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Developing Pedagogies: Learning the Teaching of English

Shari Stenberg and Amy Lee

Consider the following scenario: You arrive at graduate school in time for the three-day orientation, which consists of a series of workshop “training” you to be a scholar. One half-day session covers the conference proposal and presentation; another trains new students to write seminar papers; a third focuses on the prospectus and dissertation; yet another teaches the composition of articles for refereed journals. At the end of three days, you are ostensibly “trained” in the basics required to contribute to your profession as a scholar and researcher. While you might continue to develop these “skills” as you advance through courses, exams, dissertations, and professional forums, your program can rest assured that it has done its duty by you, having covered the fundamentals and thereby “orienting” you.

Obviously, this scenario is absurd: a parody of scholarly development. But when we think of how we prepare doctoral students to be teachers, this scenario becomes less comical. In fact, such models for teacher training are regularly relied upon. In her 1996 study of curricular requirements for TAs in thirty-six Ph.D.-granting universities, Catherine Latterell found that the overwhelming majority of teacher-training programs still rely on “what-works” or skill-based methods to prepare new teachers (27). A “what-works” pedagogy—or what Tori Haring-Smith calls the “basic training approach”—functions primarily to provide new teachers with the skills,

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policies, syllabi, and assignments they are thought to need to enter the classroom, and to familiarize the TA with the university's or department's requirements. The underlying assumption is that teaching is a skill that can be acquired by the proper training, rather than intellectual work deserving of study.

Recent signs do suggest that the field's conception of teaching is slowly changing. A growing body of scholarship is devoted to articulating teacher learning as an intellectual and ongoing process, thereby disrupting the entrenched "training" model. (See, for instance, Ritchie and Wilson's *Teacher Narratives as Critical Inquiry*, Trimmer's collection *Narration as Knowledge: Tales of the Teaching Life*, Brookfield's *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, Osterman and Kottkamp's *Reflective Practice for Educators*.) Conversations with our colleagues at other universities also remind us that innovative courses and programs that support graduate students' development as teachers *do* exist: we just don't often see them represented in the literature of our field. But even with these "gains" acknowledged, there remains much work to be done before pedagogical development is granted the same status as scholarly development.

We agree with James Slevin that arguing for the importance of teaching without examining the structures that devalue it only places us in a "permanently defensive position" (158). He insists that we need to question hegemonic conceptions of disciplinarity, where bodies of knowledge take precedence over activities of engaging knowledge with others. One of the central components of the traditional discipline, of course, is the professoriate. From the German research university, we inherited a model that equates the professor and specialist. The professor, first and foremost, is a scholar—not a teacher.

Embedded in this entrenched model—which we would contend is very much alive in contemporary universities—are three assumptions that inform the way we value, understand, and enact teacher preparation. First, since the professor's primary relationship is with the discipline, not students, it is assumed that a professor's development should be grounded almost entirely in the mastery of a subject matter. Second, we assume that professors develop in isolation, or in relationship to the scholarship we engage, but not as a result of collaboration with our students or with other teachers. The field tends to work out of what Louise Wetherbee Phelps calls an "ethic of radical individualism," an ethic that positions the classroom as a privatized space and teachers as autonomous, self-developing individuals. This brings us to the third, related assumption: once students are granted the Ph.D., they are no longer teachers-in-training but are presumably done learning to teach. These assumptions have become so entrenched within our profession that they are often rendered invisible. This article aims not only to challenge these assumptions but to replace them with alternative bases for teacher development by promoting and demonstrating a process of pedagogical inquiry.

UNPACKING PEDAGOGICAL INQUIRY

Pedagogy is becoming a term of increasing importance in English studies. While pedagogy has traditionally been conflated with teaching, or used to signify the theory preceding and informing practice, more recent conceptions understand pedagogy to encompass both theories and practices at once. Education theorist Roger Simon puts it this way:

“[P]edagogy” is a more complex and extensive term than “teaching,” referring to the integration in practice of particular curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, a time and space for the practice of those strategies and techniques, and evaluation purposes and methods. . . . In other words, talk about pedagogy is simultaneously talk about the details of what students and others might do together and the cultural politics such practices support. To propose a pedagogy is to propose a political vision. In this perspective, we cannot talk about teaching practice without talking about politics. (371)

Pedagogy, then, is at once concerned with how knowledge is produced through specific practices and processes, as well as the values and assumptions that inform those interactions. According to this definition, theory and practice necessarily function in interplay, and pedagogy encompasses both.

Scholars in English studies have begun to draw on this notion of pedagogy, addressing questions of how our engagement of the field might change if we take seriously the social nature and political potential of pedagogy. One effect on the field, according to literary theorist Maria-Regina Kecht, is that our scholarly work and our teaching work need not be divided, much less mutually exclusive:

If we can agree that language is situated in the world and thus always interested [and] that knowledge is socially produced . . . then we should also accept that as teachers and scholars we are engaged in social activities. Having gained some expertise in decoding structures of signification, we should be intellectually equipped to read our own practices, our institutions, and the world as text (5).

For us, this practice of critically reading our teaching in the same careful way we’ve learned to engage scholarly and literary texts in English studies is crucial. That is, if pedagogy is at once a means and object of inquiry, we need to develop ways of studying our teaching, of reading our pedagogical interactions and our pedagogical development (exploration, critique, revision) as texts.

However, while scholarship in English studies and critical pedagogy offers many interesting articulations of pedagogy, we have very few *representations* of scholars studying the texts of their teaching. And, in fact, Jennifer Gore argues that this is exactly the reason we haven’t seen the impact of critical pedagogy in more classrooms: scholarship has tended to favor abstract social visions over inquiry into how students and teachers practice pedagogy. Pedagogy has too often become a new

knowledge body to be theorized about, but not engaged at the level of the classroom. It has become yet another “content” to be mastered.

We’ve found our concerns echoed by education scholars such as Elizabeth Ellsworth, Jennifer Gore, Carmen Luke, and Mimi Orner. Their work represents feminist critiques of and contributions to critical pedagogy, extending the discourse by calling for closer attention to the complicated work of enacting its aims, by studying the process wherein they engage (and do not simply espouse) critical pedagogy with students. Scholars in English have also taken up this project: Linda Brodkey, Chris Gallagher, Amy Lee, and Nancy Welch have argued for the importance of studying our classrooms, narrating our processes of learning not so as to present “replicable results,” as Gallagher puts it, but to “provide material for teachers to reflect on and engage” (13). In other places, we have studied our own classrooms as texts, asking what it means to engage critical pedagogy in our classrooms (Lee). Here, we’d like to consider how this work might impact doctoral programs. What might it mean to replace teacher training with pedagogical inquiry? By deliberately slowing down and freezing particular moments in various “teacher development” sites, and by performing a reading of these moments as “texts,” we want to call attention to the possibilities and challenges of becoming and developing as critical pedagogues.

TEACHING BEYOND WHAT WE KNOW: PEDAGOGY AS A PROCESS

The conflation of teaching with the mastery of knowledge has essentially become naturalized in our field. We tend to take for granted, for instance, that it is the production of scholarship—a dissertation—that finally qualifies a doctoral candidate to be a professor. We often fail to ask why, despite the fact that most doctoral students will graduate to teach at least 3:3 loads, learning to be teachers is only considered marginally important in most doctoral curricula. In those moments when the issue of teacher preparation has been called into question, the debates are telling.

One historical example of this arose during the post–World War II boom, when the growing undergraduate student population produced a need for more English professors. The question of how to best prepare these teachers was difficult to avoid, and Don Cameron Allen’s report entitled *The Ph.D. in English and American Literature* sought to answer it. Drawing from 1,880 questionnaire responses supplied by department chairs, directors of graduate study, teachers of graduate courses in English, and recent Ph.D. recipients in English and American literature, Cameron Allen reported that 67 percent of college chairs simply wanted to introduce an alternative degree that emphasized teaching; that way, the Ph.D. could be reserved for research and scholarly activity (203). Of those who favored improving teacher training, many respondents relied on the familiar argument that better scholarship would

“naturally” produce better teaching. In fact, as one respondent suggested, teaching without research is nothing more than transmission, and “a Ph.D. improves the odds that a man will be a better teacher” (77). This is our most traditional model of professing at work, which holds that “good teaching” or, more appropriately, “good professing” has more to do with the relationship one has to knowledge than to students. It was important for those on this side of the debate, then, to distinguish their professorial work from what *teachers* did. As one respondent argued, “if they want teachers, why don’t they hire teachers?” (77). While the professor was thought to be a knowledge maker, one who brings a particular “quality” product to the classroom, the teacher was merely the transmitter of knowledge produced by someone else. The Ph.D. seemingly served as a guarantee that one was committed to making, not merely transmitting, knowledge.

Today, even as we are committing to new visions, it is difficult to shed assumptions of the acquisition-based model. Tori Haring-Smith’s “The Importance of Theory in the Training of Teaching Assistants” is one of the few teacher-training texts that takes seriously the emergence of critical theory in English studies, examining its implications on teacher preparation. She argues against strictly utilitarian methods for teaching teachers and instead promotes an integration of theory and practice. One of her greatest challenges to skill-based teacher-training models is her insistence that teaching is never atheoretical. She writes: “No teacher of composition, indeed no teacher of any subject, can operate without some kind of conscious or unconscious theory. No action we take is neutral in that respect” (35). In other words, teaching is inherently a theoretical act, a formulation of a particular set of assumptions.

In articulating a revised model for teacher training, she argues for the importance of including theoretical texts, so as to provide students “a meaningful framework within which we can place individual exercises or readings” (35). Once teachers have familiarized themselves with theories of writing pedagogy, Haring-Smith contends, they will not only better understand their students’ behaviors but will be better prepared to “offer students truly different approaches to their writing problems” (35). A theoretical framework will also enable teachers to “engage in effective self-reflection and self-evaluation” without a sense of despair (35). Consequently, Haring-Smith’s ideal training program would combine “a healthy dose of theory with a translation of that theory into practice” (35). For instance, in the course she describes, students are asked to read a set of theoretical pieces and then to generate assignments or exercises that grow out of it. “[E]very week students must come prepared not only to discuss the intrinsic merits and effects of given theories but also to demonstrate how those theories can be put into practice in a composition classroom” (35).

In many ways, we find this vision promising, for we agree with Haring-Smith that a theoretical framework is indeed useful in examining the aims and values informing our practices. Her insistence on the importance of “self-reflection” is crucial and meshes with our understanding of pedagogical inquiry. However, her approach seems to position theory and practice in a one-way relationship, where the *acquisition* of theoretical knowledge enables one’s pedagogical success. Here theory is “mastered” and then “translated” into practice, without consideration as to how teaching practice might allow us richer conceptions of theory or might, in fact, constitute theoretical activity in itself. We are concerned that theory—even when it is pedagogical in focus—not become the new subject matter to be mastered; ideally, it should work in a dialectical relationship to practice.

Our point here is that even in this moment in English studies when many of us would argue against mastery-based conceptions of the field, the dynamic remains. We want to move now to critically read a local moment that made visible this tendency, in order to demonstrate both how deeply ingrained it is and to also point to possibilities for revision.

Three years ago, the two of us, Amy as director of writing and Shari as a first-time teacher, met to discuss a draft of Shari’s syllabus for her first writing class. In the syllabus, she sought to reflect the goals of the curriculum she would work within, as well as the visions and values of the scholarship she was studying: composition and critical pedagogy. The goal, as she saw it, was to emphasize writing not as a service or neutral mode of transmission, but as means of cultural production, itself deserving of study. She made a list of texts she hoped would evoke these issues and questions and began constructing her syllabus around them. In it, she explained that the class would be “unlearning the ways we are traditionally taught to learn,” questioning the “limits” of culture, and examining the stories our culture tells about writers, student writers, and about the acts of reading and writing. She worked to “cover” every question she felt they needed to ask that semester, each of which had an answer she hoped they would later uncover. Her aim was to deliver the curriculum to the students, to pass along the knowledge they were supposed to receive.

When she met with Amy one August afternoon to go over her syllabus and choices of texts, Amy asked two questions that greatly surprised Shari: Where are the students? Where is the writing?

During this meeting, Amy questioned how and why Shari’s syllabus seemed to rely on outside texts, wondering when, where, and how the students’ writing would be foregrounded and studied. Because Shari assumed her syllabus reflected her pedagogical values—including making student writing central—she was confused by Amy’s response. The syllabus, after all, was informed by scholarship she deemed to be

inherently student-centered. It included articles that raised challenging ideas, visions that would help students to see themselves as agents, as writers. Wasn't the presence of students and their writing obvious? Amy posed a range of questions intended to help Shari examine the assumptions informing the syllabus: What are your reasons for choosing the texts that you did? What role should published texts serve in a writing class? How do they work in relation to students' own writing projects? Her intention, Amy said, was not to help Shari "fix" the syllabus, but to encourage a particular mode of reading—one that would render visible the pedagogy in the syllabus.

Often we think of syllabi simply as pragmatic documents, which act as a contract between teacher and student: this is what the course promises; these are the requirements you'll be expected to fulfill. Instead, Amy worked to demonstrate how the construction of a syllabus is an important pedagogical act, with the document serving a significant pedagogical function. In the syllabus, the teacher works to constitute her "teaching self" in relation to a group of students she has as of yet only imagined. It can be read, then, for the (implicit) assumptions it makes about who the students are and what they are thought to need. Syllabi often further indicate not only what students will need to *acquire* or *do* to successfully engage in the course, but also what kind of students they are expected to *be*.

In our discussions that day, and in those that followed—in person and by e-mail—the distance between Shari's intended and articulated aims for the course and her syllabus's somewhat contradictory representation of the course were made visible. She saw, in other words, that despite her intention to foster a participatory classroom, in which students and their work would constitute the center of the course, her syllabus essentially positioned them as blank slates, waiting to be filled with the knowledge she would give them. Amy tried to help her see this gap not as a flaw in her pedagogy but as a possibility for revision. As Orner argues, "for feminist poststructuralists, it is the gaps and ruptures in practice—the breaks, confusion, and contradiction that are always a part of the interplay in teaching—that offer the greatest insight and possibilities for change" (84). That "gap," then, became a useful place to begin a conversation, to look at the reasons it might have occurred, and to discover ways of closing it.

In examining what she hoped to accomplish with the syllabus, Shari realized that establishing her authority was an ever-present concern for a first-time teacher (particularly a young, female teaching assistant). In an e-mail to Amy, she tries to grapple with her choice of starting with texts, not assignments, and ultimately links this choice to issues of authority: "It's easier to think about reading and content because it's (seemingly) controllable. It allows some authority: I know this text and I'll teach it to you." Consequently, Shari drew on the familiar, seemingly "natural," model in which teachers rely on the texts they already know, the texts of their research, to grant themselves authority. Even in a moment when so many of us argue

that we can't control how a text is read—that it will always depend on particular contexts and the subjects engaging it—it's interesting that this desire to hold onto the text as stable, as a source of authority, remains so prevalent.

Also compelling (and troubling) about this choice, of course, is that even while Shari chose texts she thought would allow for crucial conversations about agency, authorship, and culture—conversations that would be enabling or empowering to student writers—the dynamic through which they would presumably be engaged remains unchanged. That is, even while the “content” of the text might be radical, the assumption informing its teaching is traditional: the text embodies some content that students “need” and that the teacher will pass on to them. This is similar, for instance, to the assumption that because multicultural texts are included on the syllabus, the pedagogy is progressive. As Linda Brodkey writes, “While the presence of multicultural voices is of potential pedagogical value, that a syllabus includes the novels of Toni Morrison or Sandra Cisneros does not necessarily mean that students are being taught to read them” (194). What it does mean, however, is that we continue to conflate textual presence or acquisition with pedagogical success. In another e-mail to Amy, Shari considers this issue:

Of course, I want writing to be central, of course my intentions are to value student writing (of all forms) as much (or more than) published texts. However, intending to do so, or claiming to do so, is not enough. So already my syllabus has taught me a couple of things: 1) that I am still thinking about pedagogy in some ways as content- or product-oriented (students need to “get” this); and 2) that I was placing primary emphasis on reading, and not just on reading but reading only particular forms of texts. I was afraid I might not know how to teach short stories or poems, so I picked only a particular kind of academic essay.

Of course, enacting the kind of student-centered pedagogy promoted by the critical pedagogy scholarship Shari valued did not, could not, result from mastery. In student-centered classrooms where students' texts, ideas, and knowledge are at the center, the “material” can never finally be mastered. It has to be engaged and learned anew with each group of students that enters the classroom. As Downing, Harkin, and Sosnoski argue, giving up notions of “foundational” truths or texts in English studies means engaging the field differently. “The profession has moved from raising questions about authors, to raising questions about texts, to raising questions about readers, to raising questions about the conditions of possibility for any reading, to raising questions about how we teach students to read” (6). In some ways, this is much more difficult than the traditional model of mastering texts, since we will never find answers to the question of “how we teach students to read” (or write or theorize). What prepares one to teach isn't mastery, but a willingness to give up the very notion, to make learning—on the part of students and the teacher—the center of the classroom. Just as we teach students to engage texts for how they

are written, for the consequences of the text's construction, for how they do cultural work, and for how they could be intervened in and revised, we might teach doctoral students to ask the same of their teaching.

In the end, this exchange over Shari's syllabus was not only important for what it taught her—that she was relying on old conceptions of mastery—but for the kind of pedagogical moment it enabled, for the way it allowed both Shari and Amy to study the text of the syllabus and to ask important questions about the texts of our teaching. Only later did we realize that what we enacted through our dialogue is exactly the kind of inquiry we want to promote—both in teacher training sites and in our classrooms.

OPENING CLOSED DOORS: DISRUPTING THE “ETHIC OF RADICAL INDIVIDUALISM”

In reflecting on this exchange between us, we have noted that what most enabled it was a sense of collaboration. While there were certainly power differentials present, Amy worked to show Shari how she was also benefiting from the conversation, by engaging in inquiry *with* Shari rather than *training* her. Of course, these interactions between teachers are probably less common than they should be, because the model of mastery and apprenticeship is so deeply entrenched. Since teacher training is often conducted so as to “correct” new teachers, it is not surprising that practices that could enable collaborative learning among teachers—such as syllabus workshops or classroom visits—are understood instead as surveillance mechanisms. Consequently, these visits or workshops usually end once one has presumably “learned” to teach.

This fact that teachers are often expected to share the texts of their teaching only while they are “in training” helps to promote what Phelps calls “an ethic of radical individualism” in teaching. This ethic, which serves as the basis of many academic institutions, discourages collaborative learning among teachers, setting up practices such as classroom visits as “intrusions threatening a private space of autonomy, intimacy and power” (866). While we can find evidence of this notion in teacher-training scholarship throughout the century, John Jordan's 1965 survey of 436 universities and colleges paints one of the clearest pictures. In the survey, nearly one-third of the responders declared “staunchly” that they “never” visited classrooms because, as one respondent said, “Visiting causes students to lose confidence in their teacher” (112). The implicit assumption here is that students should not see their teachers learning as teachers; learning demonstrates a lack of authority or mastery and thus works against the research ideal.

We would agree with Phelps that in order to understand the kind of dynamics informing our attempts to build a teaching community, we need to examine more

closely the “practitioner culture” in our institutions (866). When we do, the lack of attentiveness to “practitioner” development becomes evident. For instance, although doctoral students’ development as scholars is foregrounded in curricula, often accompanied by support structures designed to help students enter “the discipline”—conference proposal workshops, publishing and research discussions, and so forth—teaching is often excluded from that development or is left to first-year writing programs. The message, then, is that teaching is to be learned on one’s own. While research is supported by public mechanisms, teaching is privatized. We want to turn now to examine our local “practitioner culture” in order to point to possibilities for disrupting this ethic of radical individualism.

It was our first Writing Sequence meeting of the semester. As director and assistant director, we had generated some ideas for the year—practices that we hoped would enable teaching community and allow opportunities for us to learn from each other. In addition to the regular teacher meetings, Amy suggested that we also establish classroom visits, beginning as soon as the first two weeks of class. It was important, she insisted, to normalize them as a regular part of teaching.

Immediately, the new teachers expressed anxiety about these visits. In fact, they almost immediately rejected the idea. Though we weren’t surprised at this response, we were certainly disappointed, since we had believed that visits could work as moments of collaborative learning, and that they were a necessary component of teacher learning. Finally, after much discussion, one teacher, Laura, introduced a compromise, agreeing to the visits but insisting that she would need at least one month before anyone visited. Amy was troubled by this, asking why Laura felt that she would need to first learn on her own, without the input of other teachers. This, she said, was the very idea we were working to disrupt—that our teaching practices are somehow private, something we develop in isolated classrooms, with the door closed. But Laura insisted, again, that she wouldn’t be ready so early to open up her classroom to another teacher, that it would take time for us to trust one another enough to share the texts of our teaching. And then she issued this reminder: “You can’t enforce teaching community.”

She was right. Rethinking the problematic associations that come with “classroom observations” takes more than a declaration that they will be generative learning moments. It would take time and negotiation to understand that this version of the classroom visit was not the same evaluative practice at all, because the vision informing it, and the context in which it was enacted, were changed. It would also take time to disrupt the notion that we learn to teach in isolation.

Because the two of us had participated in successful classroom visits, where both teachers were positioned as learners and each benefited from the opportunity to reflect on and study a pedagogical moment, we wanted to transport that practice

to this new group. What we had forgotten was that with each new community, it would take time to negotiate conditions in which classroom visits could function productively. As we've suggested above, because class visits are often associated with "surveillance"—with the observer positioned as an evaluator or judge—teacher communities need to create opportunities to reflect on and re-vision this model. Getting to a place where, despite the asymmetrical power relations of "observer" and "observed," we can work collaboratively requires more than progressive visions or declarations. It requires an ongoing attentiveness to power differentials between and among teachers, to how we read each other based on the familiar categories of student and teacher, and to how we can work to move beyond them. It requires, finally, a process of developing trust.

Trust, of course, is tricky to discuss because it can't be quantified or proven. It is constructed as affective, not intellectual, and thus is easily construed as non-academic. Like community, it has to be built, worked on, and at times repaired. Even though trust is not often named as a necessary characteristic of productive pedagogies, it is almost always implicitly relied upon. For instance, though many of us in our writing curriculum felt anxiety about opening up our classrooms to each other, most of us simply *require* our students to make their texts public to each other. Indeed, many of us not only ask first-year students to write in forms and engage ideas that are new to them, but we also ask them to share that often "uncertain" writing with their peers. We tell them that they will be rewarded for participating fully in the (collaborative) writing process. They are expected, in other words, to trust in their peers, to trust in their teachers, and to trust in the pedagogy—which likely feels uncomfortable, or at least unfamiliar, to many. Problems arise not because such classrooms rely on trust, but because this foundation is not often recognized as requiring attention and labor.

In many ways, turning over a draft that might feel "uncertain"—because a student is learning, struggling to develop new techniques or strategies—is not so different from a teacher "turning over" her teaching. Students have often learned to view sharing their writing, even with each other, as a corrective mechanism, not one intended to further or extend a text. As we have argued above, teacher visits have not been understood much differently, and this conception is exacerbated by the idea that teachers should not be learners. This was made clear in Laura's request to have a month to "teach alone," so that she could presumably "perfect" her teacher image before sharing it with another teacher. A difficulty in teaching thus becomes an indication of inadequacy, rather than a moment of learning or possibility. To counter this tendency, conditions need to be established between teachers so that sharing a problem about one's class—or opening up a class in progress (with all of its messiness) to another teacher—is a normalized part of enacting and developing pedagogy for *both* teachers involved. We want to turn now to narrating a process in which

these conditions were, at least temporarily, established (although not quickly or easily), as a way of considering trust as a crucial component in building relationships between teachers.

In doing so, we turn again to the issue of classroom visits. In this particular instance, Shari was a student in a teaching practicum taught by Amy. The students in the course included both “funded” and nonfunded doctoral students. The difference meant that although some of us were teaching one course in addition to our course work, others were teaching several courses at local community colleges while taking a full course load. It also meant that we were (or felt) valued differently by the institution. The group covered a range of teaching experience levels and scholarly interests—from composition theory and pedagogy to creative writing to literary theory. Our teaching was not located within a shared curriculum, or even a single institution. But we did share one thing—a hesitancy regarding the classroom observations Amy had included on the syllabus. Twice during the semester she wanted us to visit a colleague’s classroom and to write a narrative about the visit.

The practice of classroom visits was not new to all of us. Several teachers had been observed, usually by a “supervisor” in order to fulfill an institutional requirement. (And not surprisingly, those who had been visited before were as nervous, because of those experiences, as those who had not.) Consequently, during the class period when visits were being scheduled, Amy’s attempt to quickly explain the requirements and logistical components did not anticipate or allow for the students’ uneasiness. Questions were raised as to what these visits, and our written responses, were “for.” Were we meant to evaluate each other? Should we be critiquing each other’s teaching? Was the writing for Amy or for the teacher being visited? Once again, the entrenched notion of the teacher visits surfaced. During that class period, we left behind what Amy had planned in order to talk about what was informing our hesitancy regarding the classroom visits. While Amy was still uncertain as to why the project was evoking so much concern, she sensed that the visits would be unsuccessful if we did not flesh out a shared context and design a set of conventions for carrying out the project.

In our process of negotiating the visits—which began that day and continued through the term—two features turned out to be most crucial in enacting them productively. First, it was important for us to make visible the systemic factors that contributed to our anxiety about the visits. A common fear, for instance, was that we might be exposed as “frauds,” not living up to our pedagogical “visions” and thus seeming to be “bad” teachers. These were not simply “individual” feelings, but symptomatic of the model of the master-professor who naturally teaches well because he knows so much, and who should be done learning to teach before entering the classroom. This model, as an apparent ideal, was internalized by many of our class members and reinforced by our doctoral program and profession. Consequently, rather

than setting out to soothe an individual's anxiety about performance, we needed to examine how the historical and institutional models for professor-as-teacher shaped our reactions. Why is teaching so often privatized? Why are we so quick to assume that we learn teaching best on our own, and that it is not a social process? Why is making a problematic or difficult teaching moment public perceived as at best embarrassing and at worst threatening? Why do we have so few models of collaborative teacher learning at the university level? But it was not enough to raise these questions once. Because the research model is so deeply entrenched and naturalized, it was important that we kept making it visible, so that we could see what we were challenging and why.

Second, because of the differences among us, and because we did not have curricular goals in common, we decided it was important to establish some shared ground or goals. This is not to say that working to discover commonalities is a "cure" for differences. Rather, it is to insist that refusing to recognize what is shared sometimes prevents collaboration entirely. Feminist scholarship has much to teach in regard to these issues. Scholars like Susan Bordo, for instance, have raised concern that "postmodern skepticism" about gender as a shared category has shifted conversations from questions of enacting feminist concerns in practical contexts to questions of producing an adequate theory of difference (218). As Bordo sees it, the rules are now such that "the only 'correct' perspective on race, class and gender is the affirmation of difference" while the use of gender as a category is thrown out as necessarily essentialist or totalizing (222). While Bordo acknowledges that attention to differences among women is crucial, her concern is that the possibilities of something shared—which is what fueled feminism in the first place—are now often rejected outright as inherently oppressive or essentialist. Further, she worries that claims of "attending to difference" often become ends in themselves, such that constructing a theory of difference takes precedence over talking across (or about) these differences. For class participants, then, discovering commonalities was a necessary development in creating a situation where teachers could share their classrooms with each other.

Our class started to locate these commonalities by noting that throughout the course, we had been working to move from teaching to *pedagogy*. We defined the latter as encompassing the first but including a self-reflexive component, requiring us to make deliberate choices both about our "instructional acts" and "social visions" (Gore). The aim was not to finally become one "kind" of pedagogue—critical, radical, feminist, or traditional. Rather, it was to enable us to think reflexively and critically about our teaching, to make visible and careful choices, and to be able to talk about why and how we came to them. This was one of our shared goals—a commitment to a mode of "reflexive" pedagogy that we all, no matter what our pedagogical beliefs, could enact. But even more fundamental, we noted, were a shared

commitment to our students and our willingness to learn from each other to improve our teaching. Throughout the term, we worked to foreground the idea that a teaching community wouldn't work if we did not all position ourselves as learners. So rather than using our differences as a starting point (whether those be the subject of our courses, our chosen pedagogical framework, or the institutional site in which we worked), we worked to highlight our common goals.

Once we examined our shared goals—with the most important being a commitment to learning from our teaching and from each other—our reasons for wanting to reject the visits became clearer. We worried, in fact, that the visits would threaten, not strengthen, our community by creating a dynamic in which we were evaluating each other. This was further complicated given that the “responses” written by the visitor would be read by Amy, who would ultimately be grading us. Subsequently, Amy suggested that we collaboratively decide upon what shape the responses should take, and consequently we worked to imagine a response that would position the visiting teacher as a learner, not evaluator.

We decided that it would be most useful for those being observed to receive a written document that provided a “playback” of what transpired that day. This was intended to enable the observed teacher to see her classroom from a different perspective. But we suggested it was equally important in those responses for the observing teacher to account for what *she* learned from the visit. This struck us as an important way to make use of our differences, to learn from the contrasts between our pedagogies. While this did not foreclose possibilities for critique, it required that we not critique simply because a practice or text was something we disagreed with. For instance, while one teacher might not lecture in her class, rather than imposing her values or visions onto the classroom she was observing, she was instead to ask: How is lecturing functioning in this class? Why might it be necessary? How are the students responding? In addition to promoting more reflexive “observing,” this also helped to reinforce that idea that pedagogies are always highly context-dependent, and that our readings of them needed to take into account the local sites in which they took place. Because these contexts are not fully visible to the visitor (or the visited teacher), we also decided that it would be useful for the observed and observer to meet and discuss how each of them experienced the course. This would give the teacher being observed an opportunity to explain her choices and to fill in some of the contexts.

Of course, this did not change the fact that Amy would still be “evaluating” our responses. But she made clear that instead of evaluating the teacher being observed through the eyes of her observer (which we all agreed was unfair), she was interested in the mode of inquiry engaged by the visitor: was she using it as an opportunity to reflect on her own teaching? to think beyond the assumptions and values with which she came to the classroom? In the end, our collaborative vision of the response

assignment served to complicate the traditional relations between observed and observer and required that the visitor assume a more complicated role than as “judge” or “evaluator.”

Ultimately, these visits were quite productive, while also clearly not without some tension and difficulty. They allowed us to open up our classrooms to each other and to learn from one another’s teaching. Further, they required an important process of negotiation that made visible the traditional master-apprentice models that shaped our initial hesitations about the visits, and opened a new space to discuss our development. As we discovered in the teacher meeting described at the opening of this section, practices such as classroom visits cannot simply be transported from one group of teachers to another but need to be negotiated within their specific contexts. While it is indeed possible to create a teaching community—without shutting down or ignoring differences among teachers—these experiences remind us of the (ongoing) work, struggle, and negotiation this building of trust between teachers requires.

MAKING TEACHER LEARNING VISIBLE: REPRESENTING THE DEVELOPING PROFESSOR

A central tenet of pedagogical inquiry is that teaching can never be learned finally and totally. As we see it, work with ever-changing students, new subject matter, and teaching colleagues allows us to continually reflect on our pedagogical values, assumptions, and practices. Enacting pedagogical inquiry requires an ongoing process of discovering—and responding to—revisionary possibilities. Unfortunately, the traditional professorial model counters this vision, instead abiding by the assumption that professors reach a developmental plateau, learning, once and for all, how to teach. Our teaching, unlike our research, is not presented as intellectual work that we continually renew and develop over time. Once we earn the Ph.D., our teaching—unless there is evidence suggesting otherwise—is assumed to be adequate. Consequently, the professor who is a “teacher-in-process” is largely absent from our institutional and scholarly landscapes.

Part of the reason for this absence is that there are few public or formal contexts in which professors are expected, much less encouraged, to account for their choices, to be teachers “in process.” Additionally, at many institutions, even those that identify themselves as focused on “teaching,” teaching is neither valued nor evaluated seriously. Also contributing to this absence is the fact that there are few scholarly representations of professors as *learners-in-process*. Of course, teacher-scholars likely find little incentive for producing research out of their teaching; clearly, the impetus is to produce within one’s field, rather than to write about the teaching of one’s field. And while there are certainly exceptions (Ritchie and Wilson; Gallagher;

Lee; Welch; Qualley), many publications that make pedagogy the subject matter tend to provide overarching visions, rarely showing the processes through which pedagogical development occurs.

Surprisingly, this is true even in critical pedagogy discourse, a field in which one would expect ongoing reflection on one's learning as a teacher to be not only promoted but actively practiced. Even worse, in this scholarship we found some quite troubling responses to teacher-learning narratives. The most notable example centers around Elizabeth Ellsworth's oft-cited article, "Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy," in which she describes her struggle to put into practice the "empowering" prescriptions of critical pedagogy. Her article argues that in the specific context of her class, abiding by the literature of critical pedagogy's "highly abstract language ('myths') of who we 'should' be and what 'should' be happening in our classroom" functioned only to reproduce the very conditions this 'liberatory' discourse seeks to work against" (91). More specifically, "when participants in our class attempted to put into practice prescriptions offered in the literature concerning empowerment, student voice, and dialogue, we produced results that were not only unhelpful, but actually exacerbated the very conditions we were trying to work against, including Eurocentrism, racism, sexism, classism, and 'banking education'" (91).

In response to her learning narrative, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren—whose work falls within the literature she is critiquing—blame Ellsworth's "difficulty" in enacting critical pedagogy on her "disengagement" from, and misunderstanding of, the tradition. And McLaren takes it one step further, ultimately linking her classroom "failure" to personal inadequacies:

Ellsworth engages in a woeful misreading of the tradition she so cavalierly indicts. Consequently, the important issue with which she struggles collapses under the weight of her own distortions, mystifications, and despair. Ellsworth's self-professed lack of pedagogical success can hardly be blamed on failed critical traditions but is rather attributable to her inability to move beyond self-doubt . . . [that] served to hold her voice hostage. In this instance, critical pedagogy becomes a case for holding theory as a scapegoat for failed practice. (72)

Here McLaren reads Ellsworth's inquiry into her own teaching—and the traditions informing it—not as a critical extension or examination of her work in critical pedagogy, but as an indication of failure as a *scholar*. The implication is that if she had just read correctly the "tradition she indicts," she would have been able to enact it. As Amy Lee points out, this kind of critique—in addition to being overwhelmingly masculinist—"denies the collective classroom experience in which Ellsworth grounds her authority to re-read the theoretical discourse of critical pedagogy. In doing so, he privileges the abstract notion of a 'tradition' over reflective inquiry" (147). McLaren wants her not to be a student of her teaching, but the master of her scholarship.

We raise this example because it points to the tendency, even in the scholarship most seemingly supportive of pedagogical inquiry, to assume that once one has mastered scholarship, she should be able to engage it successfully in her classroom. Further, Ellsworth's reflexive inquiry into her own teaching—exactly the kind of critical reading we are promoting in this article—is read not as an important contribution or extension to the scholarship of critical pedagogy, but as an indication of her inability to correctly enact the scholarship; her inquiry is interpreted as evidence of her deficiencies as a scholar. Our concern is that conversations like this—as well as the relative lack of teachers representing their learning in scholarship—only serve to deepen the assumption that professors are finished knowers, finished teachers. We want, consequently, to move again to our own local contexts, to examine possibilities for a teacher community that includes TAs and professors with a range of experiential backgrounds, in order to examine some of the struggles involved in emphasizing our shared roles as teacher-learners.

In our undergraduate concentration we implemented biweekly teacher meetings, which included both TAs and faculty members. The meetings were intended to promote discussion both of our individual classes and the program as a whole. At each meeting, we took turns facilitating on a pedagogical issue, in a way that would open up questions for all of us to consider. While they often emerged from a difficulty or concern a teacher was having in his or her individual classroom, these facilitations were intended to enable all participating teachers to rethink the texts of their classrooms. In other words, they were not designed as “troubleshooting” sessions so much as an opportunity to reflect on the broader contexts and concerns informing our local classrooms. Before too long, however, some of us began to notice that the facilitations, depending on who was doing the facilitating, felt very different from week to week.

For instance, when Steve, a tenured professor, led the discussion, the facilitation seemed to work as it was intended. On one occasion, for instance, he facilitated on issues of student writing development, asking us to consider how our assumptions about development inform how we think about practices such as assignment construction and evaluation in our classrooms. The discussion followed a productive and dialogic path, moving between broader, theoretical questions and more specific examples emerging from our classrooms. The theoretical concerns helped us to rethink our local practices, and the questions emerging from our teaching enabled us to exert pressure on our theoretical assumptions. Ideally, this is how the facilitations were to function.

On the other hand, when Shari facilitated on the treatment of student versus published writing in Sequence classrooms, asking how we might strive to approach both texts in a similar manner, the result was quite different. The focus of the dis-

cussion seemed to shift from the issue of student versus public writing to the new teacher's "problem." Rather than talking to each other, the teachers talked to Shari, asking if she had tried this or that practice, asking what, specifically, she was having trouble with. In other words, the issue was treated as less an intellectual issue and more an individual problem; the conversation didn't seem to be encouraging others to think through how this issue affected their own teaching. Rather, it was approached by many of the "experienced" teachers as if they were "finished"—they had resolved this problem—and could simply give her advice. Eventually, Amy interrupted the conversation to say, "Shari's not just asking for herself; she wants us to think about this, too."

As this narrative demonstrates, creating a teacher-learner community comprised of members with a range of experience—not to mention institutional positions—required some negotiating. How, for instance, could we prevent the familiar master-apprentice dynamic from seeping into our group? How could we make quality of engagement as important as quantity of experience? It became evident that for this community to function productively, emphasizing one shared value was essential: the assumption that each of us was at once a teacher and a learner. Though we cannot, of course, offer a "formula" for what enabled us to move toward this goal, we can trace some of the contributing factors and practices that, in hindsight, we might have implemented.

Because we worked in an undergraduate curriculum that emphasized writing as both the means and object of critical inquiry—something we both engaged and studied—we thought it important to conceive of teaching similarly. That is, it became necessary to establish teaching as a critical process that paralleled writing as a critical process. One of our shared curricular practices was the use of "process accounts"—a text students were asked to write in conjunction with a creative or critical assignment, in which they account for their textual choices, analyze sections in which they were having difficulties, and raise possibilities for revisions. The process accounts, then, were intended to enable students to see *how* their texts were composed, to see that the writing process was comprised of a series of choices that resulted in particular consequences and effects.

In much the same way, the teacher meetings were meant to serve as "process accounts" of our classrooms, since teaching, like writing, benefits from being studied, reflected upon, and revised. Of course, many of us tell our students that writing cannot finally be "mastered," that in our classes they are not learning "how to" as much as a mode of engaging and studying writing. These are activities that they will continue as long as they write, activities that writers—no matter their level of experience—rely on to extend and further their texts. In the same way, we have emphasized teaching as an ongoing process of learning, which is aided by collaborative inquiry.

This didn't change the fact that we came to these meetings with a range of experiential backgrounds, or that some participants conflated experience, age, and even gender with mastery. We needed, then, to recognize and critique how teacher authority is often granted on the basis of these traditional, seemingly naturalized, conditions. Of course, since the faculty were well positioned and privileged within such a model, it was one of the most difficult challenges for our teaching community to convince faculty members to reflect on their pedagogies rather than to comfortably offer their experiences and choices as prescriptive models. We worked in our group to recast experience as part of an ongoing dynamic of learning, rather than an absolute, or a guarantee of success or "done-ness." Again, the comparison to textual construction is apt: while experience with one form often helps one engage another, it doesn't change the fact that there are new rhetorical considerations and textual constraints to negotiate. Each time we enter a new classroom situation, we certainly rely on our past experiences, but our experiences don't guarantee that we finally "know how" to teach. So even as the range of experiences we brought to the classroom certainly enriched it, what mattered most for our collective learning was not experience as a product or answer, but experience as a site for reflection.

The faculty weren't alone in their resistance to revising our entrenched associations between authority and experience. In rereading the moment described above, for instance, Shari remembers being struck most of all that until Amy interjected, the dynamics were not visible to her. Being a new teacher, she expected advice. For this teaching community to work, not only were experienced teachers required to demonstrate a willingness to shift out of the master-apprentice model, but new teachers were being asked to see themselves as collaborators.

In addition to rethinking the assumed link between experience and authority, it also became important to examine how our different institutional positions as TAs versus faculty members contributed to our roles in the group. In retrospect, we realize that the asymmetrical power relations between faculty members and TAs weren't always adequately complicated. For instance, what did it mean to create a community among teachers when some of us were still students? Although we could insist that we were all learners at our teacher meetings, no one could deny that later that week several of the TAs would move back into more traditional teacher-student relationships with the very faculty members we were expected to identify as our "colleagues" at these meetings. Because these dynamics are inevitable in a group constructed this way, the problem was not exactly with the relationships themselves. Rather, it was that we did not make these issues visible to be discussed and considered. Consequently, it was often easiest—for both TAs and faculty members, it seemed—to abide by the familiar model, to remain the student or the professor.

This parallels the expectations placed on students in collaborative-oriented classrooms. Despite the fact that most students have been educated to be passive learn-

ers, student-centered pedagogies expect that they will feel entitled to (and know how to) contribute to a participatory classroom. Often, however, there is an element of fear or distrust that comes with giving up familiar classroom structures. Freire names this a “fear of freedom” that afflicts the oppressed (Shor and Freire 29). In relating his argument to American classrooms, we take this to mean that students—and in this case, new teachers—have learned well to adapt “to the structure of domination in which they are immersed” (29). Consequently, they “have become resigned to it, and are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom [because] they feel incapable of running the risks it requires” (29). There is safety in the traditional model, which is, more often than not, taken to be natural. But the problem here involves more than a rejection of freedom on the part of those with less power. The problem is also that the entrenched model is not often made visible, so that it can be studied and critiqued. As we see it, there is possibility in recognizing where we fall short of the visions we are working to achieve; it is how we revise and grow. And so just as we argue that teaching can never finally be mastered, we would argue the same about striving to enact a group that positions teachers of different experiential levels in collaboration. Working against such a deeply entrenched model requires a commitment to ongoing learning, reflecting, and revision.

CHANGING THE CONVERSATION

While it is tempting to end this article with a prescription for how to move away from these traditional visions and toward pedagogical inquiry, our conception of pedagogy does not allow for this. Pedagogical inquiry involves a shift away from concepts to be acquired and theories to be mastered and toward ongoing, locally specific dialogue between teaching and research, action and reflection. It requires, at the same time, an examination of the systemic conditions that continue to position research above teaching, mastery above inquiry. We want to conclude, then, by turning back one more time to the local, examining a particular moment to demonstrate both the potential for revision as well as the difficulty of challenging the dominant, entrenched model.

A few years ago, the new chair of our former English department described his “vision” of doctoral studies in English: “Sophisticated work” by “people from good schools,” more “critically sophisticated faculty” who “produce more,” thus attracting “better” graduate students who will be able to do “more interesting” work. When he was finished, a question was posed: “Where does teaching fit into this picture? What about wanting to attract and develop committed, effective teachers?” “Well,” the administrator responded, “teaching is a given.” The notion of teaching as a “given,” specifically in doctoral programs, is precisely the problematic and troubling assumption we have tried to address in this article. When teaching is taken for

granted, assumed to be a “natural” extension of our work as “producers” (scholars), the process of teacher development is at best discounted, at worst ignored. The vision he posed, then, only accommodates the hierarchical structures and relations in place.

A few months later, during a subsequent curricular and programmatic discussion, someone suggested that our program needed to prioritize teaching, teacher development, and pedagogical inquiry in our doctoral program. “No,” our chair responded, “we need to *integrate* teaching into the program, alongside research.” On the one hand, this is a substantive revision from his earlier assertion that teaching is “a given,” an activity or practice not even worthy of mention, much less reflection and critical inquiry. On the other hand, we want to suggest that more revision is necessary in order to substantively effect the relations and conditions in question. Because of the historical subjugation of teaching and teachers, it is not possible to integrate teaching until we first critically engage and reconceptualize the operative and functional binary that always places teaching beneath or to the side of research. Similar to talking about “integrating” traditionally underrepresented populations into the academy or English studies, talk of unproblematically “integrating” new or traditionally unrepresented areas of inquiry assumes an already equitable and level field into which new voices or perspectives can insert themselves if one just tries hard enough, is patient, and plays by the rules.

We have, it seems, at least convinced the department chair that teaching is worthy of mention. But to assume we can easily integrate teaching, pedagogy, or teacher development by fiat or declaration fails to acknowledge or disrupt the normative conditions and values that marginalize teaching from the legitimate work of doctoral programs in English in the first place. As our work here has attempted to demonstrate, we need to change the conversation—focusing not simply on producing new visions but attending to the work and practices needed for effective, substantial re-visions and thus clearing the space for pedagogical inquiry.

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