginative leap hearers of language are asked to make upon hearing a metaphor for the first time (92).

In the WRITING CENTER AS LAB example, the term "lab" shifted from metaphor to metonymy when the term became appropriated by higher education to mean a credit-bearing auxiliary to the disciplinary teaching done in the hard sciences. To Lakoff and Johnson, metaphor and metonymy serve two distinct purposes: metaphor is a way of understanding that conceives of one thing in terms of another while metonymy has a referential function that allows one entity to stand in for another (36). They cite the sentence, "the ham sandwich is ready for the check" as an example of metonymy because what the customer ordered is allowed to define the self in a somewhat dehumanizing way. The speaker of that sentence just as easily could have said, "the woman in the red dress is ready for her check," or, "the older lady with gray hair is ready for the bill." The WRITNG CENTER AS LAB metaphor in turn ceases to be a metaphor at all because the term "lab" is used to stand in for a teaching method as opposed to a place where scientific inquiry happens. While it is true that students enrolled in a science lab course use beakers, Bunsen burners and chemical compounds just like their professors do in their own professional work, the intended outcomes and purposes for the two kinds of labs are vastly different.

Recognizing the shift from metaphor to metonymy is important for writing center practitioners who might aim to create an insurgent metaphor out of WRITING CENTER AS LAB. Like metaphor, metonymy "structures not just our language, but our thoughts, attitude and actions" as well (39). Also, the usefulness of both metaphor and metonymy is grounded in the collective experience of the speaker and hearer. This makes employing the WRITING CENTER AS LAB metaphor potentially problematic for writing center practitioners because it is likely that a group of faculty in the hard science have experience with both uses of "lab." As

researchers, they associate the term "lab" with the place where they conduct experimentation and scientific inquiry and they simultaneously consider the lab as a place where students go to do hands-on (but still adjunct) work designed to enhance their undergraduate education. Given the metonymic use of the term, the WRITING CENTER AS LAB metaphor may not be the most effective way for writing center practitioners to represent accurately the work undertaken in a writing center. Doing so would leave to chance the mental image of "lab" in the listener.

I will argue that instead of taking this kind of chance with metaphor, there is a potential richness in a deep conversation about the metonymy itself. Engaging with metonymy might allow for richer conversations about the relationship between teaching in a lab and teaching in a writing center and render a more accurate understanding of writing center work. While I don't want to understate the potential value of employing metaphor in certain contexts, I remain unconvinced that doing this kind of work is consistent with the capital-P Pragmatism I'm advocating for in this book. In earlier chapters, I've referred to two different kinds of pragmatism—the one where a wide range of variables are attended to in an effort to create an increased understanding of the subject matter with the tangible ends in view and the one where short-term solutions are privileged over deep inquiry and reflection. In this chapter, I am arguing that metaphors, even insurgent ones, sometimes function as a short-term fix to fraught disciplinary problems and am advocating for a different approach. As opposed to attempting to make the WRITING CENTER AS LAB metaphor insurgent, a more Pragmatic approach to making the work of writing centers intelligible across disciplinary lines would be to confront metonymy head-on and explore its complexities collaboratively in an effort to explain the similarities and differences between the writing center and other sites of teaching and learning.

Put concretely, the conversation about how metonymy functions in the WRITING CENTER AS LAB would allow talk about some of the differences between the two spaces. In this conversation, the contrast between a writing center as something the student autonomously chooses and the required lab component to a science course would become clear. The distinction between the fixed, outcome-driven approach historically associated with the lab would be contrasted with the non-directive, process-driven approach foundational to writing center work. By explicitly articulating the evolution from metaphor to metonymy, the distinction between the two sites hopefully would become more apparent. Just as importantly though, this kind of conversation might spark important collaborative possibilities and mutual understanding of common goals.

The kinds of interdisciplinary conversations I'm advocating for in this chapter are connected with Krista Ratcliffe's idea of "rhetorical listening" in important ways. The larger logic of Ratcliffe's concept centers on the idea that listening is an under-valued rhetorical trope that can be used as an entry point into conversations about disciplinary and cultural differences. Doing this work requires all involved parties to "stand under" their own discourses and biases while at the same time being conscious of how perceptions of self and other are considered in terms of the cultural logics that inform them (206). Doing this work, Ratcliffe argues, will allow disparate groups to negotiate new ways of thinking and acting that simultaneously are aware of the differences informing their respective ways of knowing while acknowledging the commonalities.

In the case of writing centers vis-à-vis faculty members from other disciplines exploring the metonymic relationships at work in the term "lab," I suggest that rhetorical listening would

be a tangible and appropriate point of entry that takes what's important about capital-P Pragmatism and grounds it in a process that could lead to "personal and social justice" (203). For much of this chapter, I have focused on the ways lab pedagogy in the sciences departs from the pedagogy advocated in Writing Center and Composition circles. While it's true that the kind of pedagogy outlined in the UC-Santa Barbara example does call for a teacher-directed, outcomes-driven mode of learning, there are pockets of pedagogical research happening in the hard sciences that bear striking resemblance to the work of writing centers and writing teaching. Because of this, I believe rhetorical listening can help bridge the distance between the ways writing is considered across tiers in the university.

In an essay written for the Journal of College Science Teaching, Neil M. Glagovich and Arlene M. Swierczynsk, advocate a process-driven lab pedagogy that calls for students to be reflective and analytical about their lab experience. "Teaching Failure in the Lab: Turning Mistakes Into Opportunities" criticizes the rote lab experience associated with an adjunct lab component for college courses in the hard sciences, arguing, "many undergraduate science students are misled by 'cookbook' laboratory experiences that make science appear to be easy and to always yield anticipated results" (1). To Glagovich and Swierczynski, labs designed to demonstrate certain disciplinary points are a sound pedagogical strategy but neglect to provide students with the opportunity to see the sometimes ugly realities of scientific inquiry. They describe an experiment for the students to conduct that required a discipline-specific knowledge of chemistry that students in an introductory-level chemistry class could not be expected to have. They asked the students to first try to incorporate standard scientific method procedures and when those didn't work, attempt creative solutions to the problem posed in the experiment.

Student "success" in this case meant writing a narrative describing the failures and presenting possible reasons for their lack of success.

I use this example because of its resemblance to writing center pedagogy and to point out how connections like this might become apparent when writing center practitioners and teachers in other disciplines get together to deconstruct the metonymy and talk in earnest about what constitutes good teaching and learning in both settings. Reading across both the "Failure" essay and writing center pedagogy, the similarities are striking and important. In writing center work, an emphasis is placed on the process students undertake in order to create the finished product. Both settings reward risk-taking and creatively approaching hard problems as a valuable way to learn the subject matter, be it chemistry or writing. Most importantly, both sites of learning emphasize student control over their own learning processes. Writing center orthodoxy long has taught that the most productive consultations occur when non-hierarchal power relations between the writer and consultant are apparent (Clark; Meyer and Smith). Consultations are driven by the autonomous direction of the student-writer and the role of the teacher in this setting is to provide support and non-directive guidance and to facilitate the students' understanding of their own work. The experiment Glagovich and Swierczynski describe values these same methods of learning. The teacher in this case acts as a mentor and collaborator as opposed to an expert who holds "secrets" about the lab that are withheld from students. Also common across both the writing center and this lab is the idea that writing can be a tool used to come to know something as opposed to the recitation of knowledge.

Acknowledging the differences is equally important in this case as well. For example, even though the pedagogical similarities are present, the fact that Glagovich and Swierczynski's

lab likely takes place in a for-credit adjunct site of learning that's required of students departs from the standing of most writing centers. While it's true that some writing centers do have credit-bearing courses attached to them, most students who use the writing center do so on a voluntary basis. Also, in many writing centers, the consultants who work with student writers are also students themselves. The writing center's use of peer tutors differs sharply from the facilitators of science labs who, although they may well be grad students, have the responsibility of assessing the student's performance in the lab. The institutional arrangements of these two sites of learning will differ from place to place in complicated ways, so what I've offered as examples in this space, strictly speaking, are hypothetical. What I hope these examples do underscore is the necessity of engaging with these differences on a local level through a study of the discourses we use to describe our teaching spaces.

In summary, making writing center work intelligible on an institutional level requires an understanding of how metaphor has worked in the past and could work in the present. Santa Ana's idea of insurgent metaphors allows us to think in new ways about the metaphors which problematically worked to define writing centers in the past in an effort to make what we do more understandable. We must be careful though to not expect metaphor to substitute for rich engagement and deep listening with other teachers. In practice, metaphor is a way of understanding designed to bridge knowledge gaps between the speaker and the hearer—a kind of rhetorical shortcut that enhances the way humans relate to one another. This idea in itself is intrinsically valuable, but we should not expect metaphor to accomplish more than it realistically can. In employing metaphor (insurgent or not) in institutional discourse, we must be careful not to allow metaphor to stand in for the material truths behind the metaphor. As the "Failure"

example suggests, important commonalities and differences might be illuminated if we refrain from taking metaphorical shortcuts and instead explore the literal truths partially masked by metaphor.

I would like to close by discussing a tacit assumption running throughout this chapter—why making the work of writing centers intelligible to stakeholders outside of the discipline matters in the first place. While this may seem like a common-sense proposition, I believe an integral, but understated, part of this debate is questioning how writing centers fit into our conception of what good learning looks like in higher education. Making our work intelligible matters not only because it provides insights related to how we might advance our own disciplinary interests, but because it speaks to how writing centers can work with other sites of learning to create better experiences for students. For Carino and Boquet, explaining how metaphor functions in writing center discourse matters mostly to establish and revise the disciplinary identity of writing centers. For a site within the academy historically misunderstood, infantilized and pushed to the margins, this has and will continue to be important work. However, if we infuse the version of Pragmatism I am calling for in this book, the question must be expanded to make room for speculation about how these practices shape the way we conceptualize teaching and learning.

John Dewey wrote, "If education is life, all life has, from the outset, a scientific aspect, an aspect of art and culture and an aspect of communication … the [educational] progress is not in the succession of studies, but in the development of new attitudes towards and new interests in experience" (434). For Dewey, this insight eschews a narrow disciplinarity in favor of a holistic conception of the commonalities at work throughout education. Reading Dewey this way offers a

pragmatic framework for doing interdisciplinary work, especially the kind where talk of similarities and differences across sites of learning can occur. Starting these conversations is difficult, however, for a number of structural reasons ranging from a lack of professional reward for doing interdisciplinary work to the lack of forums for talk about teaching and time.

While writing centers single-handedly can't change tenure structures or create more hours in the workday, they can be sites responsible for talking about teaching and learning. This can happen under the premise of educating faculty about the work happening in writing centers. If writing center practitioners consider the purpose of this work not only to be explaining writing centers but starting conversations about teaching, not only will writing centers be better understood across the institution, but it is likely that deeper reflection into teaching and learning will happen as well. In the chapter that follows, I will explore this idea in greater detail by looking at what Pragmatism can tell us about the purposes of writing centers in our institutions and how the discipline's theory and practice can be advanced by considering not just the ways writing centers can improve their own pedagogy and institutional positioning, but how their practices function as part of a larger whole.

Chapter 4 – Pragmatist Conceptions of Play in the Writing Center

In his book, *Finite and Infinite Games: A Vision of Life and Possibility,* the religious scholar James Carse distinguishes between two types of games people play. A finite game is defined as one "played for the purpose of winning" with "temporal boundaries" and rules agreed upon by all players (3-4). An infinite game, conversely, is one played for the "purpose of continuing play" (3). To play an infinite game, the rules of the contest constantly must be reformulated and structured in order to keep as many people playing for as long as possible. The goal of an infinite game then is not victory per se, but to initiate action with others. Initiating actions with others diametrically opposes the goal of a finite game, where the object is to counter the actions of others in an effort to achieve and maintain power over an opponent.

Before I go any further into how any of this is related to the way we consider education, I believe it is important to articulate why the recognition of play (in our "work" as it were) is so important. Being playful, according to Carse, is not carefree or without consequences. Instead, playfulness in any context requires us to be open to surprises, forge alliances with others playing with us and know that "*everything* [his emphasis] that happens is of consequence" (19). Seriousness, on the other hand, leads us down a strict and narrow path where a specified conclusion is sought. The danger in seriousness rests in the idea that we close ourselves off to the possibilities that might occur through our playing with others and squelch creativity and openness to new ideas as a result.

Put concretely, the work of education is comprised of a series of finite games. Our courses meet for a 15-week semester for an hour three times a week. Many courses in our curriculum have specified outcomes (At the end of this course students will…). We are bounded by rules (there is x amount of dollars available in our budget, students must attain a certain number of credits in order to graduate, etc.). We have deadlines to meet and contractual obligations to fulfill. In a very real sense, there are winners and losers—one needs look no farther than the retention rate in higher education to see evidence of how education could be considered to be nothing more than the sum of these finite games.

However, I believe there is much possibility in looking at education as more than just a series of finite games. While the inescapability of tangible items to cross off a to-do list can't be elided, I argue that examining how these finite games are played simultaneously within an infinite one to be a valuable lens through which we can see the nature of our professional responsibilities. Recognizing how taking on the characteristics of infinite games can shape how we do our work offers us a chance to think about the ethical dimensions of professional responsibility in education. Furthermore, I contend doing this work is consistent with the kind of pragmatism I'm advocating in this book. While Carse concludes his inquiry by stating that life is the only known infinite game, what would happen if we considered education in that category as well?

Examining the characteristics of infinite games for how they can help us understand and negotiate our institutional lives is worthwhile because it allows us to think in creative ways about our work that are open to consistent reflection and collaboration. For example, infinite players

engage with conflict not to defeat an opponent (literally or figuratively) but "attempt to offer a vision of continuity and open-endedness in place of the heroic final scene. In doing so, they must at the very least draw the attention of other political participants not to what they feel they must do, but to why they feel they must do it" (49). Writing center practitioners and Compositionists know all too well the pressures faced when competing agendas for how best to teach writing or administer or consult in writing centers clash with the body of knowledge established by disciplinary expertise. As opposed to taking on these situations as a "turf war" or trying to push a specific agenda against a resisting institutional force, seeing moments like these as part of an infinite game instead of a finite one allows us to choose a rhetorical stance dependant on the situation and with whom the interaction occurs. On a pedagogical level, considering the effects of play has important implications for how we perform our pedagogical ethos for students.

For the purposes of this chapter, I would like to examine the possibilities and problems associated with trying to repossess an ethic of play in education. Specifically, I will look at the ongoing attempts to cultivate an ethos consistent with education as play and education as infinite game at the writing center I helped direct.

A HISTORY OF PEDAGOGY AND PLAY

In this chapter, I am arguing that Carse's work is consistent with the Pragmatist philosophy of the progressive movement. After all, games are a form of play and play, for pragmatists like John Dewey and George Herbert Mead, was an essential function of education.

For progressives, play signified the doing of something for its own sake as opposed to work where a task was completed in order to attain external rewards. One of the binaries John Dewey set out to undo was the distinction between work and play. Dewey believed that most forms of a child's play consisted of appropriating adult tasks on an imaginative scale. Think of school-aged children who spend time "playing school" or cooking with an easy-bake oven. Far from being frivolous means of entertainment for small children, this play gives children the chance to reconstruct their lived experiences in order to attain higher levels of awareness about the world around them. This idea is consistent with Dewey's vision of pragmatism because work and play become inseparable and act as a way for children to immerse themselves in society (Dewey, "Froebel's Educational Principles" 143-45).

It is important to understand that not all forms of play are equally valuable for educational purposes; Dewey is explicit about his disdain for "playing for playing's sake." Instead, Dewey encourages a model of play that reduces the "artificial gap between life in school and out" by creating situations where a learner is trying to effect change in some way (Dewey, *Democracy and Education* 15.1). Fortunately for young learners, the distinction between work and play is often nonexistent. Anyone who has tried to wash dishes or mop the floor in the presence of a two-year-old knows that even the most mundane household chores can act as a form of play should the task interest the small child. As Dewey notes, we must avoid the separation of play and work which the adult makes when thinking of children: "To the child, his play is his activity, his life, his business. It is intensely serious. He is absorbed, engrossed in it. It is an occupation. Hence many things which to the adult are work, or even drudgery, may be play

to the child" (Page mw.1.340). For the Deweyan Pragmatist, any form of play that helps learners gain insight into the world around them is considered to be an integral component of the educational process.

In this sense, Carse echoes Dewey when he suggests that infinite game players carefully consider what they're doing because everything has consequences. Dewey's "education as play" and Carse's "infinite game" both require the participant to view the undertaking of tasks through a similar lens through which to view experience. For Carse, experiencing the world as if it were an infinite game allows us to be amenable to changes and unplanned outcomes that result from initiating actions with others in an attempt to continue playing. For Dewey, the breakdown of the work/play dichotomy allows learners to immerse themselves into a society with verve in ways that make education meaningful. To both Carse and Dewey, the game is inseparable from the experience. Put differently, Carse's argument implies that the proper paradigm to view experience is that it's all one kind of game or another. Dewey would argue that all experience optimally would be considered both work and play.

Another progressive thinker heavily involved in Dewey's circle of pragmatic philosophers who considered play to be an integral aspect of the learning process was George Herbert Mead. For Mead, play was "fundamental for the emergence of all aspects of the self: conciousness, mind, intelligence, significant symbols and human interaction" (Mead liv). While Mead is most noted for his work on the relationship between play and early child development, an important feature of his work described play as being integral and inseparable from other things (like work and art) that allow people to develop a sense of self. Mead vehemently spoke

back to critics who regarded play as auxiliary to the "real," subject-specific work of schools: "The school has become a great machine for grinding in the cheapest and most trivial parts of our culture, while the essential things are wholly omitted, not to mention the unnatural method of controlling the child's mind and conduct" (99). For Mead, the institution of school represented a space where experiential learning took a backseat to a pre-set curriculum and in turn worked to kill creativity and personal investment in the process.

Regrettably, the lasting effect of Dewey and Mead's insights into the educative nature of play stops shortly after kindergarten in most contemporary American classrooms. The standards-driven way of doing school has emptied (literally in some cases) the playgrounds made possible by progressive pragmatists. A rigidly structured style of learning from primary school to higher education, results-driven summative assessment practices and a streamlined curriculum all work to undermine the idea of education as an infinite game. In its place are a series of finite games that are very serious in nature (students will score x on the standardized exam, the essay cannot exceed five pages and must include an underlined thesis statement, etc.).

CRITIQUES OF PLAY

I believe it is important to consider a possible objection to the premise of education as play or education as infinite game. Considering the work of education to be a form of play may subject this version of pragmatism to the same criticism that Bousquet and others leveled against those in the Richard Miller pragmatist camp discussed in Chapter 1. It could be argued that this

kind of pragmatist approach is apolitical and accomodationist and exists to perpetuate a damaged and inequitable status quo. Teresa Ebert maintains that a ludic approach to theory reduces the potential of revolutionary thought because it fails to account for the material historical aspects of issues. She contends such thinking "substitutes the personal (playful meditation) for the political (historical explanation), and in so doing . . . legitimates, among other things, a pragmatic pluralism that tolerates exploitation (as one possible free choice)." If education is truly a problematically finite game, is the best way to deal with the material reality of the situation really to start considering it a game? What about the material consequences of such actions? Most importantly, given the marginalized history of writing centers, why would it be worth advocating for a paradigm that could be considered juvenile or infantilizing?

To Carse, however, players of infinite games approach questions of politics from a far different vantage point. Instead of considering politics to be the battle of competing ideologies, i.e. materialist critique vs. speaking the language of those in power, politics in the sense of an infinite game requires collaboration and engagement. Paradoxically, these players are "political without having a politics" (47). Having a politics means following a prescribed set of variables towards a desired end. To a player of infinite games, on the other hand, to be political "is to recast rules in the attempt to eliminate all [problematic] societal ends, that is, to maintain the essential fluidity of human association" (48). To put it another way, players of infinite games recall the first rule of infinite games—to keep as many people playing as long as possible. Any political end pursued in this sense is designed to keep the game going for the greatest number of people, as opposed to having one predetermined ideology prevail over another one.

PLAY, PRAGMATISM AND WRITING CENTERS

In addition to providing a fresh approach to the ideological differences over education, considering infinite games and play also reimagine a vision for teaching and learning that many writing center practitioners undertake. To Dewey, learners are natural risk-takers. From the young child who wants to help her mother do laundry to the college student who wants to make a multi-modal argument instead of write a five-paragraph essay, interested learners do not have to be talked into "high-risk, high-yield" educational endeavors. They come to such projects naturally. It is also natural that some of these tasks are beyond the learner's ability to complete. A student trying out academic discourse for the first time won't sound like a professor, and a cookie baked by a five-year-old won't taste like it came from a bakery. Dewey would contend that's fine. While creating rudimentary projects is of minor concern, the real danger occurs if the student doesn't recognize the inadequacy of the project. This is where the teacher's role becomes important—it is the teacher's two-fold job to point out the imperfections of the student's work while maintaining a sense of wonder and creativity within the student. I believe this protocol to be consistent with Beth Boquet's "high-risk, high-yield" approach to tutoring student writers. Consultants give writers a chance to experiment through playing with words and ideas, but can lend expertise when necessary. Conversely, a "serious" player might take a different approach. For the student-writer the question would be, "How am I going to write this paper in a way that my professor will like?" For the "serious" consultant the question becomes, "What I am going to

be able to tell this writer so he can get a good grade on his project?" In the writing center I help direct, being serious in this sense is not the kind of ethos we want to project in our consultants and the writers with whom we work. Instead, the possibilities for articulating a different version of literacy work happens when we abandon the trappings of the finite and start "playing" in the infinite sense.

In order to make this playful approach visible to the people who enter the writing center, decisions regarding the physical appearance of the space had to be consistent with the tutoring ethos we hoped our consultants would embrace. In the section that follows, I will attempt to articulate how both the current physical design of our writing center and the consultant-training practices we undertake work to cultivate a sense of infinite play in both our consultants and the student-writers with whom we work. After describing this work, I then will talk about the myriad risks and potential rewards of approaching our work in this way. It is my hope that the examples used in this chapter can speak in significant ways to a series of ongoing questions within writing center circles—how do we position ourselves and our work within the larger learning culture of our institutions? What do our physical spaces say about this positioning? How can writing centers work to redefine what it means to do the work of writing higher education while still making our work understandable to those outsiders who may hold conceptions of writing and writing centers that are different than ours?

When I am invited into classrooms and asked to give a presentation about the writing center, I often wrap up the brief presentation by explaining that we are the only known institutionally-sanctioned site with posters of both Jimi Hendrix and Ani DiFranco on the wall. I

use the line not because I think students will flock to the writing center to see pictures of a real-life guitar hero and an indie rock pioneer, but rather to proclaim that the writing center is different from other standardized sites of learning on our campuses. And I want the students in the classroom to not just see that we're different because of the pedagogical make-up of the place. Sure, I spend a great deal of time in these moments talking about the non-evaluative nature of the feedback, the idea that the consultants are not teachers or experts per se but knowledgeable peers who are invested deeply in the work of writing. But what I am equally interested in is conveying a sense of the writing center as a quirky, fun, engaging place that's a significant departure from other sites of learning students may encounter in their academic lives. In these moments, I am trying to articulate to students how the physical appearance of the writing center represents the alternative pedagogical approach students will find once they get there.

A significant amount of writing center research has been devoted to the physicality of the space the center occupies. In their essay focused on the design of writing center spaces, Hadfield et al. rightfully claim the architectural goal of a writing center should be "a non-threatening, comfortable environment that generates—rather than inhibits—conversation" (171). This quote leaves unsaid something most of us who work in a campus setting where it's difficult to distinguish one classroom or office from another already know—formalist designs of spaces that all look the same seem uninviting and impersonal. Consistent with this idea is the frequently employed "home" metaphor. The metaphor of home to describe writing centers frequently is used when describing the social dynamics and atmosphere a good writing center offers (Harris;

Kinkead; Hadfield et al). In this representation of writing centers, conversations and coffee flow freely and reflect the non-evaluative and welcoming stance writing centers often attempt to take.

In our writing center, we pay attention to the physical design of the place partially for the reasons Harris and Hatfield point out. We agree that the physical representation of the center is an important cultural indicator both for members of the university community coming to the writing center for the first time and the consultants working there on a daily basis. However, in our writing center we ask the physical appearance of the place to do more than just serve a social function. The posters hanging on the wall are just one example of how our philosophies on writing, learning and teaching are reflected in the physical design of the space. Yes, we want to be welcoming and inviting, but we also believe that cultivating what we believe to be desirable habits of mind are just as important as having candy waiting on the table for student-writers.

In *The Everyday Writing Center,* the five authors offer a vision of writing center work that embraces the kind of fluidity of learning and chaotic interactions endemic to writing center work. They offer up the mythological Trickster figure as a representation of the kind of teacher/learner that a writing center space can help create. For the authors of *Everyday,* the trickster figure can "teach us a habit of mind that helps us notice and revel in the accidental, the unforeseen, the surprise" (12). The messy, chaotic portrait of existence the trickster creates is a way for writing center practitioners to speak back to the pressures brought upon writing centers by a learning culture primarily concerned with efficiency and order. Implicit in the book's discussion of the trickster is the idea that being comfortable with chaos, ambiguity and the unknown are an important component of a writing center's pedagogical identity. The influence

of the trickster mindset discussed in *Everyday* is important to understanding the culture of our writing center (and this chapter for that matter) for three reasons:1) The physical layout of our center is designed to be consistent with the chaos, wonder and mischievousness the trickster figure represents; 2) Framing teaching and learning as an endeavor with outcomes that cannot be foreseen immediately or compartmentalized is central to our pedagogy; and 3) Performing ourselves in this way is consistent with a kind of playfulness that Dewey, Mead and Carse value in a learning context.

In addition to posters of rock stars, a person visiting our writing center will see a somewhat dizzying array of decorations adorning our walls and tables. On the chalkboard, a series of haiku written in magnetic poetry by our consultants and student-writers sits next to our hours of operation. In the corner, a selection of word and trivia games lay stacked on our shelves. In the back corner, two bookshelves, a microwave and a few comfortable chairs comprise our library/kitchenette. On the wall above the computers are drawings of animals of indeterminate origin. Mastodons (the unofficial mascot of the writing center) act as the centerpiece for the tables.

When the writing center moved to our current space three years ago, none of these decorations existed. We had a microwave and a coffee pot, but these supplemental furnishings came as the result of a series of organic initiatives designed by the consultants. It wasn't planned. Sort of. While it's true that when the faculty director and I began our work in the center in the Fall of 2007, we never imagined having a mascot or sponsoring unofficial poetry contests, we did imagine the writing center to be a place that allowed for these kinds of things to happen. We

believed it was important to sponsor a site of learning that gave space for creative initiatives to occur, no matter how strange or chaotic they may seem at first glance. We sided with the architectural philosophy of UC-Berkeley professor Christopher Alexander who said universities are sites that are "shaped by an accumulation of actual human experiences and, as such, will be a place fit for other, newer human experiences—a place far fitter than any impersonal or inflexible environment could ever be" (49).

In our case, the personalization of the space reflected a larger, more important idea than the individual whims of our creative consultants. It reflected a vision of writing teaching that would push on the boundaries of what is considered to be good consulting practices. It reflected a commitment not just to writing teaching, but to thinking creatively about how our work could be part of a commitment to social justice principles within our university. It reflected our vision of a writing center that valued a sense of community around creating text that would make the space a locus for thinking, talking about and doing writing in a university setting. It reflected our desire to portray the work of writing as full of wonder and fun. Simply put, we wanted it to be different from a conventional classroom and different from a place where students went to get help with their papers. We wanted our visual rhetorical stance to reflect that ethos.

The same eclectic spirit realized in the physical design of our writing center also is embodied in the consultants we hired. When we began assembling an undergraduate consulting staff to compliment our existing graduate tutors, we looked for a collection of people whose varied interests could help create a vibrant, creative and interesting space for learning. We did not look for the best writers (although some of our consultants are quite accomplished), we did

not factor in a consultant's grade-point average, nor did we necessarily care if they were English majors. We looked for engaging people who talked about writing in compelling ways and who displayed a relational intelligence necessary to work with the wide swath of writers who passed through our doors.

During the interview process, we asked a series of fairly predictable questions about their experiences with writing as a student or a teacher and about their future plans. While we duly noted this kind of information, we also asked questions like, "What are you interested in aside from writing?" Beneath the get-to-know-you feel, our purpose in asking these kinds of questions was to allow the prospective consultants to talk about the aspects of their lives that they felt strongly about and to attain an insight into how they talked about things that didn't seem like work to them. It was our hope in asking these questions that we would get a sense of which candidates embodied the kind of zeal for learning and passion for their work that was "infinite" in a sense. We believed that both the questions about writing experience and about outside experience were equally important—it was necessary for these new consultants to have answered both well. After doing our initial hiring, we had on staff a martial-arts expert, a Classics major, an aspiring literary agent and a future high school English teacher. What connected these new undergraduate consultants was a passion for the work of writing and an ability to enjoy learning in a manner consistent with John Tagg's claim that deep engagement with a subject cannot happen if the process of coming to know something isn't enjoyable (80-82).

Taking an approach to hiring that placed a high level of value on how prospective consultants approached teaching and learning was not without risks. Because of administrative

institutional logistics, new consultants were not required to take a course in writing center theory. The primary sources of staff development consisted of a pre-semester orientation and a weekly staff meeting. Hiring consultants who may not have much formal experience in the teaching of writing or a background in literacy theory coupled with the lack of an academic requirement was an admittedly risky approach. It would have been safer to hire undergraduate English majors or education majors with an emphasis in English than to do what we did and throw an eclectic hodgepodge of interesting people from diverse academic backgrounds together and hope our staff development work sufficed to give our consultants the necessary background to do their jobs well.

Herein lies one of the most challenging dilemmas our writing center faced in developing our institutional persona: Our hiring practices and the design of our physical spaces indicate how we aim to fulfill our commitments to the work of writing and social justice with a sense of wonder and playfulness that sets us apart from other sites of learning within the university. But how could we espouse that ethos in meaningful ways given the persistent misunderstandings of writing centers in a university culture that prides itself on rigor and serious mental labor? I believe this question is important for practitioners to consider on not only an institutional level, but a pedagogical one as well. Will students accustomed to traditionally designed sites and attitudes about learning consider the writing center to be a viable academic space when they walk in and see hand-drawn pictures of animals on our walls?

Problematic perceptions of writing center work, including but not limited to the historical link between writing centers and remediation makes it more difficult and riskier to make the case

that play and academic work are not mutually exclusive. Consider this: A student comes to our writing center because his professor told him his writing was substandard. This student, already lacking confidence in his ability to write using academic discourse, already has internalized misconceptions of the writing center as the byproduct of his professor's comments. He sees the writing center as punishment and a place where he has to go in order to attain a level of academic proficiency he doesn't yet have. This student likely will see pictures on the wall, the poetry on the chalkboard and the game of Scrabble in the corner through a lens that's entirely different than the one we imagined. Instead of seeing the writing center's physical space as a site where thoughtful academic work regarding writing mixes with play and wonder, he sees it as childish and infantilizing.

Also consider this: A series of upper-level administrators suggest we meet in the writing center to discuss a bump in funding for the next academic year. These administrators directly control a large percentage of our yearly budget and want to see for themselves what we've done with the space. In the middle of our presentation about how we've seen a three-fold increase in the number of students we serve over the last two years, the administrator's eyes wander toward the chalkboard where the phrase "boil the blue finger" serves as the last line of a magnetic haiku. Will she see the poem for what we implicitly intended for it to represent—the fact that the writing center sponsors spontaneous and fun wordplay as part of its pedagogy? Or will she make a mental note of how odd and disorienting the writing center appears? Worse yet, will the phrase offend her academic and personal sensibilities to a degree where the deeply serious academic work we've done is obscured by magnetic poetry and results in the loss of funding?

While some aspects of these hypothetical challenges are endemic to any facet of the institution trying to assume a more progressive position on the nature of play in a learning environment, the unique institutional positioning of writing centers adds another layer of complexity. Writing center practitioners once again must reconcile the urge to be subversive in their literacy practices with a long-desired aim to be recognized as a site of legitimate intellectual and academic work. The question about whether or not to revel and take pride in outsider status (Trimbur, Summerfield) or fight to get off the margins (Eodice, Marshall, Boquet) long has been discussed in writing center research. My detailing of our writing center's physical space and consultant mentality aims to complicate this question by discussing the possibilities of trying to advance the institutional status of writing centers without sacrificing the pedagogical qualities that make the space unique.

Furthermore, it is worth questioning how visiting student-writers experience the site as well. The space doesn't look like other sites of learning they're accustomed to seeing; the ad hoc décor is designed to signify the writing center as a space within the institution where idiosyncrasy, creativity and challenging the status quo are valued. But because the space looks so different from the traditional classrooms on our campus, is there a risk that a student coming in for a consultation for the first time will feel like an outsider who walks into one big inside joke they don't understand? The question on a student-consultant level becomes to what degree can the writing center make visible its pedagogy without creating a sense of uncomfortable disorientation in its students. While it's likely true that the students who approach learning with the same engaged and playful outlook on education as the consultants we hire will develop an

immediate affinity for the place, it stands to reason the same won't necessarily be true for students who academically have been acculturated to view learning in a vastly different manner. One of the trickiest balancing acts a writing center as an institutional space and the consultants who work there must pull off is positioning themselves simultaneously as a place of expertise where institutional codes and academic protocol are made visible to students and encouraging them to challenge the problematic aspects of this sometimes hidden curriculum. An absent sense of play in many learning environments is one aspect of higher education that our writing center aims to work against. In ways that are consistent with the version of Pragmatism I've been advocating in this book, play can, and in our view should, be integral to the experience of learning not just for kindergartners, but for all learners at all levels. Here's the rub, though: What happens when Pragmatic maxims conflict with one another? In order to answer the questions I've put forth in the latter half of this chapter, I believe it is important to recognize a potential conflict in what is considered to be consistent with Pragmatism. On one hand, incorporating a sense of play in the learning environment we sponsor aligns closely with the Chicago Progressive Pragmatism of Dewey and Mead. On the other hand, incorporating a version of Pragmatism that potentially could alienate people because it departs so radically from established institutional structures wouldn't be pragmatic at all.

Let me be clear. Creating a writing center designed to act as a gatekeeper or mystical holder of knowledge about academic discourse that dutifully doles out the necessary information to students in order for them to succeed in their academic lives is precisely the version of pragmatism I'm not advocating in this chapter or this book. Creating a writing center that looks

and acts like every other site of learning on campus and enacts its pedagogy based on the same established literacy values as the rest of the university is not the big-P Pragmatic alternative to what we've done with our space.

I believe what we've done with our writing center is consistent with Pragmatism because underneath the external features of our physical space is a pedagogy and a manner of conducting ourselves in our institutional dealings that is engaged deeply with the mainstream academic values like research, inquiry and a commitment to social justice through the education of students. Our intention is not to preference play over other ideological and pedagogical commitments, just to make it a feature of what we do. In addition to creating magnetic poems on the chalkboard, our consultants also are engaged with a wide swath of ongoing research projects in addition to their regular duties as consultants. The same consultants who draw pictures for our walls also contribute to the intellectual life of the university through their writing center teaching, national conference presentations and intra-institutional workshops designed to facilitate the responsible teaching of writing across campus. Specifically, our consultants created and planned a day-long conference on writing where the panelists presented on topics ranging from how time is conceptualized in writing center consultations to the role of consultant identity in the writing center.

Aside from the keynote speaker and a series of concurrent sessions, this consultant-led conference didn't resemble a typical academic conference. Participants didn't simply read their term papers for a public audience or create power-point presentations on their research. Instead, the multi-modal forms these presentations took highlighted how the knowledge gleaned from

conceptualizing the writing center as a site of rich inquiry could be combined with play to create the conditions where the academic potential of writing centers could be realized and made public in academically sanctioned ways. In the two stories that follow, I will highlight how the consultant research conducted by our tutors at a local conference on writing center work act as a praxis moment consistent with Mead's conception of how work and play mutually inform one another.

Ellie and Brad built a time machine. The two consultants wanted to explore the tangible ramifications of Anne Geller's 2005 award-winning article "Tick Tock, Next: Finding Epochal Time in the Writing Center" for their contributions to the conference. In her essay, Geller argues that an overly prescriptive emphasis on the amount of fungible time in the context of a writing center consultation distracted consultants from what they ought to be concerned with—the patience and relationship-building necessary to sustain a long-term collaboration with student-writers. For their project, Ellie and Brad created a circular behemoth of an exhibit where their reflections on time in the writing center were noted on the walls of the time machine. This seven-foot tall sculpture made out of poster board allowed conference goers literally to step into a time machine. Once visitors did so, they read about Ellie and Brad's speculation about how well the 25- or 50-minute length of consultations served English Language Learners, inquired into the possibility of not using the duration of the appointment time if writers only needed one or two short but crucial bits of feedback and summarized Geller's contribution to the field.

Tony and Amy created a role-playing game where actions and embodied characteristics of both the consultant and the student-writer affected their response strategies. One consultant

played the role of student while the other played the consultant. Together, they acted out a series of scripts about the assumptions and generalizations that might be carried out unconsciously during the course of a consultation. For example, when Amy, a Latina woman, played the role of student and admitted to Tony, a white man playing the role of consultant, that she didn't have time to put a conclusion on her paper and it was due in two hours, Tony taped a piece of paper to Amy's arm with the word "lazy" on it. When Tony's script called for him to respond to her comment with a short or snide remark, Amy taped a piece of paper to his arm that said "condescending." This role-playing game vividly illustrated how quickly summary judgments springing from preconditioned beliefs can frame the nature of individual writing center consultations.

In both of these examples, the deep inquiry into the kinds of questions writing center practitioners should be asking was offered up in a way that not only was engaged and intelligent, but accessible to the public audience attending the symposium. Most of the conference goers were not immediately familiar with the research component of a writing center consultant's job and some were not even familiar with how the writing center functioned within the university. In order to make this research visible to an audience unfamiliar with their day-to-day work, the presenter-consultants used play as an invitation to outsiders to experience their work. While it is doubtful members of the university who had little interest in the work of writing centers would attend a student-research forum that looked like a typical academic conference, stepping into a time machine or experiencing improvisational theatre offered an alternative that served as an engaging and fun introduction to a body of work that might seem foreign. This forum was

consistent with Pragmatism because it took principled means to accomplish a desired end (in this case the end was making the research component of writing center work visible to a semi-public audience in hope of sustaining academic credibility within the institution). It also was consistent with another maxim of the Chicago Progressive Pragmatists, the notion that work and play mutually should inform one another.

Mead writes, "it is possible to conceive abstractly of conditions in which all endeavors should have the spontaneity of play" (34). In the two examples described above, deeply serious intellectual work takes on different forms and I believe this makes visible Mead's ideas about the false distinctions between the formal, regulated structures for learning and the acquisition of knowledge itself. For Mead, the purpose in doing anything "should be but an expression of the whole interest in life and carry the momentum with it of this whole" (36). In other words, making a time machine as a forum for presenting research is only kitschy if it doesn't also bring new knowledge about the way writing centers conceptualize time. Writing haiku on the chalkboard is only moderately entertaining or alienating to outsiders unless it underscores a larger point about the way our writing center conceives of the teaching and doing of writing. I believe it also is important to keep in mind that our writing center consultants are learners as well. In the case of the time machine and the role-playing game, our consultants learned through playing. In addition to the external value of playfulness in the conference example, incorporating play into long-term staff development exercises is consistent with Dewey's notion that any form of play should allow the learner to discover something new about the world in the process.

To summarize, this chapter discusses the pragmatic implications of developing a pedagogical ethos accounting for play, the effects and consequences of making play central to a writing center's identity and the ways in which play and inquiry combine to make writing center work accessible and visible. While it is true that creating a playful pedagogy and ethos involves a certain amount of risks for writing centers, cultivating this dynamic is worthwhile because it works to create conditions that press on the boundaries of what is known currently. In fact, writing centers might be an optimal site for imagining the implications of play because as a site of learning, they are less bound by the strictures of other more traditional sites within the institution. However, practitioners who attempt to make play an integral part of their institutional identity also must be mindful of the risks associated with this practice because the "serious players" (to borrow Carse's term) and others who culturally are conditioned to see education as work may not always see the value in considering how play functions in an educative setting. For the Pragmatic practitioner though, play can and should be an integral component of our teaching, learning and collaborative institutional dealings.

Chapter 5- Pragmatism and Tenure

In the first four chapters of this book, I've suggested ways in which compositionists and writing center specialists could look to the philosophy of Pragmatism to inform their institutional and pedagogical practices.

Chapter 2 argues that Pragmatism allows writing center scholars an avenue for inquiry that doesn't force practitioners to choose between a research agenda centered on the practical, tangible needs of writing centers and a more theoretically-based approach. Doing scholarship in this way allows for greater academic credibility for writing center work and gives new direction to our work. In an effort to examine the quintessential writing center task of making the work of our writing centers intelligible to the larger institution, Chapter 3 is devoted to examining how using the Pragmatist instruments of metaphor and metonymy in new ways can compel richer and more sustained conversations about the place of writing centers in the university. Chapter 4 brings a more micro-level focus to the relationship between Pragmatism and writing center work by examining how the pedagogy sponsored by writing centers is consistent with the Pragmatist notion that play is integral to the learning process. This chapter also looks at the ramifications of what happens when this pedagogy runs across competing trends in higher education.

A current running through all four chapters is the idea that the version of Pragmatism I find useful to understanding complications surrounding certain issues in the field should not be confused with or be synonymous to "practical." In fact it is quite the opposite. When scholars in composition attempt to dismiss or trivialize arguments they find to be simplistic, naïve or accomodationist, they often will invoke pejoratively the term "pragmatism" or "pragmatic." The

troublesome irony that I hope this book exposes is that dismissing pragmatism out-of-hand ignores a deeper, more sustained philosophical inquiry that can be used to incorporate the very ideas these scholars critical of the pragmatic turn in composition argue for.

In this last chapter, I will explore one immediate area of interest for all compositionists and writing center practitioners that would benefit from a more comprehensive reading of what it actually means to be pragmatic. One of the most important discussions currently undertaken in the field has to do with the labor practices and institutional arrangements that affect the professional lives of writing teachers. The main reason why labor issues are an integral part of the discipline's research agenda is the inextricable link between the growth of Composition as an academic area of study and the university's reliance on contingent employees and a market-driven curriculum more generally. Unlike other disciplines within the academy, nearly all Ph.D.s trained in Composition and Rhetoric graduate programs will be involved with managing others in some capacity during their careers. As I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter, the debate on what to do to counter the troubling working conditions of contingent faculty teaching writing in the university has reached an impasse. I believe this is because the two most visible sides of the argument fail to account for the entire set of complicated variables that must be considered in order to enact the kind of change necessary to make real reform happen. Infusing Pragmatism into the conversation, I believe, allows us to reframe and refocus the terms of the debate in ways that should matter to all faculty teaching in our colleges and universities and not just those without job permanence.

In this chapter, I will explain how current debates over labor issues in Composition fail to account for the overarching systemic changes occurring within the professorate and will broaden the scope of the conversation to include a discussion about what tenure means and why changing its terms and conditions (while simultaneously preserving its importance) plays heavily into any talks about labor in the university. My argument holds that the group of scholars who champion working within the existing structures of higher education to effect change, the group who label themselves or get labeled "pragmatists," really aren't pragmatic at all in the ways I'm considering the term. At the same time, I argue that scholars who think the only way real change will occur is through organized labor and class solidarity are only half right because they fail to account for the material complexities that come with being embedded in a managed system. Pragmatism, I argue, lets us into this conversation in a different way.

I believe taking on this debate in the last chapter of the book is a fitting conclusion because it best represents how Pragmatism as a philosophy allows us to read across myriad ideologies, take what's useful about them and apply them to real situations that affect real people. By simultaneously allowing for intellectual dexterity and a focus on the ends of reform, we are able to put a name on what most engaged scholar/practitioners already do anyway. My sense is that what rereading Pragmatism offers us isn't necessarily a revolutionary way of considering ourselves and our work in relation to the larger institution, but instead a theoretical justification for breaking down the disconnections between the ways we want the world to be and the way the world actually is. Every day in our lives we make certain decisions that work within a system that we know isn't perfect. We are attuned to the material realities of our

circumstances in visceral and visible ways. But even when we make these decisions, we don't, or at least shouldn't, lose sight of the ideological underpinnings that frame the way we wish our institutions and our world could be. I submit the value of Pragmatism to be a way of articulating, theorizing and acting upon this often conflicted reality.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF COMPOSITION'S LABOR STRUGGLES

Over the last 30 years, colleges and universities increasingly have relied on contingent faculty to staff its courses and no discipline in the academy has felt this trend more acutely than composition. A 2008 MLA report found that in the fall of 2006 only 30.8% of courses offered within English departments were taught by tenure-track faculty. Faculty off the tenure track accounted for 41.6% of the course offerings and the remaining 27.6 were taught by graduate assistants ("Education in the Balance"). A 2001 CCCC study of working conditions in composition found that full-time, tenure-track faculty only taught 7% of these introductory classes (Scott 1). The university's heavy reliance on contingent labor, however, does not translate into working conditions that reflect the importance of non-tenured employees to the university's structure. According to the CCCC study, 60% of full-time non-tenured faculty makes less than $28,000 per year. An even smaller percentage of these employees have access to an employer-based health-care plan and/or professional development funds (CCCC).

Donna Strickland, in her essay, "Making the Managerial Conscious in Composition Studies," contends that confronting labor issues in the field requires taking a hard look at the material realities of the day-to-day lives of those working in the field and recognizing how the

growth of the field corresponds with the kinds of working conditions now affecting the majority of instructors in the field. Strickland contends that the bulk of composition scholarship deals disproportionately with idealistic justifications of the discipline's past and present and that "composition specialists generally see their role as nothing less than empowering students to participate in a democratic society" (127). Strickland claims this over-emphasis on how composition can work towards egalitarian ends and social justice elides the material circumstances that factor equally into any discussion about the discipline's institutional positioning.

Though she critiques the way composition lacks substantial treatment of the material circumstances that also significantly play into why the field exists in the first place, she acknowledges that the field's social justice ideals and attending to material issues like labor practices are not inherently at odds with each other. For my purposes in this book, I will take Strickland's notion that "composition specialists may be uniquely qualified to work toward re-shaping corporate trends in the university" as a point of departure and devote the remainder of this chapter to reconciling composition's commitment to teaching in democratic ways with the material circumstances under which such teaching is done. Like Strickland, I believe Pragmatism gives us a lens through which we can undertake this kind of work progressively.

Given the current material realities of writing teaching in American universities, a growing number of Composition scholars advocate formalizing the professional status of contingent employees who do the majority of first-year writing teaching. Researchers like

Michael Murphy accept that the economic landscape of higher education necessitates that a good portion of the labor required to teach sections of a course that nearly all students must take will come from those not on a traditional tenure track. In Murphy's view, staffing every section of first-year writing with a tenure-track professor is a logistical impossibility because a) there would not be enough faculty members to staff the courses, even if the material resources existed, and b) there would be significant resistance from a professorate historically disinterested in teaching first-year writing. Because of the complexities bound up in transforming the labor practices of composition simply by relying on tenure-track professors, Murphy calls for the creation of a teaching-intensive substructure within the professorate that will meet the demands of the university while simultaneously creating better working conditions for the adjunct employees currently involved with teaching these courses ("New Faculty" 23). As an alternative to having large numbers of university instructors languishing in dead-end adjunct jobs with low wages and little opportunity for professional advancement, Murphy contends that formalizing the teaching substructure already at work in Composition could create full-time positions that teachers could work their way into as their careers progressed (24).

Murphy contends that creating a series of what Leslie and Gappa label "Professors of Practice" appointments are "in the best economic and intellectual interests both of composition as a discipline and of higher education more generally" (26). For the instructors doing the actual work, formalizing their appointments in increasingly professional ways would provide higher wages (although still less than a tenure-track professorship), greater job security and increased institutional status. For the university, this kind of investment would ensure retaining a majority

of quality, committed teachers while still keeping the profitability of first-year writing courses high.

At the root of this sort of compromise between the university and its workers is an idea that effecting change can happen only when compositionists recognize that we do in fact labor within existing corporate structures and must negotiate the demands of this structure as opposed to "persisting in fantasies of escaping that system" (Harris 51). While Murphy advocates for a redefinition of the professoriate in terms of labor practices, scholars like Joseph Harris believe formalizing a teaching substructure to be necessary on pedagogical grounds. Harris contends that the current tenure system does not reward the good teaching of composition and too often the teaching of writing falls into the hands of those who are least trained and/or inclined to teach the subject well. Creating permanent teaching positions with pay and benefits comparable to that of tenured faculty, Harris contends, not only could allow good teachers who care about first-year writing to teach the bulk of the sections, but also allow WPAs more control in staffing and curricular decisions. To Harris, the net result of such structural changes benefits not only contingent faculty who now have better material conditions in their professional lives, but that students ultimately reap the benefits of such a system because they take classes as part of an academic culture that recognizes and values their first-year experience enough to ensure competent and willing classroom teaching.

The vision for composition's labor practices advocated by Murphy and Harris clearly aligns with what Richard Miller calls for in *As If Learning Mattered.* As I began to discuss in Chapter 1, Miller asks compositionists to consider themselves as "intellectual bureaucrats" who

must work within a corporatized academic system if they wish to effect change within the university (213). The important contribution of Miller's work rests on the idea that once the ideology of change is put into practice, respectfully engaging with those who the system already has rewarded must occur if the reform effort has any chance of lasting success (204). For Murphy, this kind of work happens when he calls for a formalizing of the already present labor practices in American universities. Critics like Murphy and Harris write from a subject position that attempts to legitimize and materially recognize the teaching of writing as a job best done by qualified and well-compensated professionals, but stop short of advocating for any radical systemic change. They see the problem not as a single conscious choice set forth by those with power in the university, but as the longitudinal product of a constellation of choices affected by economics, the idea of tenure and the role first-year writing plays within a university system.

Harris and Murphy take to heart Miller's idea that constraining forces within composition are not necessarily paralyzing ones (211). Harris writes that it would be better if all contingent faculty lines were converted to tenure lines, but that's not likely to happen anytime soon so "we need to look for more immediate ways to support the work of writing teaching" ("Behind Blue Eyes"). This search for practical solutions to solving the problems associated with composition's labor practices is often (and wrongly) confused with the kind of Pragmatism I've been arguing for in this book. Murphy is perhaps the most explicit about using practical ends to justify the ethical validity of his argument when he writes that his argument "stands a much better chance of success with program and university administrators … who will ultimately have to be convinced in order for significant changes ever to be realized" (18).

Nowhere in Composition has the term "pragmatism" been more invoked than in discussions about the discipline's labor practices. Sometimes used as a term of derision that signifies the field's tacit acceptance of abysmal working conditions (Bousquet) and sometimes shied away from by targets of Bousquet's ire who position themselves as change agents working within a highly complex bureaucracy (Harris; Murphy; Miller), the notion of pragmatism, implicitly or explicitly, never strays too far from the conversation. Bousquet laments the pragmatic turn in Composition because its micro-level approach to institutional change cannot provide the theoretical underpinnings necessary for radically altering the discipline's irrevocably flawed labor practices. Bousquet uses "pragmatism" or "pragmatic" as a pejorative catch-all term to describe those practitioners who don't wholeheartedly subscribe to his argument.

Curiously, the "pragmatist" recipients of Bousquet's criticism take the bait and shy away from engaging in a discussion that seriously takes up what it would mean to read Pragmatist philosophy onto the conversation about the labor practices under discussion in the field. Joe Harris writes, "If what Bousquet means by pragmatist is someone who is reconciled to working within the system as it stands … I am not a pragmatist" (893). Similarly, Michael Murphy contends Bousquet misrepresents his position by implying that Murphy's brand of pragmatism gives up on long-term collective action (230). In both examples, Harris and Murphy are explicitly critical of Bousquet's misapplication of the term pragmatism to their work. This doesn't necessarily indicate Murphy and Harris are against any application of the term in any form, but it does indicate a willingness on their parts to distance themselves from pragmatism (or

at least a discussion about what the application of the term might mean). After distancing themselves from pragmatism, the two responses to Bousquet drop the subject altogether.

I believe it is a mistake to elide pragmatism, especially in the context under discussion in this chapter, because a careful reading of what Pragmatism actually is could show the ways in which both the materialist critique done by Bousquet and the change methods advocated for by Miller and Porter et al. fail to account for the structural and ideological complexity of reforming systems. For the remainder of this chapter, I will highlight how reading Dewey's version of pragmatism accounts for not only the lived realities and existing structural arrangements of institutional life but also accounts for the larger-scale materialist critique that is strikingly similar to Bousquet's. Doing this work, I argue, will invigorate an eminently salient debate that will be integral to the professional lives of nearly all Compositionists for likely the duration of their working lives. The economic realities of contemporary American colleges and universities only add to the conversation's import. It's time to get past the impasse.

In his award-winning essay, "Composition as a Management Science: Toward a University Without a WPA," Marc Bousquet argues that nothing short of abdicating a managed system of labor within Composition can make the reforms necessary to undo the exploitive labor practices surrounding writing teaching. For Bousquet, social movement unionism and the abolishment of the Writing Program Administrator are two of the conditions necessary for achieving disciplinary status as well as contributing to a better world (518). While Porter et al. point to the creation of the writing major, graduate programs in Composition and Rhetoric and special projects in the university centered on writing as evidence that Compositionists long have

recognized the value of learning to negotiate their way through the university rhetorically, Bousquet sees these trends as precisely the problem. He writes:

> the emergence of rhetoric and composition into some form of (marginal) respectability and (institutional bureaucratic) validity has a great deal to do with its usefulness to upper management in its legitimating the practice of deploying a revolving labor force of graduate employees and other contingent teachers to teach writing. The discipline's enormous usefulness to academic capitalism—in delivering cheap teaching, training a supervisory class for the cheap teachers and producing a group of intellectuals who theorize and legitimate this scene of managed labor- has to given at least as much credit in this expansion. (500)

The suggested alternative of working to make teaching-intensive instructorships supplant a dependence on contingent labor, for Bousquet, already has been done for quite some time in liberal arts colleges and still are problematic because they are not professorial thus are even more subjected to managerial control. The reason why proposals like Murphy's are untenable is because they "idealize after the fact [his emphasis], legitimating an already existing reality that few people are pleased with" (506). The alternative then is for managed teachers of writing working under less than desirable circumstances to organize in solidarity to press for material changes in their circumstances. He points to examples ranging from Emma Goldman to Eugene Debs to the AARP to highlight the virtues of organization and to refute the claim that such

voices will be dismissed unilaterally. Ultimately, he writes, solidarity is the only way "to reconsider the limits to thought imposed by pragmatism" and effect institutional change (518).

Fundamentally, Bousquet's absolutely right. For the increasing number of contingent writing teachers (many of whom have spent years earning a Ph.D. and teach students as well if not better than tenured faculty), anything short of a wage on par with their tenured colleagues and working in a collegial, supportive professional environment won't do. In order to enact such dramatic changes to the way writing is structured and taught in our universities, nothing short of the idealism Bousquet advocates will suffice. However, the way Bousquet dismisses the arguments of all he deems "pragmatic" and calls for the relinquishing of the WPA positions functions to distance anyone who dares to work within the existing system from being a part of the solution. The crux of the problem is this: Even if writing teachers working in universities agree with him ideologically, we all are bound inextricably to the reality of our circumstances to some degree. Anyone who ever has had a job knows this.

Furthermore, positioning Compositionists like Harris and Porter et al. as the enemy in this conversation ignores the material reality Bousquet wants us so badly to consider. In many universities, WPAs are sometimes the only advocates for both contingent teachers and the teaching of writing in departments where first-year writing classes are an afterthought. In a response to Bousquet, Harris contends that far from wanting more managerial control over teachers, his role as a WPA is to create the conditions under which writing teachers were trained, evaluated and assigned classes in professional ways.

Let's assume for a second that a WPA at a large Research I university does what Bousquet recommends and resigns her post. Would this actually be of benefit to contingent faculty? Gone are the structures in place to support new graduate assistants teaching for the first time, gone is the voice that had the institutional authority to speak on behalf of contingent faculty who lacked a voice in departmental proceedings and gone is the administrative figure who works to make the experience of a first-year writing class beneficial to students.

In his response, Evan Watkins takes a more tempered read of Bousquet's argument and rightfully asks us to consider what he offers "as a point of departure for political understanding and action, not a conclusion" (900). I agree with Watkins's assessment of the value of Bousquet's argument; after all, what Bousquet provides is an explicit and frank big-picture critique of a fraught system where the economic needs of the university clash with what we know about good teaching and humane labor practices. However, what Bousquet's argument doesn't do is provide a place for those working in the day-to-day realities of university writing programs to find their way into the argument even if they do buy into the idea of class solidarity. Here's what I mean: Does Bousquet really believe that the elimination of the WPA position would help organize the class of university teachers assigned to first-year writing classes in ways that would have the net effects he advocates for? In many programs, including my own Research I writing program, much of the talk about pedagogy that happens in the department and the entire teacher training of new graduate assistants occurs because the WPA-led writing program has facilitated the discussion. WPAs also serve a function, often using their administrative position to advocate for the working conditions of contingent faculty and graduate

teaching assistants. Minus the presence of the WPA, graduate teaching assistants would be left almost entirely to fend for themselves and the teaching of first-year writing undoubtedly would suffer. Furthermore, graduate teaching assistants who specialize in another area of English Studies would be acculturated to see the teaching of first-year writing as simply a means to an end (funding of their own professional research interests) and other contingent faculty would be left without even an indirect voice at the table where administrative decisions regarding their professional lives are made. In short, it is hard to imagine who would lead the charge and be in a position to advocate for the interests of writing teachers without the WPA.

Unfortunately, Harris and Murphy fail to recognize the ideological importance of Bousquet's argument. Only Watkins recognizes this after Harris and Murphy staked out their positions advocating the formalization of the system of contingent labor. What Harris and Murphy both do in a sense is skip right over the ideological underpinnings of what their arguments might mean and go right into the material consequences of what this new system would entail. In my view, this is an equally problematic mistake. When Harris advocates "working for change now" what he's essentially doing is limiting the scope of the conversation to the argumentative threads immediately applicable to tangibly changing composition's labor practices in the short term ("Behind Blue Eyes" 893). This occurs at the expense of any real engagement with Bousquet's major point—that in order to make lasting change, we can't settle for short-term concessions that don't alter fundamentally the landscape of labor practices in higher education.

What I believe an authentic and considered discussion of Pragmatism allows us to do is open up this intrinsically important discussion to accommodate both the material element (Murphy; Miller; Harris) and the ideological (Bousquet). The current state of the conversation is affected, to its detriment, I think, by the all-or-nothing logic put forth by all participants. For those in the Murphy/Miller/Harris camp, the monolithic, expansive bureaucracy of higher education makes radically changing the structure nearly impossible and for Bousquet, the fixed ends of what it would take to fix the existing system leave the "mobilization" he calls for an abstraction that fails to take into account the conditions of what such work would entail.

To conclude this chapter and this project, I will attempt to map out a series of recommendations garnered by reading real Pragmatism onto composition's labor issues. In this analysis, I will tease out what I perceive to be valuable lines of inquiry and experimental knowledge offered by Bousquet and temper these ideas with clear-headed allegiance to the material realities articulated by compositionists like Miller, Harris and Murphy. Consistent with the way Dewey recommends the pursuit of knowledge, I will supplement the tangible application of these suggestions with a holistic and long-term vision for the discipline of composition.

THE ROLE OF TENURE IN COMPOSITON'S LABOR ISSUES

In a 2009 presentation for CCCC, Doug Hesse, the Founding Director of the Writing Program at Denver University, described the state of his newly created writing program, which employs 19 full-time lecturers who teach over 95% of this program's first-year writing classes.

Hesse's talk highlighted the many virtues of his institutional arrangement ranging from beautiful new buildings to a university-wide commitment to writing excellence and a stable cache of permanent full-timers teaching first-year writing who also are able to pursue research interests and institutional service as a portion of their work. The program Hesse has created is worth emulating in many ways—I'm sure most WPAs would trade their professional lot for Hesse's in a hurry. But for all the successes he talked about, he ended the presentation with the question/worry of how he could sustain the momentum of the new program well into the future (cite). What Hesse has in place at Denver University and what Murphy and Harris advocate for is close to right in both sentiment and practice. The missing, but integral, component of their philosophy, however, is a rewards system centered on academic freedom and a salary structure that will keep this newly-formed professional class satisfied in the long-term.

The problems Hesse faces at DU could be met with a possible Pragmatist reading of contemporary labor issues in Composition and may look like this: Practitioners within the discipline should be willing to go the route Murphy advocates and work towards converting as many contingent faculty lines as possible to full-time lectureships without losing sight of a long-term commitment to make these lines permanent and tenurable. Even though a philosophy such as this is consistent with Pragmatism, it remains unsatisfying for two reasons. For starters, once these full-time lectureships are in place, the chances of them ever being converted into tenurable lines are very slim. From a managerial perspective, there's little incentive for university administrators to increase the salary of and give tenure to this new (and potentially plentiful)

class of the professoriate. Unless Compositionists can come up with an effective way to convince administrators of the necessity of tenure, these full-time lines will stay the way they are. Just as important, philosophically speaking, is the idea that devoting a large amount of money to funding these full-time lines changes the fundamental role of the professor in the university. While Hesse's concerns about motivation of the lecturers in his program are warranted, there is potentially an even larger issue at hand—how the benefits of academic freedom and tenure might affect the role of this class of academics.

A pressing, but oft-ignored question related to labor issues in Composition and the academy more generally has to do with the rights full-time lecturers have or don't have relative to their tenured peers. This question matters because without a tenure system that protects an individual's right to teach subject matter how they wish in accordance with their own professional judgment and through methods they deem pedagogically responsible, it stands to reason these teachers could be subject to public opinion and institutional control in ways other academics with tenure are not.

As early as 1965, Columbia historian and American Association of University Professors (AAUP) President Walter Metzger warned that "the question of uses of sub-faculties … will be answered, if not by organized professors, then by those who dealt with them before [the creation of the AAUP] … the possessors of material and legal power" (237). The logic behind his prescient message held that ceding control of the faculty's terms of work over to administration could erode the academic freedom of all university professors. One of the most indelible contributions of the AAUP was the issue of faculty self-governance. The value of one's peers

determining a colleague's worth marked a shift away from managerial control and the whims of governors and college presidents. When Metzger alludes to "those who dealt with them before," he meant the university presidents who, before the creation of the AAUP, had nearly autonomous control over the curriculum, who taught it and how much they were paid to do such work. The line between pursuing truth wherever it may lead and upholding an existing social order was a fine one before the establishment of academic freedom. Stories abound regarding professors fired because their ideas directly confronted the very donors whose economic contributions were integral to sustaining the university.

The AAUP's version of academic freedom operates under the assumption that the country benefits when university professors are allowed to do their work without unduly being influenced by external factors. Instead of being evaluated based on the popularity of their ideas or ideologies, faculty are scrutinized by their peers on the quality of their ideas and teaching. The problem, as Gary Rhodes points out, in having a group of professionals outside of this tenured sphere is that a question begins to arise regarding who controls the content, development and delivery of courses (171). This question is especially acute for teachers in a first-year writing classroom because it is often writing courses that are most susceptible to the kind of public scrutiny that make academic freedom so necessary in the first place.

It is not only possible, but probable, that a situation similar to the one Linda Brodkey describes in her essay "The Trouble at Texas" may arise with full-time lecturers and others outside the traditional tenure track at the center of the controversy. "The Trouble at Texas" outlines an attempt by Brodkey and her colleagues at the University of Texas-Austin to redesign

a first-year writing course that emphasized looking at how court cases regarding issues of difference historically have been handled. To others in the field, what Brodkey and company wanted the course to accomplish didn't stray too far from the field's mainstream; however, the course's title, "Writing about Difference," drew the ire of other stakeholders from university administrators to the Texas Legislature. The scrutiny was so severe that the implementation of the course never happened. Brodkey's efforts were thwarted even though she was on a tenure-line appointment. One could imagine the repercussions may have been even more severe had she held an appointment without the protections of tenure.

In his essay, "Academic Freedom," John Dewey points to the central contradiction necessitating academic freedom for university teachers. He writes that professors simultaneously are bound to the pursuit of truth and freedom of inquiry in the classroom as well as to the interests of the university. These two allegiances inevitably will come into contact with one another when the goal of pursuing truth leads the teacher into spaces that run counter to the aims and philosophy of the university. To Dewey, disciplines in the humanities are especially susceptible to this phenomena because they a) are not typically regarded as being empirically grounded in science and b) are likely to run counter the prevailing ideology of the institution and culture in which it's located (57). In other words, teachers who deal with the "problems of life," as Dewey referred to the humanities, need academic freedom as much as researchers because their ideas are likely to be the most contentious. As Dewey points out, "Wherever the discrepancy between the new truth and established institutions is emphasized," this new truth is likely to be met with a great deal of resistance (59). The poststructuralist approach Brodkey took

in her course design was well within the established disciplinary framework of the humanities in the mid-1990s, but Dewey proved to be right that these "new truths" would be met with a great deal of resistance by the public writ large who were slow to keep up with the changes taking place within the academy.

For my purposes in this chapter, I am arguing two things simultaneously: 1) The working conditions of those who do the majority of the teaching in our universities need to change because the unfair labor practices associated with them lead to conditions that make the quality of life for the teacher and the quality of the education for the student worse; and 2) Teaching, especially in Composition, needs to enjoy the protections of academic freedom because the intellectual practice surrounding teaching often involves calling into question widely held assumptions about our institutions and traditions in ways that may be opposed violently in larger society. Because of this dimension, there needs to be an alternative form of tenure in place that shelters teachers, especially ones whose pedagogy is rooted in the critical, from falling victim to the whims of administrators and the public writ large. It's not hard to imagine a situation where a full-time instructor's teaching methods and ideology runs counter to agents of power within the university. Perhaps a series of negative teaching evaluations coupled with an administration wary of instructors who overtly attempt to buck the status quo are enough to warrant the instructor's contract not be renewed. In this plausible scenario, the instructor's peers are absent from any discussion about her performance and subsequent dismissal.

If trends in Composition's labor practices continue in the way Murphy and Harris recommend, negotiating an alternative form of tenure that protects the academic freedom of this

new class of academics must be considered more carefully than it currently has been. What I'm not advocating here is abandoning the existing system of tenure that has been in place since the 1940s. In all disciplines, the necessity of new research and ideas is the lifeblood of academic work. This is not an argument that research is somehow unimportant or that those who work in traditionally conceived tenure-track settings are wasting the money of the state governments who support them. Instead, I am arguing that recognizing the importance of tenure for permanent faculty, whatever their job function is, needs to be accounted for. My sense is that the need to address the conditions of tenure differently will not just be a concern of contingent faculty. What it means to be a professor, especially in the humanities, is changing. What I am calling for is a system of tenure that accounts for and is responsive to the changing realities of the higher education landscape that include fewer and fewer publication outlets for Compositionists and an increased need for undergraduate teaching by full-time faculty.

The need to consider alternative forms of tenure alongside an increase in hiring academics for the purposes of teaching exists for reasons that are not solely ideological nor hypothetical. A 2002 report of the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on the Future of Scholarly Publishing asks how increasingly strenuous publishing demands placed upon faculty can be reconciled with decreasing outlets for scholars, especially in the humanities, to publish their books. In order to understand why historical conceptions of what attaining tenure requires may be an imprecise way to measure the professional credentials of contemporary faculty, a constellation of factors must be taken into account.

The buyer's market created by the glut of credentialed Ph.D.s in English has upped the ante significantly for job-seekers. Because of the abundance of candidates, institutions that historically placed a minimal emphasis on scholarly production now can distinguish between prospective hires based on their publishing records and require publication in addition to teaching and service as conditions for tenure ("Profession" 10). While this trend, in itself, isn't necessarily problematic (in fact, it might serve to make our scholarship more robust), the concurrent depletion of outlets that publish scholarship in the humanities creates a more vexing set of circumstances and provides another reason why rethinking the requirements of tenure should occur. While academic freedom and wage issues are the most visible reasons for why the definition of tenure should be reconsidered, there are other substantial material variables that lend support to the idea.

The monograph book, long considered to be the gold standard for attaining tenure, is increasingly harder to publish while the demands for it remain fairly constant. Economic pressures and decreased readership have combined to create a dwindling market for scholarly books. University publishing houses are often the first to get the axe when a new budgetary shortfall looms. In composition, formerly major publishing outlets like the SUNY press no longer exist and Utah State press fights for its existence at the time of this writing. Making these economic constraints especially troubling is what John Thompson calls the "twigging effect." Thompson, in his book *Books in the Digital Age,* describes how an increasingly splintered set of academic sub-specialties and the plethora of new material make it next to impossible for scholars to keep up with contemporary work, even within their own field (177). For an audience that was

already quite small, the idea that the books being published in the field aren't even being widely read by colleagues has called into question the monograph's status as the key to tenure.

The MLA recognizes the perilous position of the book vis-à-vis the tenure process and recently has advocated for rethinking what it means to do scholarly research. Alternative conceptions of what counts towards tenure play heavily into the organization's recommendations: "The profession as a whole should develop a more capacious conception of scholarship by rethinking the dominance of the monograph, promoting the scholarly essay, establishing multiple pathways to tenure, and using scholarly portfolios" ("Recommendations" 11). The impetus behind the MLA's concern over the status of publication has to do mostly with fears that an entire generation of junior faculty never will attain tenure under the current material constraints affecting their professional lives. The MLA Task Force on Evaluating Scholarship for Tenure and Promotion recommends a system where tenure is evaluated based on the needs and stated institutional mission that may look different in depending on the academic context.

So far, the same Task Force reports that fears about losing an entire generation of scholars to an antiquated tenure process remain hypothetical. Faculty members continue to be tenured at a rate similar to their predecessors (27). The report, however, does not take into account the specific context surrounding the circumstances of non-tenure-track full-time faculty teaching primarily lower-division writing courses outlined earlier in the chapter. The report doesn't account for the idea that one of the reasons why faculty members are being tenured at a rate relative to their predecessors is that more faculty teaching lower-division courses aren't

eligible for tenure in the first place. In other words, just because the percentages align doesn't mean that questions about rethinking tenure are rendered moot.

I believe the calls to change the tenure system and the debate about labor issues in composition converge in important ways that center on fundamental questions about what purpose the university is supposed to serve, who benefits from the work faculty undertakes and how scholars respond to the idea that the need for public engagement is growing while research interests become increasingly specialized and remote from the general public. In many cases, the Professor of Practice lines described earlier in this chapter encompass what could be (and many currently are already) a new vision for what the professoriate could look like in an era where scholarship is not defined exclusively by traditional means of publication. By being more or less "free" from the constraints of academic publishing, full-time faculty contribute to the overall intellectual life of the university by teaching undergraduates, developing curriculum and piloting projects designed to enhance wider engagement with the public including, but not limited to, the students on our campuses.

In "Education in the Balance: A Report on the Academic Workforce in English," the organization calls for faculty members to engage more than they currently do with the general public, arguing, "Included in our unwritten contract with the public is the understanding that we will take this work seriously, making general education a part of our ongoing research and making our ongoing research part of general education" (19). The members of the university best positioned to enact the MLA's recommendations are not the tenure-eligible faculty to which the

report refers, but rather the full-time lecturers and professors of practice whose conditions of employment depend heavily on engagement with lower-division undergraduates and the external university. The connection between the changing material conditions of what a professorship entails and the labor issues in Composition matters because if the MLA's recommendations are to be enacted, it likely will be Compositionists at the forefront of this change.

What I am arguing for in this chapter is two-fold. I am asking Compositionists to recognize the necessity of providing full-time lecturers or professors of practice with an alternative framework for tenure or a tenure-like employment track that will provide them academic freedom and the opportunity for economic advancement over the course of their careers. I believe this is necessary in order for faculty to do their best work within the classroom without undue concerns about job security and popularity and I believe it is in the best interest of the university to provide a work environment where innovation and teacherly initiative is valued and materially supported. If our institutions behave as if they mean what they say when they profess a commitment to undergraduate education, creating a new framework for supporting those faculty who take on the bulk of that work appears salient.

Furthermore, I am calling for the field to recognize that we already have lost the battle for tenure in Composition on the terms that Bousquet/Miller argued over. Administrative priorities that privilege economics have carried the day. Full-time faculty off a traditional tenure track have been and will continue to be an integral part of writing instruction for the foreseeable future and their roles likely will expand if renewable, appointments and other visiting professorships

are included amongst their ranks. For Compositionists interested in reform, the case is not closed, but the terms of the debate need to be reformulated. Specifically, I believe it is in the best interest of writing teachers to push for a re-conceptualization of what tenure means for all faculty in addition to pressing for tenure or tenure-like working conditions for faculty teaching outside of a traditional tenure structure.

Enacting a system where these two agendas are pursued simultaneously hopefully will work to blur the existing distinction between those who work under a tenure system and those who do not. If faculty hired under a traditional tenure track could achieve tenure through an increased emphasis on teaching and service, non-tenure track faculty who do approximately the same work would be in a presumably better position to argue for working conditions that carry the perks of tenure. The two agendas complement each other in ways that would benefit both groups of faculty. Those hired on a tenure track would have increased flexibility in making tenure cases in an inhospitable publishing climate while those off the tenure track could use the experiences of their tenured peers as leverage to argue that their jobs also should be considered worthy of the benefits accompanying tenure because they increasingly are similar.

An important benefit of this proposed scenario is the potential for increased solidarity amongst faculty of all statuses. If the job of the professoriate is reconsidered in ways that I am advocating, unions potentially could gain a more powerful voice in the day-to-day workings of the institutions because there would be a greater number of workers pushing for an increasingly similar goal—academic freedom for all faculty and a peer-reviewed merit system less constrained by external whims and economic factors.

These are the conditions that I believe we must approach if we are serious about effecting change in Composition's labor arrangement. The time has come to think differently about Composition's labor issues and to take this conversation as an impetus to think more broadly about how the role of the professor and the university can be refigured to provide the citizens of our states with access to high-quality teaching and research as well as provide all those who work within the university system with ethically and professionally responsible working conditions. It is also my belief that reading Pragmatism onto our work will allow for us to negotiate a coherent theoretical framework for grounding these ideas as well as guide us in our efforts to implement the kinds of change that our ideas lead us towards.

Afterword: Can Pragmatism Save Itself From Pragmatism?

One dimension permeating the history of both writing center scholarship and Composition is the idea that in order to attain academic legitimacy, the two fields must distance themselves from a definition, imposed from the outside, that renders them in service of and to the rest of the academy. Scholars in both disciplines have championed the worth of their field through an argument that a rhetorically-based study of writing is a worthwhile subject regardless of a student's academic preparedness or ability. On a tangible level, this way of thinking about how writing instruction happens in universities has resulted in first-year writing classes for all incoming freshman as a general education component and an increased visibility of writing centers as a site for all writers, not just those students tagged as in need of remediation in some way.

Compositionists and writing center directors should be pleased with recent trends in higher education that place an increased emphasis on their students' written communication skills. As I've documented in this dissertation, the role writing plays in contemporary higher education can no longer be considered an auxiliary component of the curriculum; rather, there is reason to believe that writing is anything but marginalized within higher education. For evidence of this trend away from the margins of the academy, one can look at the prevalence of job listings for writing specialists and writing center directors; one also can look at the increasing amount of institutional resources devoted to writing instruction and the emphasis on developing good writing practices across disciplinary lines.

However, I would venture to say all professionals who direct a writing center or manage a first-year writing program simultaneously still grapple with the same issues of visibility and intelligibility that have made professional life hard since the inception of the fields. For instance in our writing center this semester, we've written emails to colleagues who "require" the writing center to sign off on student drafts, and the rhetorically-based first-year writing curriculum came under scrutiny from both an external review board and by proxy many colleagues in our own department whose ideas about teaching writing run counter to ours. Everyone agrees that writing is important, but the question about how best to teach the act to students remains hotly contested.

As this book has demonstrated, it's not that the work of writing is invisible or that the people doing this work are not valued. Instead, we, as writing specialists, simply are wanted for the wrong reasons (or at least what we believe to be the wrong reasons based on four decades of academic research). My contention is that it is too blunt an instrument to say that writing instruction is marginalized in the academy and we instead should focus our attention on resolving a much more difficult paradoxical problem—how to make our research-informed positions regarding responsible and ethical writing instruction visible to stakeholders within the institution who understand the importance of writing, but have conflicting ways of going about this work.

A highly visible front for the discursive shift I'm outlining here likely will happen around the idea of remediation. Historically, the link between remediation and the work of writing instruction has been the cause of great consternation within Composition and Writing Center Studies because of its connections to the problematic positioning of students and sites of writing

teaching. Think about the instructor comments our consultants see with some regularity— "This paper has serious issues—go to the writing center." Think about the faculty meeting where an instructor in a junior-level course laments, "My students can't write—I'm talking about things that should have been covered in first-year writing classes." Both sites of writing instruction have for all kinds of good reasons shied away from the remedial tag because of its problematic connection to comments like the ones described above.

It's not difficult to see what writing specialists find problematic about these two common experiences most directors have faced at one time or another. In both instances, the instructor has delegated the teaching of writing to an outside source. In the first example, the instructor recommended the writing center in an effort to outsource the revision process to someone else. In the second example, the faculty member implicitly expected her students to come out of a first-year writing class knowing exactly what kind version of academic discourse should be produced in a specific disciplinary style. Both examples highlight how the discourse about writing and writing instruction still positions it within a remedial context in the academy. When taken together with the increased institutional emphasis on written communication, how to handle these contradictory views becomes much more complicated.

While at the same time it is Pragmatic to attend to these intra-institutional conversations and continue to explain the ways in which the responsibility for good writing instruction falls upon all faculty and not just those specializing in Composition and to continue to talk about the detailed reasons why the writing center is not a place primarily suited for cleaning up grammar, there is also another dimension to the issue that often gets lost in these conversations—the idea

that certain students really do need some form of extra support because their levels of preparedness are not on par with their peers'. If we consider the most generous definition of remediation (i.e. the work towards correcting a deficiency) what are the implications for Pragmatism in this context?

First, let's consider the two main problems with the idea of remediation. As Mary Soliday rightly points out (and I discuss in Chapter 2), the remedial tag often has been placed on historically under-represented student populations as a way to preserve existing structures of racial, class and cultural privilege within the academy. In other words, the idea that if students don't speak and write in dominant dialects of English, there's something wrong with them infuses any conversation about writing vis-à-vis remediation. The second problem has to do with the institutional positioning of the teaching of writing. When the work of writing teaching is bound up exclusively in talks about remediation and the rhetoric of student need, Composition and Rhetoric as academic disciplines have a much harder time making the case for scholarly legitimacy and this has ramifications for the labor conditions of teaching writing that are detailed in Chapter 5, as well as for how hard it is to make the work of writing and writing centers intelligible to those outside the disciplines (see Chapter 3).

For all kinds of understandable reasons, writing scholars have shied away from the idea of remediation because they rightly wanted to distance themselves from the historically fraught connotations of the term in order to increase the visibility of writing as an academic pursuit and in doing so, better serve students, especially those on the margins of the academy. However,

given the evolving role of writing in the university that I've documented in this book, one of the biggest questions related to an approach to writing instruction grounded in Pragmatism that remains unanswered is what to do with the idea of remediation. There is enough reason to believe that an institutional emphasis on writing and written communication will remain central to the curriculum in the future. The importance of writing is visible now and can be accounted for in many different ways. What the real question seems to be is how writing specialists will handle this evolving role, specifically in regards to how we serve students who really do need our expertise the most. Would embracing remediation be inherent to a Pragmatic approach to writing teaching or would it set the field back to a darker historical time?

I believe writing should be an agent of access to higher education and the practices and policies of writing programs should work towards that goal. The question I'm left with now though is how does remediation factor into making higher education a more democratic place? If one accepts the idea that writing programs have indeed proved their worth to the institution and are no longer primarily seen as adjunct to the real work of the university, then can writing teachers go back to the idea of remediation and embrace it along the lines of social justice? Would this be consistent with Pragmatism? Simply put, when the idea of remediation is loaded with fraught baggage that labels some students normal and "others" already-marginalized students, the answer of course is no. However, the reality of higher education is that there are degrees of writing ability across student populations and there are not too many sites within the institution that serve students on the low end of that scale. The first-year writing classroom will remain a place that serves these students and the writing center always will attract heavily the

students who do not believe themselves to be capable writers; the writing center also often will be called upon to provide support in writing instruction for demographics of students deemed deficient.

Fundamentally, we, as writing specialists, must ask ourselves if our discipline has made enough institutional headway to embrace explicitly projects and programs that have a ring of remediation to them without having to worry about being pigeon-holed as a service arm of the academy or feel locked-in to embarking only on these sorts of endeavors.

In the fall of 2009, our writing center piloted a one-credit course for a group of international students enrolled in a matriculation agreement between a university in China and the University of Nebraska. The new course was designed to support the academic literacy needs of these students who transferred to UNL as upperclassmen studying in an American university for the first time. At the request of the administration, the writing center created, planned and implemented the syllabus for the new course. The decision to involve the writing center with this new program is an example of the kinds of Pragmatic questions with which writing specialists will have to grapple as colleges and universities prioritize things like the recruitment of international students, expanding online course offerings and creating collaborations with entities in the private sector. Saying yes to this type of program is an example of the kind of Pragmatism I believe writing programs should feel comfortable with.

There's a cynical way to read our implementation of the one-credit course. University administrators pressured to raise the enrollment of international students paying expensive

tuition orchestrated a matriculation agreement that accounted for the students' actual level of academic preparedness in very limited and peripheral ways. Once the problem was realized, university administrators who wanted to see the program work turned to the writing center as a site where these international students could be supported in their quest for academic fluency in English because that support was unavailable through other disciplinary channels. Once again, the writing center is the default setting to which students who lacked fluency in their academic writing could turn because other faculty were busy doing the real work of the university. The writing center's complicity in this arrangement is little-p pragmatic in ways that I'm not advocating for here.

The reasons we said yes to this program, however, were rooted in capital-P Pragmatism. Another way to tell the story affirms the role of the writing center as a site of access within the university that values, promotes and supports the needs of all writers whose ways of knowing and writing may not be valued as highly because they don't always take the form of standard written English. The last sentence of our mission statement reads, "We are committed to the democratization of higher education and in particular to the ongoing pursuit of a just society," and we saw the one-credit course as consistent with that mission. We saw taking part in this program as a way to act upon the principles in which we ground our work. The course, then, became an opportunity to enact the values that we hold to be true about writing in ways that were aligned with the needs of outside stakeholders within the wider university. Helping students cultivate an institutional literacy, teaching them to make choices about their writing that would

allow them to articulate their own voice in their courses and doing the work that hopefully will increase retention for a liminal demographic of students are all things that align with the principles we base our work upon.

Furthermore, a calculated decision was made to do this kind of work because there were other indicators that writing writ large was a valuable part of the university's plan to provide students with a quality higher education. The value of writing and writing teaching was visible in an institutional commitment to fund tenure-track faculty lines in Composition and Rhetoric and the writing program itself was determined to be a Program of Excellence by the university. It was clear that members of the university community tasked with allocating budgets understood and bought into the vision of writing instruction for which we were advocating. It is possible that we may have declined the offer if institutional circumstances were different on an administrative front.

Taken together, these two facets of our rationale for implementing the one-credit course can serve as an example of what tangible, Pragmatic thinking can look like for writing programs. Because there always will be a finite amount of what one writing center director or one writing program realistically can do, questions about when to say yes will be of utmost importance. I mention this, even though it may well be obvious, to highlight how different a "problem" this is from ones documented in the annals of writing center and WPA literature that describe selling soda for extra cash or going to consignment stores to equip writing centers with proper furniture.

What's not as obvious though is a call to move away from an "ethos of marginality" where writing centers and writing programs have hung their hat for so long. We are not

marginalized. Certainly there always will be members of the university community who do not understand our pedagogy and there inevitably will be resistance to some of the ideas we put forth, but that is different than being cast aside as an academic handmaiden doing the work that no one else in the university wants to do. I call for writing theorists to imagine the possibilities if we consider ourselves and construct our discourse in accordance with this idea. I believe Pragmatism is a theoretical lens that will help us make the hard, but hopeful, choices that will define our institutional positioning in the 21st century university.

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