Through the Glass

The UIC Writing Center Magazine

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In this issue:
The Boring Age
Identity in the Writing Center
Undergraduate writing
A Student Writer in STEM

Student Contributors
Gregor Baszak
Balssam Malhas
Laura Senteno
Faculty Editor
Charitianne WIlliams

Director's Corner: Learning from Writers

We have many students who continue to use the Writing Center regularly, even though they are receiving good grades or are no longer required to come. Through a research project initiated by Charitianne Williams, Assistant Director at the Writing Center, we are collecting and analyzing interviews to find out more about how and why these students use the Writing Center.

As frequent users of the Writing Center, these students offer perspectives that at first might be hidden from the eyes of those who work here. For example, we have learned that all these writers are comfortable thinking of themselves as ongoing learners and that working with a tutor makes that learning process more productive. Even though most of these students say they don't like writing, that is not the most important part of their relationship to it. What is more significant for them is knowing that writing is important and talking to a tutor is a way to make the time and effort it takes to write both manageable and enjoyable.

As one one of the writers put it, "it's good to have a connection." Finally, Kim noticed that the writers become internally, rather than externally, motivated. Even though they are already getting high grades, they go to the Writing Center, "because I still want to learn more."

Charitianne's study of the interview transcripts show how writers contribute to tutoring conversations. Charitianne is especially interested in multilingual writers, who are accustomed to negotiating meaning through the lenses of various languages. She is finding that multilingual writers are good at modeling ways of making connections between what they already know and what they need to learn and, if there is an obstacle to the tutoring conversation, of making adaptations that move the conversation forward.

For too long, Charitianne argues, writing center theories have been viewing tutoring as conflict. Tutoring has been commonly defined as a "contact zone," where the starting point for a conversation marks differences between tutor and writer -- differences between "first" languages, skill level, interest in writing, or ability to learn. Much of this view comes from seeing the world through what Charitianne calls a "monolingual" lens, which draws sharp boundaries between languages. But if we start looking at tutoring from another angle, from a "translingual" lens, we begin to notice not the boundaries, but the ways that experience in one language can bring not only knowledge to the use of another language, but new meaning as well.

Seeing language use as compatible rather than conflictual extends to the ways writers and tutors can talk about writing. Conversations can get stalled if writers and tutors approach tutoring in categories that are too fixed. We do this when, for example, we say things like "I am a good/bad writer," or "I am ESL," or "I am no good in English." Rather than investing in writing as something fixed in our identity, Charitianne noticed that the writers who use us regularly think of writing as a matter of doing rather than being. These writers described writing as a matter of action: "I tend to look at ideas from different angles," or "I like tutoring because it gives me opportunity to discuss," or tutoring is about "looking at things different ways."

Although we are still in the preliminary stages of this research project, we already see how it can help all of us grow as writing center workers. Any assumptions that returning writers are "needy" or "remedial" should clearly be reconsidered. Many of the writers who use us are not passive recipients of tutoring, but fellow writers who take turns being leaders in the tutoring conversation. We have been saying, of course, that both tutor and writer bring something to the tutoring table. This research offers us more insight into the concrete ways writers contribute, which helps us learn more deeply what it means to be interested, respectful, and useful.

Kim O'Neil, also Assistant Director and the third member of our research team, found evidence that frequent users of the Writing Center change in three basic ways. First, they begin thinking that writing is not a fixed ability, not something you are either good or not good at, but something that can be learned. Second, Kim saw that writers begin to like working with others on their writing.

--Vainis Aleksa

Writing in the "Boring Age"

Edited by Gregor Baszak

On April 13, 2016, the UIC Writing Center organized a panel discussion on the topic: "Writing in the 'Boring Age.'" The speakers were Kevin Carey, Hannah Green, Dylan Tabang, and Lucia Whalen. The panel was named after a 2010 TIME Magazine article by Michael Lind, and the panelists were asked to respond to the following prompt: How does a new generation of writers reflect on its abilities to supply original, arguable thesis statements in an age where these same writers are forced to "publish or perish"? At a time where most gatherings of academic professionals reveal very little, as Christy Wampole argues in "The Conference Manifesto," how should writers make their voices heard? How do we assure that we contribute to the diverse set of conversations going on in our respective fields?

What follows is an edited transcript of their conversation:

Kevin Carey: I am going to address these questions primarily from the perspective of a teacher. I have a number of different reactions that I categorized as philosophical, political, and pedagogical. Here's a set of philosophical questions: What is boredom? What is boredom's relationship to originality, productivity, creativity, innovation, and autonomy? Why are we against it? At least from the tenor of the questions from the panel description, it seems like boredom is the thing to be fought off, and innovation is the thing to be striven for. And Ought we be? Ought we so quickly be dismissive of boredom for the sake of innovation? Here's a set of political questions: Who says we're bored? Who's asking the question? In whose interests is it to suppose that this is a boring age, and that we should be moving towards greater and larger doses of innovative activity? I know my students aren't bored: most of them take five or six classes, they work jobs, and so forth. I know my colleagues aren't bored. Then there's a pedagogical question: What is to be gained and what is to be lost in declaring war on boredom in the classroom or in writing?

When I first saw the title of this event, a couple of quotes came to mind. Walter Benjamin, for example, writes: "If sleep is the apogee of physical relaxation, boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation. Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience. A rustling in the leaves drives him away." I've always found this quote compelling because rather than, as we often do, see boredom as something to be fought, Benjamin seems to be making an argument that boredom is both a necessary space and a necessary time that's conducive to our health, our mental stability. Thus, I'm really dubious about rushing to do away with it.

In a similar tone, Nietzsche writes that: "[B]oredom is that disagreeable 'lull' of the soul that precedes a happy voyage and cheerful winds; they [i.e. "creative spirits," KC] must endure [boredom], they must await its effect on them – precisely that is what lesser natures are totally unable to achieve. To fend off boredom at any price is vulgar, just as work without pleasure is vulgar." The talk of "lesser" and "more" natures is something we could probably do without, but I think it's really important to think this through, especially today when everything seems built and made to grab your attention and to make you productive and to make you do, feel, think some thing. I think we can't escape a certain fundamental vulgarity of feeling that everything is done for some instrumental, ulte-

Photo by Rachel Holtz

rior motive.

Finally, I would like to present a quote by Riyad Shahjahan from his article "Being 'lazy' and slowing down: Toward decolonizing time, our body, and pedagogy":

"Time became a trajectory against which to measure indigenous and other subaltern individuals and groups in terms of the degree to which they are out of sync, behind in development, anachronistic, and resistant to progress . . . Linear Eurocentric notions of time were used to sort individuals into opposing categories such as intelligent/slow, lazy/industrious, saved/unsaved, believer/heathen, developed/ undeveloped, and civilized/ primitive; in the process, most of the world's people and their knowledge came to stand outside of history . . ."

As a teacher, I want to push back against these distinctions, against the innovative, the new, the productive always being the most valuable of values. I want to be very aware of the way these notions have been used and still are being used to sort out students in one way or another. Lastly, as Shahjahan goes on:

"Time is a key coercive force in the neoliberal academy that prompts us to view our own potential 'lack of fit' as a form of failure. The multiplying and endless 'academic tasks'—countless forms of assessments and a hyped-up productivity schedule—engendered through neoliberal reforms propagate an ever-present 'scarcity of time' affectively and cognitively. Neoliberal technologies of surveillance, management, measurement, and control are underpinned by linear notions of time that structure or colonize one's career." (491)

I think about this in terms students in a first-year writing course, where it seems that there has been a fad for some time of trying to come up with more and more innovative ways either to extract greater productivity from students or greater innovation and productivity from teachers. It's a real disservice to students to only present to them writing, reading, literature, the life of the mind – whatever you want to call it – as this instrumental thing they have to master the skills of and not allow them the time to be bored, the time to be immersed in a thing. And if we think about the metaphor that's being invoked in the adjective "boring," it comes from a tool which is used to bore. "To bore" is to move forward slowly and persistently. And so I guess for me, if that's true, if to be bored is to move forward slowly and persistently; if it's to have the leisure or material resource of time at one's disposal to think through a thing, or not think through a thing, or to relax; if that's true about what boredom is, then I think it is our responsibility as teachers to bore the

crap out of our students.

Lucia Whalen: Reading the article "The Boring Age" was interesting. Based on my experiences as a student who went to a public liberal arts school and a community college and now UIC, I have come across different levels of student engagement. Now that I work in the writing center I've become interested in a set of questions: What makes people engaged with learning? What makes people excited to learn? What is the connection between boredom and fulfillment? Finally, in a technological age where we're bombarded with knowledge and other stimuli, why do certain people that I tutor really, really hate writing and really not like learning? This was confirmed by research I did for a class here in the writing center: A lot of the people that I talked to resent academic writing and don't like most of the things that they do in their classes, because they feel that their assignments are thrust upon them without much choice on their side. These people don't really feel any personal connection

to those tasks.

I think it's important to have a personal connection to whatever you're encountering in class. When I read "The Boring Age," I was thinking a lot about technology and the sort of love-hate relationship I have with it, because I feel technology affects my own creativity and my own ability to manage my time wisely. I often feel that I just get sucked into it, and so it seems like a lot of the technology I use doesn't really help me be as progressive and creative a person I want to be. If we ask how we use technology today, I wonder if we actually benefit from it, or rather if it thwarts our ability to be creative. In my research work with students I've found that assigning them more personal writing tasks seems a lot more exciting to them.

If you take in massive amounts of information and then feel overloaded, this may result in a certain amount of apathy or boredom with everyday life. You start feeling disconnected, I certainly do, from your emotions and sensory experiences. I thus wonder how we can maintain a fulfilling sensory experience in this time when so much of the focus is on technology within the classroom. How can we be as engaged as possible in the classroom and the writing center? What makes people feel really connected to themselves and their work in a time when it's very easy to get distracted and not feel connected to or excited about the things you encounter during your studies?

Dylan Tabang: Originally when I was invited to speak at this panel I thought I'd be speaking about science and its connection to writing in the "boring age." But now that I've listened to Kevin and Lucia,

I think I can offer a little perspective on what it means to be a first-semester student at UIC and what that means for me as a writer in what may be a "boring age." So, I think I want to talk a little bit about the questions that were originally asked of us.

I think my transition into college has broadened my horizon into thinking about things that transcend disciplinary boundaries. Suddenly, everything feels more complex. When you are in high school, things appear more simple; in college, however, I've been taking classes in math, the sciences, and in English, and now, it seems, the boundaries between these fields become more blurry. Being part of an academic community inevitably is a journey into complexity.

I also share Lucia's concern for personal connections we make with our writing. I have observed this transition in my friends who came into college: I see their passion for what they write about; they also notice connections between what they thought were isolated disciplines. So, it's doubtful whether we're living in a boring age. This is true also because I've noticed that these same friends, whom I've known to be mostly politically apathetic, are becoming more and more passionate about their beliefs and they write about these beliefs in Facebook posts or on their blogs. People suddenly feel this personal connection to the ideas of Bernie Sanders or even Donald Trump, even though their ideas aren't exactly groundbreaking. From Bernie Sanders we hear populistic undertones that echo William Jennings Bryan and other politicians in the populist tradition. In Donald Trump we see echoes of

nationalistic sentiments that were prevalent in the 19th century. Seeing these things unfold and being connected to them has made my friends passionate, and it's safe to say they aren't bored because they are feeling personal connections to what's going on. They are writing and they are becoming more involved. They are growing into this political but also academic community.

Finally, I would like to speak to the point of argument and the question whether the emphasis on argument in composition is appropriate. I would say that I do believe that everything does seem to be an argument - not in the traditional sense of one person yelling at another but in the sense that all dialogue is persuasion, whether it be asking your parents for a raise in your allowance or proposing some change in the operations of the company to your boss. On Facebook, as I mentioned, I see my friends arguing about politics all the time. This is all evidence to me that we aren't bored.

Hannah Green: I think I may end up giving a little bit of a different spin of things. One question we were asked in the panel description was if we had encountered this "publish-or-perish" attitude and how we thought about it. I think about "publish or perish" every day. As an academic, as a scholar, I'm all too aware of the need for me to publish in academic journals by the time that I hit the job market. As a creative writer, I feel that pressure even more so. When it comes to creative writing jobs at four-year universities, you will find that most job descriptions require an MFA or PhD, and they don't necessarily prefer one over the other. What they go by isn't just your

qualifications, it's your publication record. Do you have books published? Have you been regularly contributing to the bigger picture?

Then there is the question of funding and whether you get more timid as regards the arguments and theses you dare to make. Here I can actually speak more to the sciences than to the humanities. I know that a lot of scientific publications are driven by funding. Universities will fund you for some projects and not for others, especially outside sources. We know, for example, that much research is conducted to constantly produce the latest anti-depressant, because that's what sells. So, obviously many academics are forced into certain research areas to get funding. The peer-review process, as well, deserves scrutiny. People often write peer review reports for their friends' articles so that they can get published. All in all, then, I think that this "publish-or-perish" mentality definitely has negative consequences.

In the field of creative writing you can always find a place for your writing. As for the level of the literary magazine you may end up in, some are definitely regarded more highly than others. The downside is that everyone can publish online, but then who reads it? Just because you can put your creative work up there doesn't mean it's actually going to get read. Often I just get caught up in this idea as I write: Is this good enough? Is this going to get published? Where should I try to publish it? What are people going to think? I find it really hard to just switch that off and just write what I want to write. I don't just want to get published anywhere, I would like to get published in

places whose names carry some weight, that would look good on my CV. I find it kind of inhibiting.

Of course, to get published is a good way of showing that you are knowledgeable in your field, that you are contributing to these conversations, these areas of expertise, that you are up-to-date on this information, that you are actually interacting with other scholars and their ideas.I can see the benefit of all of this, but I also feel sometimes that academia as a whole can feel a little bit like preaching to the choir. In freshman composition classes we teach our students that academic writing is joining a conversation, that it's a way for you to incorporate your voice into these conversations that are going on. It's a great way to help students understand that there's research going on. This concept is a good way to help first-year writers understand how to use sources, why we credit other sources, and how to say new things instead of just repeating what has already been said before. But I also feel that sometimes academia is not so much a conversation as just kind of like a shouting match, a "look-at-me" kind of thing, and that we covet these publications because we want to get jobs. Sometimes this will affect the quality of the work.

I'll quote one of my professors from this semester who says that academic journals are where his ideas go to die. To access an academic journal we need to go through something like JSTOR. We as academics can all do that for free, we have unlimited access to this site and plenty of other databases, but outside of academia to use JSTOR will cost you $200 a year. You can get a monthly subscription

for $20 but it limits you to ten pdf downloads and it can range from $20 to $40 just to download one article. Thus, outside of academia who is actually reading what we write? My professor said that when his article gets published it goes on JSTOR, if he's lucky a handful of graduate students read it and cite it in their papers, and that's it. I feel like this idea of writing as a conversation doesn't really work if we're not allowing other voices to join in, and I think in this age where the more we study the more specialized we get, I think we should be encouraging people to join conversations, to open things up. I don't understand why we have to keep our academic research hidden behind paywalls. What would go wrong if people outside of academia have free access to it? This also gets me to the question of the accessibility of academic language but I don't think I'll go down that route …

Audience Question and Answer Period

KC: I wanted to respond in a couple ways to the question about the "publish-or-perish" dynamic and the way that it might impede big ideas by forcing people to just publish less ambitious ideas in order to get something published. In his book The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Thomas Kuhn introduces the term "paradigm shift," i.e. a groundbreaking change in the way we think about a thing. What's fascinating is that Kuhn argues that these paradigm shifts don't come from some brilliant thinker innovating something, and then another one innovating something, and then another one innovating something. They stem from the regular, boring, everyday work most scientists do, which is prov-

ing a thesis that's already known, with a slight tweak. Then little by little, through the repetition in the doing of what is known and the doing of what is boring, anomalies accumulate. Which we ignore. And ignore, and ignore. Until finally the anomalies are so apparent that you can't ignore them, and then somebody – it doesn't matter who; it's almost as if anybody at that point could have come along and – boom! coins a new thing, a new paradigm.

Audience member: It seems you're making an argument about innovation by accumulation. It seems that everybody is interested in not perishing, in publishing, and so everybody takes small, conservative steps in thesis formulation. Certainly innovation can be achieved that way. But the question is, would there be greater efficiency if, instead of, by accumulation, you could do this in a large step by challenging – if you're able to, of course – the paradigm from the get go in such a way that may revolutionize the existing body of work? Are people disincentivized from attempting to challenge the existing scholarship out of economic considerations? Everybody's staying safe, and the people that may cause change – they're afraid.

KC: I think that's a good point. My only concern is that whenever people start talking efficiency, I always want to ask: Efficient according to whom?

Audience member: We may ask why more academic journals aren't actually talking about experiments and endeavors that have failed. Especially in my discipline, where we read a lot of scholarly articles and studies, everyone is wondering how we even got to the point

of actually conducting all of this research with all these intricate methodologies. If you read academic journals, it's rare that failure is written about. We don't regard failure as an opportunity for learning at all. So I think that that's just something that we can interrogate as an entire academic community too.

LW: I've been in classes where everyone was just silent, and it's hard to get anyone to talk. I think knowing how to ask questions is a skill – as is the willingness to be wrong and to appear stupid …

Audience member: I wanted to shift gears somewhat. Todd DeStigter, a professor in the English Education department here at UIC wonders why we even emphasize argument so much. At least in the teaching of first-year writing. How do you respond? What do we make of argument, especially in the early years when we're developing as writers? Is it something we should privilege? Or are there other things that can help us develop as writers, things that go beyond argument?

HG: In the composition classroom I don't think there's anything wrong with teaching argument. You acquire valuable skills if you learn how to understand arguments, how to spot logical fallacies, to isolate claims from evidence, to find a thesis statement in a journal article. If you replaced a class such as English 161, the second leg of our first-year writing program, which is research and argument based, with a class on memoir, it would really hurt students in the long run.

KC: As a writing-instructor the most boring papers I've come across were by students who tried to turn out an argument and, gosh, they did succeed – they went and

they found the proof, they got the counterargument, and in the end it becomes just this pantomime rather than really inquiring into a thing. Maybe that inquiry may lead to an argument in the long run, and often times it does, it leads to a more sophisticated argument.

DT: Then there is the question, as Lucia already hinted at, of getting students engaged in the classroom. To become part of an academic community, of getting to know the language of academic discourse, you just need to be exposed to it.

Last semester, I took English 161, and I think the bulk of what I learned came not from reading templates such as in the book They Say / I Say but instead from reading so many texts, so many sources. Having these texts available really helped me enhance the arguments that I was formulating. That's how students learn what academic writing is like. They'll say: I think I'm able to do that after I get to know the conventions, how people are talking in this community. Then students will be surprised to realize that they've been talking and writing in similar ways for most of their lives. Working with templates is a starting point for sure. But by reading existing work by other writers, we will also gradually become part of this academic community ourselves. Part of the way to engage students is to give them something that they can connect to, and then they'll say: "I can definitely do this."

Transcribed by Gregor Baszak, Kevin Carey, Dylan Tabang, Lucia Whalen

Group Work Sessions in the Writing Center

Instructors: Did you know that you could bring your class to the Writing Center for Writing Workshops?

During weeks 6 through 12, the Writing Center offers three types of group work sessions.

All types of workshops require instructor interaction throughout the workshop, a briefing of tutors at outset, and, time permitting, a quick debriefing with tutors at end.

1. Beginning a Task:
- Tutors observe as you introduce the writing project to your students.
- Students get into groups with a tutor to analyze the task. Specific attention is paid to genre demands.
- Together students and tutors imagine and map the format and features of a finished project.
- Tutors discuss and model brainstorming techniques.
- Instructors "float," answering questions and offering input.
- The session ends with a writing exercise where students write an initial plan.

2. Thesis Development:
- Tutors observe as you review goals and challenges of the assignment and of developing a thesis.
- The group discusses the essential features of a thesis in regards to the product, and creates criteria for a strong thesis statement.
- Students bring a partial draft of the project with their working thesis, which they present to each other and the tutor.
- Groups focus on articulating strong thesis statements that meet the established criteria.
- Instructors "float," answering questions and offering input.
- The session ends with a writing exercise where students revise their working thesis and create a plan for revision of their writing projects as a whole.

2. Gallery Walk:
- Students come with a description of a project in process.
- Students post descriptions of their work around the center, and other students move around the room, asking questions and providing feedback.
- Tutors circulate with students, acting as "knowledgable others" and guiding/facilitating conversations as needed.

*To schedule a group work session, instructors can contact **Kim O'Neil** at **oneil.kim@gmail.com.** Please include the following information:*
- *Your top two choices of dates*
- *The class number and discipline*
- *The number of sections*
- *The respective classtimes and head counts*
- *Groupwork type (Beginning a Task, Thesis Development, or Gallery Walk.)*

An Open Letter to UIC Undergraduates

Balssam Malhas

Dear undergraduate students,

As an undergrad, you may feel like most of your life revolves around writing academic papers, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, until you get the feeling that writing may just be a series of never-ending "mysteries." Sometimes it has to do with understanding what is being asked in the prompt, other times it is of what writing style should be implemented, and of course, there is the uncertainty of how it will be graded. These are some struggles that we face early on through academic writing, and while there aren't actually any hidden secrets and mysteries, it can be hard to feel otherwise, and it can hinder your ability to write a successful paper. Merely disregarding that you feel there are mysteries can be difficult to do; a better approach would be to embrace it. Embracing the idea that writing can sometimes be a mystery allows you to be in control—it allows you to realize that while you do not understand it all right away, you can still uncover it, and to uncover that mystery, you must take on the perspective of a detective.

The most obvious task of a detective is that they uncover clues to help them understand the situation as a whole. These clues can almost always be found in the prompt. Clues in the prompt give you a feel for what you are about to delve in to—the page or word requirement, the number of sources cited, and what type of writing it will be. Detectives also have re-sources like their lieutenant and consultants, both of which can have significant roles in the writing process as I will later bring to your attention.

But first, you get an assignment, you read the prompt, and then procrastinate; it's the typical way of college students. There is no denying that writing essays is time-consuming, but why do most people procrastinate? It has a lot to do with commitment. We're afraid of commitment; we don't want to invest our time and thoughts into anything that has the possibility of ending negatively, so instead, we procrastinate with writing our essays until we have no choice but to face it. We don't want to invest our time and thoughts in writing something, only to receive a low grade in the end. We think that if we leave it to the last moment, no matter how hard we work on it, if we get a low grade in the end we won't feel as bad since we didn't really try; we didn't invest our time and energy. But that takes away the beauty of writing. You are given essays to explore your thoughts, to expand your knowledge, and to express your voice. This is why college is the best time to experiment with your writing—the thoughts you put into it and the styles you use. Invest in your writing. Give writing your all—your time, your effort, your thoughts. Don't be afraid of that possible low grade; take the risk of truly trying. Getting a low grade is not a marker of your identity as a writer, so your ego shouldn't take a hit, nor should you feel insulted.

> # Give writing your all—your time, your effort, your thoughts. Don't be afraid. . .

It is important, though, to keep in mind that your teacher will be your audience. That does not mean you have to tailor your writing to match their opinions, but it means you should bear in mind that they will be reading it, and that they will have certain expectations. Yes, teachers are human, and they have their good and bad days, but they also have rubrics, guidelines, and standards as the basis for the grades they give. The grade given on a paper could vary depending on professor, but the grading process isn't meant to be subjective. This could be due to the different expectations placed, which is why if you are provided with a rubric, it is essential to read it, because it will take away some of the mystery of how it will be graded.

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Assuming you got passed the procrastination and worries of its grading, you look into the prompt. Some prompts are very structured, either telling you the exact points to include or exactly how they want it to be organized. Yet most prompts, just like detectives' cases, don't seem to reveal all that you would like at a first glance, leaving a lot to interpretation. The vagueness of the prompt has less to do with the instructor's inability to write clear, precise prompts, and more to do with them wanting to see where you'll go with it. Teachers what to see your thought process, your take on what is being discussed in class, rather than their own ideas and opinions phrased into your own words. The less specific a prompt is, the less clear a case is, the more room there is to explore the various ideas and possibilities. Of course you wouldn't want to drift too far off course though, and that is one reason why it is important to seek help.

Detectives aren't completely on their own, they have a lieutenant in charge; similarly, as a student you have your teacher. While those in command give you assignments to do on your own, they expect you to refer back to them when you are not sure. Your effectiveness is contingent on your clarity of the assignment, and many times that

clarity is achieved through asking those in command the questions you need to. Being unsure if your teacher will accept the topic you decided to write about is a key example of when you should ask your teacher for approval. Other times can be for clarification of the topic, of the concepts, or simply, of the prompt. But plainly asking your teacher, "What does this mean?" will result in a reply similar to what is already written in the prompt. Another aspect we can implement from detectives is the thoughtfulness they put into the phrasing of their questions to get insightful answers. Another way to ask the teacher could possibly be, "I understand this part… But here is where I get confused…" This way, your teacher is able to see that you actually put some genuine thought into it, and will likely give you a more helpful answer as to how to approach the essay or understand the requirements and expectations of the paper.

In most papers, there is usually that dreaded part in the prompt that informs you to include outside sources, and while it may not be explicitly written, you should always assume these sources are meant to be peer-reviewed. Teachers do not require these sources simply to make the assignment more difficult, even though search-

ing through the databases for relevant sources truly is a tedious task. Being in a university, your writing is now put at a higher standard; the ideas you present should not merely be opinion-based, however, they should be supported by credible sources. The information you used to find through the google search engine is not considered a reliable source, and no longer has a place in your academic papers. On the other hand, the articles found on those databases are peer-reviewed; hence, make your stance much more dependable.

Typically when an instructor requires a certain amount of sources or references in your paper, it also goes hand in hand with "apply what you learned in class." But unless your teacher is a peer-reviewed author whose essays are uploaded onto these databases, simply the idea of searching for sources can become frustrating. The articles you find do not need to be completely similar to the ideas your teacher expressed or taught of in class, but they should at least hold similar concepts so you can use it to support what it is you have learned from the class's lectures and material. The sources you use would be most appropriate as supporting or contradictory evidence, or at least as relevant in-

formation, instead of material that carries little to do with the subject matter other than a quote or two.

More important than the sources used, is the way you present your content, more specifically, the types of writing. Of the most common as an undergrad, there are journal entries. Usually journal entries require no outside sources, only the required reading and the professor's lecture. These writing assignments are typically personal comments or reflections on what was discussed or related topics. Journal entries are probably of the least formal writing assignments, but

professors do expect your writing to prove that your thoughts and opinions truly were engaged. And unless they mention otherwise, they also expect it to be well written, with spelling and grammar mistakes ranging from little to none.

A more complex academic writing you face in your undergrad years is the lab report. This type of writing is seen when you have science or psychology classes that

have a lab component, and it has a rigid format that must be followed. The format begins with a title page and is then followed by different sections which are titled and separated. The most typical structure for the rest of the paper consists of these different sections for the abstract, the methods, the data and results, the discussion or conclusion, and lastly, a works cited.

Finally, there is the typical "paper." This is the broadest since it is not specific to a certain discipline or subject, and can be written on a variety of different topics with many different purposes. Papers should have little to no spelling and grammar mistakes, the organization should be clear, and, in a word, it should be polished. As you learned

to write essays, there were certain structures learned and focused on—most commonly the five paragraph essay or MELCons. Once you feel comfortable enough in writing through those structures, you can break the structure. Unless it is required in your first-year writing course, and unless your teacher mentioned otherwise, your academic papers can now be much more flexible. Your thesis does not need to be in a specific area, nor do you need to count the sentences in a paragraph or your paragraphs in the essay.

That does not mean that these papers can be a rambling of words that only somewhat relate to your topic, since there are types of writing your teacher may require that can require a specific focus. Your teachers may require a persuasive writing, also known as an argumentative paper, in which you attempt to persuade your readers to take on the perspective or opinion that you are supporting, which may or may not truly be your point of view. Most times you are asked to write this type of essay, it is plainly

stated in the prompt, but in times that it is not, clue words that hint to this type of writing are; "persuade," "argue," or "convince." While an argumentative essay gives the connotation that you will be arguing, it is meant in the most proper way. You are expected to give reasons and evidence to support your side, rather than encourage your side by simply putting down the other.

Another type is expository writing. With this type you are required to provide information or explain a topic to show your knowledge on it. Clue words that hint to expository writing are "explain" or "describe." Both expository and argumentative writing are papers which will likely require outside research. This is because in these types you are stating things and making claims that need support to be certain of and consider.

With creative, expressive, autobiographical, or personal writing, you are free to let your thoughts and opinions guide your paper. They are meant to be recordings, explorations, or reflections. With all these writing types, there can be some overlap. Your argumentative paper may have expository or personal writing, and your autobiographical paper could have both argumentative and expository aspects. Your paper does not have to solely be a single type, as long as the others are implemented while remaining focused on the required one.

No matter the type of writing, most require analysis within it. Analysis in writing has a lot to do with interpretation. Depending on the discipline, analysis can become a little tricky since some prefer your interpretation come from you, while others want the interpretation from what the sources

and quotes convey. Generally though, an analysis simply goes beyond what is being literally said, and goes into your thoughts on what it means. You want to focus on what the details imply and go into your own analytical conclusions, which must be reasonable and not stretch much further than the details support. With that said, you do not need to agree with who or what you are analyzing; what they try to say is not nearly as important as what is being understood. Whether the assignment is specifically asking for analysis or not, you usually implement it to some degree, or to surround the quotations you use, so it is always important to keep a critical eye.

Before you begin to write, or while you are in the process, you may feel you want to bounce your ideas off of someone. Or maybe once you feel you are close to your final draft, you want to make sure your ideas make sense to others and flow properly. Or maybe, you haven't began putting your thoughts to paper; you have them somewhere in your mind, but just can't put them together long enough to be able to write them down. The writing process does not have to be a solitary act; detectives also find others to aid them with their work, they ask for help—they consult. Writing center tutors can play a key role in helping you reveal that mystery at hand; they are the consultants that can help you understand the clues before you, and help you make sense of it. So if the clues you need deciphered have to do with approaching a prompt, recognizing and fixing grammar issues, or revising according to teachers' comments and corrections, the writing center tutors will not only help you

with that in a session, but through them, you can start to recognize many of those clues on your own. Just as significantly, writing center tutors can be just as helpful to writers as consultants are to detectives with their thought processes; they can help them with their thought process as they begin to reveal the mystery—paradoxically aiding with the expanding and focusing of their thoughts, in a way that would strengthen their ideas for a more confident paper.

The mystery in writing can lead to an alienation of our own language, which can take away all the valuable ideas we could express. A few things to take out of this letter is the advantages of taking on the perspective of a detective and working on uncovering the mystery, rather than feeling helpless; the deciphering of "clues," making use of your "lieutenant" and "consultants," and a refresher or two. This strategy is only a small step in the writing process to help recognize when you can decipher these clues on your own, as well as the various times during the process that you are able to seek help. While writing does not have to be a completely solitary act, there is a time where trying to find the clues is over, where asking for help should take a break, and you must begin writing. So take out that pen, or start up that computer, and just let your words flow.

Sincerely,

An English Education major who continues to see the "mysteries" in writing

Identity Construction and Writing Center Praxis

Laura Senteno

Introduction

Current perspectives on identity construction within educational spaces, and specifically within the context of writing center tutoring, are indicative of an important shift in theory from more fixed, essentialist views of learning and behavior to a more descriptive, learner-centered approach to pedagogy. Postmodernism and poststructuralism have influenced theories of identity construction, contributing to its current treatment in literature as a process of becoming, involving a multiplicity of factors, and in a constant state of flux. Identity is performative, discursive, and multifaceted (Bingham, 2001; Butler, 1990; Dumas, 2008); because it is informed by situational factors, place is also integral to its construction.

Like identities, places are constructed by a variety of social factors that govern learning interactions as much as the physical characteristics of the space (Callejo Pérez, 2004). Educational spaces in particular are important meeting points between identities and the political and sociocultural factors that have shaped the places themselves (Denny, 2010). Studies of identity and place in the context of education reveal a mutually informative process between the two; educational spaces can be thought of as the frame within which student identities are constructed, while the spaces themselves are also constructed by exchanges of identity (Callejo Pérez,

2004; Denny, 2010).

A review of the literature pertaining to the construction of student identity can serve to elucidate its multiple processes, as well as contextualize the educational space as a background against which these processes occur. By acknowledging student identity in the context of pedagogy, educators can approach the classroom or writing center as a space of recognition, thereby fostering students' agency (Bingham, 2001; Canagarajah, 1999). The present review of literature will touch on theories of educational spaces, the definition and construction of identity within these spaces, and the relevance of attention to identity in pedagogy to writing centers in particular. The use of language and its relation to agency is a segue between more general theories of identity in the context of educational space and the specific setting of writing centers. Because it integrates the study of identity construction with a critical view of language, and comprises a process of inquiry that challenges oppression, queer theory is proposed as a framework for approaching identity in pedagogy. A discussion of implications of the literature for writing centers and areas of future research will follow. Given its unique position as a nonclassroom educational space whose existing praxis lends great attention to issues of social justice, the writing center is particularly wellsuited to adopting practices informed by the construction of student identity; the writing center will be examined as a space

where theories from these diverse disciplines can be brought together in the service of learners.

Findings of the Review

The Construction of Educational Space

Educational spaces are characterized as a places of potential, defined and brought to life by the purposeful actions of their constituents (Callejo Pérez, et al., 2004); they are constructed, as opposed to "natural" or "automatic", requiring deliberate creation in accordance with their intended outcome (Fain, 2007, p. 11). Through their visibility, educational spaces define reality, and are "always dynamic" in that they encompass multiple individual experiences (Fain, 2007). Taken together, these multiple experiences shape and define a given space. For example, the interactions that occur within a school are constantly changing, and the juxtaposition of these interactions upon the school environment defines students' and teachers' realities. At the same time, the school itself is defined by collective experience and interaction. Additionally, educational spaces are governed by convention, which limits how freely accessible they are; the intentional design and definition of curriculum can enhance accessibility (Fain, 2007).

A common theme in theories of pedagogical space is the problem of attending to students' diverse needs while operating within the constraints of the institution at large. Because of tension between the backdrop of convention and the dynamic experiences of social and pedagogical interaction, construction of educational space can have either liberating or limiting outcomes for learners. However,

there is a tendency for spaces to be limiting by default, as constructing a liberating space takes conscious effort to challenge convention (Fain, 2007). Kumashiro (2000) echoes Fain's framing of the educational space as one that can be either liberatory or oppressive in nature. Conventions such as restrictive curricula and social norms that marginalize the Other can aid in the limiting construction of educational spaces, restricting individualism and free thought, rather than supporting students' freedom (Fain, 2007; Kumashiro, 2000). Therefore, it is critical for educational spaces to be designed intentionally to facilitate the type of interactions that will provide constituents with freedom of choice. Callejo Pérez, et al. (2004) emphasize that adequate service to learners depends on the intentional design and creation of a space; a space becomes a place when the potentiality of space is addressed through its constituents' purposeful actions.

Identity Construction Within Educational Spaces

Like space, identity is also approached as dynamic, rather than fixed, in current literature. If educational spaces are dynamic, living, and defined by human interaction, then the construction of identity through pedagogical exchange is a specific way of lending meaning to these spaces. Recent literature positions identity as situational, fluid,

and multiply constructed (Dumas, 2008; Butler, 1990) rather than a static fact of essentialist or binary categories (Abes, Jones, & McEwan, 2007). Through pedagogical interaction, learning environments bring to the surface cultural and sociopolitical elements that shape identity. Aside from race and ethnicity, these elements also encompass linguistic behavior, sexuality, and power relations (Dumas, 2008; Kumashiro, 2000). There is significant consensus in the literature that, because of its fluid nature, identity behaves more like a process than a consistent trait. That is, learners define and use their identities as processes of becoming, drawing on culture, language, and their own desires. Identity is also constructed in relation to communities of practice based on one's movement toward or away from a given group (Dumas, 2008; Wenger, 1998). Both Dumas (2008) and Wenger (1998) emphasize that identities are defined not only by participating in certain practices,

but also by refraining from others. For example, a student may use certain elements of style in language to express identification with, a certain group within the classroom, while rejecting the styles of other groups. Interactions within educational spaces are important situations where the construction of student identity takes place through all of these processes; spaces such as writing centers are "nodal points" where identities brush up against each other as well as institutional conventions (Denny, 2010).

While students make choices in the construction of their own identities, their identities are also constructed through the perceptions and treatment of those around them, such as classmates and teachers. Bingham (2001) contextualizes identity in education within a model of recognition, where learners both acknowledge others' identities and experience a level of comfort and agency when others acknowledge their own identities. When one is properly recognized, it contributes to one's sense of self, affirming their dignity (Bingham, 2001). On the other hand, improper recognition, or a lack of recognition, can be damaging to learners (Bingham, 2001; Kumashiro, 2000). Especially within today's multicultural, multilingual, and socioeconomically diverse student populations, points of difference can manifest in processes of othering, where certain

identities are privileged while others are marginalized (Kumashiro, 2000), resulting in oppression. One way that educators may be complicit in reinforcing an oppressive status quo is by approaching pedagogy from a perspective of commonality, rather than difference (Dumas, 2008; Kubota, 2004). Sociocultural, linguistic, gender/sexuality, and class differences play important roles in identity construction; therefore, a onesize-fitsall approach to pedagogy can effectively erase learner identities, rather than acknowledge them (Dumas, 2008; Kumashiro, 2000). Kubota (2004) asserts that to take an approach of commonality is to implement a "differenceblind vision" that "fails to recognize the social and economic inequalities and institutional racism that actually exist in schools and society" (p. 33)." Because identity differences can bring about opportunities for learning and mutual understanding, pedagogical practices informed by identity should recog-

nize differences, provide support for the Other, and use conflict to identify and solve problems (Bingham, 2001; Dumas, 2008; Kumashiro, 2000).

The Interaction of Language and Identity Within the Writing Center

In the context of pedagogy, and especially within the writing center, language can be thought of as the currency of learners' expressions of identity. Not only are questions of language use at the heart of writing tutoring activities, they are also entwined with the construction of identity within the writing center. A tutoring session can be thought of as "vehicle through which two identities contact each other through writing"a social interaction where the multiple elements of writer and tutor identities are expressed through conversation (Ansari, 2011). Language serves a multitude of purposes in relation to identity within the writing center; it can function as an identity of its own (Dumas, 2008), and/or as a tool with which to express other facets of identity.

Writing centers are exemplary of the tensions between institutional linguistic conventions and the individual voices of writers (Grimm, 1999). In their work and in tutoring interactions, writers may use their vernaculars to assert their own identity in a deliberate way

(Young, 2011). However, they can also be assigned identities by others on the basis of their language use, regardless of their own self-identification (OrtmeierHooper, 2008). To apply Fain and Kumashiro's theories of space construction, these examples of language use can aid in the writing center's construction as either a liberatory or oppressive space. Writer voices, which are unique representations of their agency expressed by language, often clash against institutional expectations of linguistic assimilation into the dominant group (Canagarajah, 2003; Grimm, 1999; Young, 2011). If students do not fulfill the expectation to use dominant types of language, they may be marginalized (Grimm, 2011). On the other hand, the use of one's own language allows one to feel acknowledged (Bingham, 2001), and writers' unique voices, if valorized, have the potential to enrich discourse overall (Young, 2011).

Queer Theory as a Potential Framework

Queer theory is a recurring suggestion in discussions of a framework for the treatment of identity within pedagogical practice. Because it "disrupt[s] traditional identity categories" (Abes, et al., 2007, p. 3) queer theory lends itself well to a pedagogical model that acknowledges differences, but also avoids the fragmenting effect of categorization. The term "queer" is itself a linguistic and political assertion of identities that are separate from the dominant norm, as well as a term that includes a multitude of sexual and gender identities, rather than using "lesbian" or "gay" to distinguish one queer identity from another (Kumashiro, 2000; Dumas, 2008; Abes,

et al., 2007). Queer theory's focus on inquiry serves to challenge the social conventions that privilege certain identities while marginalizing the Other (Kumashiro, 2000; Denny, 2010); through a process of problematizing, queer theory "posits a critical rethinking of the ideology that shapes sexual identity" (Dumas, 2008, p. 4). Through critical examination and use of language, recognition of identities that are constructed in opposition to the norm, and efforts to confront latent biases, the integration of queer theory with pedagogical practice presents important opportunities for learner empowerment and work against oppression (Kumashiro, 2000; Dumas, 2008; Denny, 2010).

Discussion and Implications

The literature reviewed has explored the dynamic nature of both space and identity as constructed by multiple interactions. The construction of identity can cooccur with the construction of a pedagogical space, in that the ongoing human exchanges both define place and express constituents' identities. Fain (2004) suggests that the potential for learners to experience freedom depends on the construction of a space to provide the "emancipating dimension" of choice (p. 11). Therefore, pedagogical spaces play the important role of paving the way for learners'

success through their deliberate construction. There is consensus within the literature that, without deliberate efforts to create spaces where learners experience the liberation of choice, pedagogical spaces can easily fall into patterns of upholding social conventions that are limiting to learners, resulting in marginalization and/or oppression.

Marginalization can occur if learners' identities are not acknowledged, misrepresented, or suppressed (Bingham, 2001; Dumas, 2008; Kumashiro, 2000). Because their activities focus on the use of language, writing centers present learners with the opportunity for their identities to be recognized in multiple ways, including recognizing a writer's unique language as an identity, as well as supporting the expression of identity in written work. The use of one's own languageand acceptance of this language by tutors and educatorsis a way to acknowledge identity, encourage agency, and affirm dignity. By encouraging writers to use their unique voices, writing centers can not only support the development of writer identity, but also challenge linguistic systems of power and help to enrich discourse as a whole (Ansari, 2011; Canagarajah, 1999; Bingham, 2001; Young, 2012).

As an educational space whose

core efforts include knowledge sharing through facetoface interaction and whose own praxis involves conscious efforts to confront issues of social justice (Grimm, 1999), writing centers are able to combine knowledge from the fields of geography, identity studies, pedagogy, and critical theory in order to best serve students. An identitybased approach facilitates mutual exchange and allows student identity to play a role in pedagogical processes (Schachter & Rich), which can contribute to the liberatory positioning of the writing center as a constructed learning environment (Fain, 2007; Kumashiro, 2000). Denny posits that a writing center's efficacy is defined by its ability to problematize the everyday, specifically in efforts to challenge structures of power that surround it (2010). This very concept of problematizing is elemental to queer theory, which has suitably been proposed as a lens for liberatory educational practices that dismantle the status quo. Even more specifically, Kumashiro (2000) proposes that educators "queer our understanding of ourselves" (p. 45) in order to confront latent, potentially oppressive attitudes; "deconstruct the Self/Other binary" (p. 45); and to ultimately achieve an antioppressive understanding of the Other.

Future Research

A model for the integration of identity with pedagogy has been proposed by Shachter & Rich (2011). They note that a field incorporating identity and education does not yet exist; therefore, studies thus far have been fragmented, rather than comprehensive. Inquiring writers and tutors about their experiences of identity within tutoring exchanges might lend valuable insights to the area of writing center theory. The specific area of ESL within the writing center has explored writers' own ideas about themselves in response to the identities they have been assigned by educators (OrtmeierHooper, 2008), but this concept remains to be explored within the writer population in general.

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Tutors, Mark your Calendars!

Next year, November 10-13, 2017, the main annual conference for writing centers will be held in Chicago! The conference is especially welcoming to presentations, panels, and workshops conducted by tutors.

Many of the projects you are doing (or did) in English 222 or 482 can be revised and adapted for a proposal for the conference. If you are staff, developing one of your course projects for a paper is a great professional development activity or a cross-tutoring opportunity. You are also welcome to discuss a possible project with any of the assistant directors or graduate staff.

If your proposal gets accepted for the conference, the Writing Center directors will find support so that at least a portion of your conference fee (usually about $200) would be reimbursed to you. Having a conference paper is of course an important distinguishing item on your resume.

This is a special opportunity because it has been over a decade since the conference was held in Chicago. The conference is attended by tutors and staff from all over the world. Many of the the authors you read in 222/482 come to these conferences to report on their current research. They are approachable and it can be a thrill to meet them in person.

STEM Writing Pedagogies and Practices: A Critical Analysis

Jessica Parrish

Chemistry was not the hardest part of organic chemistry. For me, the most challenging part of CHEM 233, Organic Chemistry Lab, was the pacing. There are 10 lab reports due, typically one every week. The rubrics were strict and formulaic, so I felt robotic producing 10 lab reports that looked and read essentially the same. I didn't feel that those long form reports helped me understand the material any better than the studying for the quizzes, and the rubric-to-page transliteration I had to do each week certainly didn't make me a better writer. (Maybe a faster one.) Another part that stressed me out was the lack of flexibility. There were no drafts, and no chance for revisions. This high-stakes production and grading was daunting and discouraging. In my other lab classes I was facing a similar wall. There seemed to be a focus on production without any attention to the process of writing which I had learned and come to expect due to classes like ENGL 161.

I wanted to find out if I was alone in this problem. I conducted a small survey of upperclassman STEM majors about their experiences writing in the sciences. What I got was a small but vocal collection of biology, chemistry, and engineering students. While this cannot possibly be representative of classrooms or departments as a whole, the continuity in responses points to some problems that I feel must be addressed. This paper is solely concerned with the ways in which

we can improve our classrooms. A detailed look at the things professors are doing right at UIC would take a much longer paper. I will be the first to admit that I haven't read every syllabus, or sat in every lab. I can't make definitive statements about every class here at UIC. This article is not meant to diagnose departments, or classes, or even individual assignments as without use at all. Instead I ask faculty who teach lab classes to reflect on what writing means in their classes and whether any points I introduce are useful to them and their teaching.

Across the board students surveyed said that since their freshman year, their writing has improved, especially their writing for their STEM classes. Curiously though, not a single one responded positively when I asked them whether or not their STEM TAs and professors were a part of that improvement. Answers to this question ranged from mild – "not very. Usually they can only help with the materials, not any of the writing trouble I have like it not being long enough" to antagonistic – "Frankly, they haven't done much. Each one has their own format for writing lab reports that they claim is how it is in the "real world" and it just gets confusing." (Another response was a more humorous, but less helpful "Zero. Negative amounts.") These comments seemed to center around lab classes and their associated lab reports. The agreement across the survey seems to suggest that there may be something at the structural level that is causing these students to struggle

where in other classes they have been successful. Whether or not professors and TAs are actually neglecting writing support or instruction isn't the question – I'm sure they're not intentionally causing damage to their students. There's a chain from the student's needs to their professor's understanding and response to their needs, to how those responses actually affect the students. What's obvious to me is that there seems to be a breakdown somewhere in this chain when it comes to writing, and students are noticing.

This perceived lack of academic writing support has a huge effect on students. It increases stress about writing dramatically, and confers no fundamental skill. I don't think the goal should be to eliminate anxiety or challenge from classrooms, but those challenges should ultimately benefit students. Right now, that's not what happening. A focus on mass production without any support for the process of that production is harmful to students' writing and intellectual development.

So why then? What could be an institutional cause that leaves these students feeling unsupported? Let's continue to use CHEM 233 as a case study. There are 22 students in each section, almost every week handing in a lab report. Those lab reports are long. Mine averaged about five pages per week, while my lab partner regularly handed in seven. One TA is responsible for all the students in their section, and is expected to return lab reports graded the next week. That's over

100 pages of reading and grading almost every week. This is on top of their other duties as a TA in a lab class – setting up reagents and holding office hours. This is also in addition to their own studies as a graduate student. STEM TAs don't get a lot training in teaching. They aren't even offered much training at all in teaching writing specifically. Combined with the fact that TAs don't get paid a living wage for the work they do (The salary is around $22-$23 per hour, but working full time as a TA isn't an option for many or even most grad students), this high workload and abysmal support of our grad students translates directly to lows support for undergraduates in these classes. Time is, of course, another looming factor in this. Time is always at a premium in classrooms, and I know that labs feel this restriction particularly keenly. Labs are here to impart practical skills, and the easy answer to whether or not labs should concern themselves with teach writing is that writing is a skill for students to learn elsewhere, in specialized writing classes like ENGL 160. I'd like to recognize that writing is, instead, an umbrella term for a series of skills, and those skills shift with the discipline one writes in. It's therefore worth reflecting on whether students are gaining a well-rounded set of skills in the classroom, and if that's something we should be striving for.

There's a plurality of other models that we could imagine, but we don't have to imagine them. UIC is home to multiple innovative practices: in STEM classrooms, and across the university. Some other STEM classes do have a variety of writing assignments. Computer Science 335 includes a book report,

a presentation, and a research paper. Two of those projects have a draft due before the final product is due, and time in class is spent on receiving feedback from peers on one of those drafts. Students in CHEM 305 made a visit to the Writing Center this semester to take advantage of the new Gallery Walk group work session. These are shining examples of ways we can support writing as a process for students in any level.

Group work is used in other classrooms at the university to support the writing process. Peer revision of drafts is universal in the first year writing program. I've also had professors that give time for peer revision on final projects and papers. These are, not incidentally, the classes where I have produced writing that I am the most proud of. There is some, but not much, draft work and revision done by professors in STEM classrooms, and in labs it's even rarer.

Support throughout the writing process is instrumental to student success. In classes where the focus is most definitely on quantity over quality, we could stand to step back and think about the ways that we can foster students' academic writing skills. We can take notes from other classrooms – setting aside time for group work and draft revision would be an amazing first step.

"Preparing students for the real world". That's usually how I hear tough workload, strict guidelines, nondiverse assignments, and high risk grading being defended. I'd like to advise against this type of thinking. We should be making fewer assumptions about the kind of work students will be doing after graduation. Even when students are going to grad school and

writing papers that look like lab reports, that's not all they're doing, and they're certainly not doing it in the format that exists in classrooms. If we are truly to prepare students for the scientific workforce and for graduate school at the same time, we need to expose them to a breadth of writing styles, expectations, and environments. Grant writing, blog posting, and conference speaking are extremely important skills. Collaboration in writing is essential to academia. It's nearly unheard of to see a groundbreaking paper not have multiple co-authors. Students also need practice responding to critiques on their writing and revising accordingly. Being able to give helpful critique on someone else's writing makes them an invaluable member of a team. Peer based grading and revision also takes some of the pressure off of TAs and professors. My hope is that professors who teach labs take some time to consider whether writing is something worth explicitly teaching in their classes. To take the next step in teaching, STEM lab professors need to listen to their colleagues and their students, and reflect on the ways in which changes to practices and pedagogies can be beneficial for everyone involved.